
SATYA - TRUTHFUL IN THOUGHT, SPEECH & ACTION

We Want to Hear From You!

We are hoping to expand this newsletter, but we need your help. Is there a topic you would like to have covered? Are you part of an organization or group that is doing humanitarian work others might like to know about? Has an issue come up that you would like to explore? Are you interested in hearing conflicting viewpoints on a topic? What experiences have you had with sharing, promoting, working for nonviolence? If you can say yes to any of these ideas, then please submit them via email to yeswecanpeacebuilders1@gmail.com.



*Nonviolence is the science of how to create one's own life
in the image of God.*

Rev, James Lawson

A Gun Ordinance for Nonviolent Morro Bay By Ruth Ann Angus

We cried and were shocked each time the news report came through that another mass shooting occurred. It was awful and we could not help thinking what it would be like if it happened here. And then it did – well, almost.

The City of Gilroy, California was enjoying its yearly festival of that smelly crop that has made the area famous. The Garlic Festival was in full swing at Christmas Hill Park on July 28, 2019, when suddenly gunshots rang out. Three people were killed, and 17 others wounded. The shooter, 19-year-old William Legan committed suicide ending a shootout with responding police officers. The Garlic Festival attracts upwards of 80,000 people to this three-day event and is well known as a family oriented fun day. This was just another in a round of mass shootings but this one hit just a little too close to home.

As a tourist destination Morro Bay holds many outdoor festivals and events, as do many of the towns on the Central Coast of California. With beautiful beaches, fine dining, and an abundance of wineries, towns like Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and Arroyo Grande take advantage of the amenities they offer as well as the pleasant weather to attract visitors to their towns. It is a major source of income for all the small businesses that abound here and helps to fill the city coffers with much needed tax money. What would we do if someone chose to target us?

Those were the thoughts not only on the mind of event coordinators, but also Morro Bay city council person Dawn Addis, a strong advocate for nonviolence. Addis originally brought the issue of gun safety forward to her fellow councilmembers not long after the Virginia Beach shooting at a Public Works building where 12 people were murdered.

As Director of the Nonviolent Cities Project for Morro Bay I also had concerns. After the Garlic Festival incident, I wasted no time in drafting a statement to the city council in Morro Bay. My plea at the council meeting was to ask the City of Morro Bay to come forth with a statement to our congressional representatives calling for a law governing gun ownership, especially banning sale and use of assault weapons.

It is far too easy for someone to pull off a mass shooting at any of the outdoor events held in San Luis Obispo County. Small city police forces, like the Morro Bay Police Department, must manage everything from traffic related incidents, robbery, burglary, to severe domestic violence and too often, murder and suicide. Some events on the Central Coast bring in 10, 000 to 15,000 attendees. In Morro Bay only two officers are available to work at these events. Unless the sponsoring organization can afford to hire security personnel, these organizers can only hope that no incidents occur.

This and the overall issue of gun safety made its way onto the agendas of continuing city council meetings but for a while Covid got in the way of any action until September 2021. At its September 14th council meeting, the City of Morro Bay heard a staff report offering five different options for enacting gun safety measures in the town. These options included closing safe storage loopholes, educational initiatives, increased funding for police and civilian training, legislative advocacy, and a gun buyback program. All but the gun buyback program were adopted.

“This is a hard issue, but an urgent one for our Central Coast communities,” Addis commented, “I deeply believe it takes each of us to make and keep our communities safe from gun violence. We have to be the leaders we have been waiting for.”

As one of the 50 cities participating in the national Nonviolent City Project through Pace e Bene/Campaign Nonviolence, Morro Bay is becoming the forerunner in standing up against violence. “For our council to show bravery by taking this issue seriously, gives me tremendous hope that other communities will too,” Addis said.

