

CFCU Founders Remember the Beginnings



A

Christian, a Jew and a Universalist walk into a coffee shop and... a movement of faith communities who are committed to ending gun violence is born.

Recently CFCU founders Jerry Arca, from First Plymouth Congregational Church, Gene Drumm, from First Unitarian Universalist Church and Alana Smart, from Congregation B'nai Havurah met at Metropolis Coffee House in the Golden Triangle to remember the day they first met there– the day that Colorado Faith Communities United to end Gun Violence was born.

Here is a bit of their conversation:

Jerry: We hardly knew each other, but we knew each other's congregations had an interest in the gun violence issue.

Alana: One of the things we discovered is that all of our congregations were just heartsick at what had happened at Sandy Hook. We discovered that we were all working on it on our own, and then when we discovered that other congregations were hurting as badly as we were, we started working together.

Gene: There was a bit of a consensus that we could do more in a larger organization than just in our individual congregations so we started outreaching.

Jerry: Each one of us was leading an effort in our own congregation. When we reached out to the other communities the three of us were the natural contacts.

Gene: At the time I was a member at First Universalist and on our Gun Violence Prevention task force. We found out that First Plymouth had a gun violence prevention group too. I reached out to Jerry.



Jerry: Sandy Hook was the catalyst. Our minister, of course, had a lot to say about it... "after the worship service ends," he said, "we are going to talk more about it, we're going to meet in the chapel afterwards." A lot of people stayed for that conversation.

Gene: It had been over a year since Sandy Hook and it came out that Congress was not going to do anything in response to the slaughter of six year old children... At First Universalist we were invited "If anybody would like to start to develop a response to what's happening with Gun Violence...we launched a task force and we got a congregational statement.



Alana: A group of us at B'nai Havurah wanted to respond to the killings at Sandy Hook, and then we discovered some resistance. We did a survey, had some educational sessions and then a wakeup call came to our congregation. In 2014 Jose Diaz-Luevano ..our long time and beloved custodian... was shot to death in a dispute at a backyard barbeque. He was Denver's first gun fatality of 2014. That gave our congregation a kind of call to action.



Gene: Our first steps: we began going to a whole lot of congregations and trying to get them to join us. All the way to Summit county and Colorado Springs. We were out talking to a lot of congregations. Jerry developed a powerpoint slide presentation. If they didn't want to be a part of our group, we asked them what action they would take.

Alana: Our founding meeting was on June 12, 2014 at First Plymouth. There were 18 congregations and now we are over 55. We believe that thoughts and prayers must be accompanied by action. You must honor with action.



You can watch the whole interview at our Anniversary Celebration on September 22 at First Plymouth Congregational Church. Don't forget to RSVP!