



## **Temple Sinai Gun Violence Prevention Group: 2016-2019 Accomplishments**

- July 2016- Social Action Committee creates a new Temple Sinai Gun Violence Prevention Group, Chair, Steve Klitzman, and Vice Chair, Robin Gerber. Seeks to “educate, engage and activate members of Temple Sinai to confront the gun violence epidemic in our community and nation.” Grows by 2019 to over 80 members with new Vice Chair, Sally Greenberg.

### **Educational Activities and Programs**

- Oct. 2016- High Holy Days- GVP Group helped Temple Sinai become the first area synagogue to mount on temple grounds over 200 colored T-shirts with the names, ages and dates of death of area gun violence victims in 2015 as part of a “Memorial to the Lost.”
- Yom Kippur 2016- Rabbi Adam Rosenwasser, spiritual advisor to the GVP Group, conducted conversation in the Bet Am with over 100 congregants about guns and gun violence in America with Evan Osnos, Writer, *The New Yorker*.
- Nov. 2016- Presented well attended program (over 150) at biannual “Zwerdling Shabbaton Weekend” on universal background checks with viewing of film “91%,” keynote address by Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD8), panel discussion with GVP scholar, victim, advocates and gun owner, and conference dinner.
- Oct. 2017- Mounted second High Holy Days display of a “Memorial to the Lost” in memory of over 200 area gun violence victims in 2016.
- Nov. 2017- Presented another well attended GVP program on links between gun violence and domestic abuse with victims, advocates, police, etc. First of three GVP programs co-sponsored by Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.
- Nov. 2018- Presented fourth well attended GVP program on gun suicide and saving lives with “extreme risk protection orders” AKA “red flag laws” with GVP advocates, MD. state legislator, psychiatrist, survivor, police, moderated by Petula Dvorak, Columnist, *Washington Post*.

- Feb. 2019- Presented photographic and video exhibit and panel discussion entitled “Washington’s Other Monuments”- documentation over 20-year period of informal community memorials to local victims of gun violence.
- April- May 2019- Presented three GVP programs sponsored by the “DC Area Interfaith Gun Violence Prevention Network.” Attended by over 175 as part of a “community forum” on gun violence: the “Growing Threat of Gun Violence” at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Chevy Chase, MD, “Finding Common Ground: What Gun Owners Can Teach Us,” at Bethesda United Methodist Church, and “Reducing Urban Gun Violence: What Works and How You Can Help,” at Temple Sinai.
- Sept. 2019- Presented a Sunday brunch book talk with the Rev. Rob Schenck, President, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute and a former leader of the evangelical political movement in the USA. Author of *Costly Grace: An Evangelical Minister’s Rediscovery of Faith, Hope, and Love*” in which he advocates GVP as a “pro life” position.
- Sept. 2019- Helped organize and support annual “Silence the Violence Concert” of area choral groups co-sponsored by Temple Sinai, Temple Micah, Adas Israel and others at the National United Methodist Church, 3401 Nebraska Avenue, NW. Benefited the TraRon Center in DC. Center focuses on helping children survivors of GV victims in DC Wards 7 and 8, with the highest number of gun deaths in DC. Uses art and activism to help children and families impacted by gun violence in DC.
- Oct. 2019- Co-sponsored GVP interfaith program at the Washington National Cathedral entitled “Prepare, Respond, Reclaim: Gun Violence and Houses of Worship.”

### **Legislative Advocacy**

- Fall 2017- Successfully advocated vs. enactment in Congress of NRA legislation for national “concealed carry reciprocity,” deregulation of gun silencers, armor-piercing bullets, and illegal gun trafficking.
- Jan.-April 2018- Successfully advocated vs. legislative proposals in MD and VA General Assemblies to authorize guns in houses of worship.
- Jan.-April 2018- Successfully advocated for enactment of stronger MD law disarming Maryland citizens convicted of domestic abuse.
- Jan.- April 2019- Successfully advocated again against enactment of legislation in MD and VA General Assemblies to authorize guns in houses of worship.
- April 2019- Helped organize with Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute in DC visits of 20 clergy from around the country with just Senate Republican staffers to support Senate passage of the universal background check bill the House passed in Feb.2019 as well as a national extreme risk protection order bill.

- April 2019- Testified before the DC Committee on the Judiciary in favor of increased money for the DC “violence interruption” program. Budget was increased from \$3 million to \$12 million per year.
- Nov. 2019- Helped support as individuals, not as Temple Sinai, pro-GVP candidates in election for Virginia General Assembly. Helped elect a pro--GVP majority in both the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate for first time in over 25 years. Expected to enact a number of long-stalled pro-GVP bills.

### **Coalition Building**

- March 2017- Interfaith- Co-founded with GVP Committee of the Washington National Cathedral “DC Area Interfaith Gun Violence Prevention Network.” Now has over 100 area churches, synagogues and mosques on its contact list, with over 30 core members including TSGVPG actively working to advance GVP.
- 2016- Present- National GVP Groups- Developed information-sharing and co-advocacy relationships with several national GVP groups, including Brady Campaign, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, Everytown for Gun Safety, Giffords, Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence, as well as the DMV chapters of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America.

### **Community and Student Outreach**

- 2019-2020- Instituted and will continue outreach to other community and student groups interested in GVP, including the “Pathways2Power” student GVP group at Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter High School in southeast DC, Communities United Against Hate, Chevy Chase, MD, the Montgomery County Students for Change, as well as Temple Sinai students and young adult religious school alumni in DMV area.

### **Award Recognition**

- Dec. 2019- Temple Sinai GVP Group received a 2019 Irving J. Fain Social Justice Award from the Commission on Social Action, Reform Judaism, at the Biennial Meeting in Chicago, Il. GVP Group cited for its “outstanding” and “innovative” program, and as an “inspiration to the greater Reform Jewish community, encouraging others to undertake similar inspiring initiatives.”



**Steve Klitzman, Chair, Temple Sinai Gun Violence Prevention Group, holds 2019 Irving J. Fain Social Justice award at 2019 Biennial in Chicago with Temple Sinai supporters from left to right: Liz Dunst, outgoing Chair, Commission on Social Action, Rabbi Jonah Pesner, Director, Religious Action Center, Shelly Cohen, Chair, Fain Award Committee, Steve Klitzman, Justine Lisser, wife, Steve Klitzman, Deitra Reiser and Cantor Laura Croen.**