

Travis Park Church
230 E. Travis Street
San Antonio, Texas 78205



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Travis Park Church is one of several host sites for “Vidas Robadas” Gun Violence Awareness Installation, open to the public from 11-1 on Wednesdays through November 15th

[ACCESS MEDIA PHOTOS HERE](#)

SAN ANTONIO, TX (*October 25, 2023*) – On Friday, October 20 & Saturday, October 21, the Transforming Communities Network held the 2nd annual Shalom Summit at Travis Park Church with keynote speakers Shane Claiborne and Rev. Dr. Fred Smith Jr. around the idea of peace or “shalom” in our community. The issue of gun violence was top of mind.

Shalom Summit was sponsored by the Transformational Communities Network (TCN), an initiative of the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church. TCN is composed of churches and neighborhood partners engaged in the work of community development.

In two plenary sessions Shane Claiborne shared his thoughts from his book *Beating Guns – Hope for People Who are Weary of Violence*. Leading up to Shalom Summit, Pastor Cynthia Engstrom, lead pastor at Travis Park Church, led both an in-person and virtual book study on the book.

“When people don’t know what to do, too often they do nothing. When people don’t know how to pursue needed change, too often they do nothing. When people don’t believe they have power or influence, don’t have voice or vote, too often they do nothing. For too long, too many have suffered paralysis in the face of grave loss of life and liberty by gun violence in America. Today, in America, the number one cause of childhood death is death by gun. The power to change this lies completely in the hands, the voices, and the will of the American people who are largely aligned ideologically regarding the need for reasonable legislation that will preserve life and liberty, constitution and community

well-being. For the sake of our community and most especially our children, it is time to join the coalition of people from every corner of our community, from every walk of life, and across the political spectrum to become peacemakers in our community. Join the coalition of peacemakers. Change IS happening.” - Pastor Cynthia Engstrom, Lead Pastor at Travis Park Church.

Rev. Dr. Fred Smith also spoke about Violence and Religion, Beloved Community and Prophetic Leadership in two plenary sessions; he presented ideas on the Root Issues of Violence in a special breakout session.

Travis Park Church is serving as one of many host sites for **Vidas Robadas (Taken Lives)**, an installation of t-shirts that honors lives stolen by gun violence. This installation is in partnership with local groups such as COPS Metro, and Austin-based interfaith advocacy group, Texas Impact.

Over 2,700 Bexar county residents have died from gun violence related incidents since 2018, and 250 of those lives are represented at Travis Park Church through t-shirts. White shirts represent lost lives through gun suicide and colored shirts represent those lost to homicide. There are blank shirts still available at Travis Park Church. More hands are needed to complete the installation.

“It’s incredible to me that we have continually created these shirts over several days, and the installation is still not complete. There are so many names and each one matters. The physical act of creating a shirt that represents an actual human and adding it to those in our sanctuary is a sobering and holy experience.” - Juliette Clark, Communications Director, Travis Park Church

The public is invited to ask questions, view, and participate in Vidas Robadas at Travis Park Church (230 E. Travis Street) on the following dates between the hours of 11am – 1pm:

Wednesday, October 25

Wednesday, November 1

Wednesday, November 8

Wednesday, November 15

The whole of the memorial installation can be witnessed at churches throughout the city. On Saturday, November 18th faith communities will march for peace to the Alamodome to set up a Vidas Robadas memorial in anticipation of the Voluntary Weapons Exchange the following day.

Take Further Action:

[Register here to march](#) or [donate](#) or participate in Councilmen Courage's Voluntary Weapons Exchange at the Alamodome Lot B on Sunday, November 19 from 12pm - 5pm.

Having members of our congregation who have experienced gun violence first hand, Travis Park feels it is critical to engage this issue. Vidas Robadas localizes and connects communities to the reality of gun violence, honoring gun violence victims and at the same time witnessing to the need for change. Our faith tradition calls on us to be stewards of peace.

“In a world inundated with violence, it is easy to allow the names and faces of the victims to fade into the noise and be lost. The purpose of this installation is to keep the memory of the lost alive. What we remember, we cannot ignore. Jesus called the peacemakers blessed and named them the children of God. Peace making begins with remembering.” Rev. Bob Clark, Travis Park Church.

FACTS FOR MEDIA:

A MAJORITY OF TEXANS AGREE THAT GUN VIOLENCE IS A MAJOR ISSUE

- Over 2,600 Bexar county residents have died from gun violence related incidents since 2018.
- More than 39,000 Americans die of gun-related incidents every year— an average of more than 100 deaths per day.

ABOUT THE TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES NETWORK (TCN)

Transformational Communities Network (TCN) is composed of churches and neighborhood partners engaged in the work of community development. TCN

began as an initiative of the Rio Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2017 with support from Methodist Healthcare Ministries.

The Mission of TCN is to build a network of transformational communities by equipping locally embedded leaders with training and ongoing support for the work of shalom.

Through this network, new models for applying community development principles and processes are emerging. Communities that have engaged the TCN processes are becoming reference points and/or teaching centers of spiritual transformation within the church and community. To learn more visit: <https://www.tcopraxis.org/>

ABOUT TEXAS IMPACT

Texas Impact is a religious grassroots network whose members include individuals, congregations, and governing bodies of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and other faiths. Texas Impact exists to advance state public policies that are consistent with the shared values of Texas faith communities.

The non-profit works on a wide variety of public policy issues within the broadly held social concerns of mainstream religious traditions. Texas Impact uses a process of discernment on public policy issues like the processes used by many faith traditions, including Scripture, the wisdom of the faith traditions, current public policy information and data, and the experiential knowledge of people of faith to develop our positions and policy goals.

ABOUT TRAVIS PARK CHURCH

Established in 1846, Travis Park Church is grounded in history and vision. Founded by the Rev. John Wesley DeVilbiss, missionary to The Republic of Texas, who in 1844 preached the first protestant sermon ever heard in San Antonio and in 1946 organized the congregation in the courthouse. Today, the people of Travis Park Church continue seeking to make the world a better place through "unconditional love and action" where all are welcome and ALL MEANS ALL. Travis Park Church is affiliated with the Reconciling Ministries Network, a

group of congregations and groups worldwide which have adopted statements welcoming people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. Travis Park Church is also a Lighthouse Congregation in the Rio Texas United Methodist Conference, and is a welcoming place for those whose church has closed or disaffiliated from the United Methodist Church. In 2021, Travis Park Church celebrated 175 years in the community with a commemorative 3500 sq. ft. “All Are Welcome, Love Conquers Hate” mural installation overlooking the Travis Park Church parking lot on Travis Street. To learn more visit travispark.org.

For more information contact:

Travis Park Church
Rev. Bob Clark
bclark@travispark.org
210-837-0923

Texas Impact
Bobby Watson
Human Rights Fellow
bobby@texasimpact.org

Abel Vega
Director, Mission, Service, & Justice Ministries of Rio Texas Conference
avega@riotexas.org