Do We Pray, or Do We Shoot?

An interdisciplinary approach to reconcile polarized stances: Peace and defense church theological and practical responses to the threat of a mass shooting

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of interdisciplinary Doctor of Philosophy in Human-Centered Design.

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to find ways to help churches keep safe from a mass shooter. To do that, I hoped to find common ground among academics, law enforcement, peace churches, and defense churches and then leverage that common ground to find ways the groups could collaborate on church safety. I observed three churches and conducted interviews at 14 churches. I reviewed academic literature about academics and law enforcement officers. The common ground I found between all groups was fear of violence, desire to be safe, and a general belief in metaphysical forces. Other key takeaways were that outsiders cannot make accurate assumptions about religious groups based on denomination and that a religious group's response to the threat of violence might not be internally consistent or make sense to outsiders. I designed a course based on my research results and pedagogical best practices. I limited the target audience to police officers because they were the easiest to identify and contact and because their job was to counter violence. Police officers who complete the course should better understand religious worldviews, know examples of how different Christian groups view violence, know how to effectively interact with religious groups, and know how to leverage common ground between religious groups and law enforcement officers. Future efforts include producing the course, observing law enforcement officers, and creating an undergraduate course on contemporary Christianity.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to find ways to help churches keep safe from a mass shooter. I hoped to connect academics, police, and different Christian churches so they could collaborate on church defense. To learn about Christian churches, I attended three churches and interviewed leaders at 14 churches. I read prior research about academics and police. I found that all groups had in common the desire to stay safe from violence and a general belief in a force greater than themselves. I also learned that outsiders could not make accurate assumptions about religious groups based on denomination and that a religious group's response to the threat of violence might not be internally consistent or make sense to outsiders. To apply my results, I designed a course for police officers because they were the easiest group to identify and contact and because their job was to counter violence. Those who complete the course should learn to better understand religious worldviews, know examples of how different Christian groups view violence, know how to effectively interact with religious groups, and know how to leverage commonalities among religious groups and law enforcement officers. Future efforts include producing the course, observing law enforcement officers, and creating an undergraduate course on contemporary Christianity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Contemporary Christian Polarization

Between the Columbine High School mass shooting in 1999 and the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, Christian churches in the U.S. have witnessed 19 fatal shootings (Earls, 2020b). Church shootings didn't occur in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID pandemic, but shootings did occur in a warehouse, grocery store, gas station, and spa (Victor & Gross, 2021). In 2022 church shootings resumed with four events, two in California, one in Iowa, and one in Alabama (Earls, 2020b).

Mass shootings are incredibly divisive. The Right calls for thoughts and prayers and supports the Second Amendment. The Left demands gun control and prosecution of those in the firearms industry. Both sides strawman and demonize the other and use tragic events to pursue their agendas. Even different Christian groups, which rely on the same scripture, react differently to mass shootings in places of worship. Some arm themselves; others consciously refuse to be vigilant. Academe's common view of religion as a divisive social construct hinders its understanding of most of our mostly Christian country. Academe's largely theoretical approach is challenging to apply in communities. Law enforcement's practical responses to the threat of violence are not equally appreciated by all Christian groups.[1]

Increasing polarization is a fact of twenty-first century American life. Democrats and Republicans have drifted further apart ideologically from each other in the past two decades. They have increasingly hateful feelings and use hateful speech for the other party and its members (Pew Research Center, 2022). More and more, people are basing all their views on liberal or conservative ideology and expectations rather than taking a personal, measured approach to each issue (Doherty, 2014b).

The separation isn't only ideological. It's also demographic and cultural. Democrats are more likely to reside in cities and Republicans more in rural areas more so than in past decades (LaHurd, 2018). Democrats are more likely to be highly educated and have educated friends, have a higher income, and enjoy reading and going to museums. Republicans are more likely to be white, older, to serve in the military, and enjoy hunting (Pew Research Center, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2021a).

American polarization extends to religion. When discussing how differently football players Tim Tebow and Colin Kaepernick enact their religion, religious scholar Michael Frost (2017) wrote:

> "In many parts of the world it feels as though the church is separating into two versions, one that values personal piety, gentleness, respect for cultural mores, and an emphasis on moral issues like abortion and homosexuality, and another that values social justice, community development, racial reconciliation, and political activism. One version is kneeling in private prayer. The other is kneeling in public protest. One is concerned with private sins like abortion. The other is concerned with public sins

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[1] I use "Christian group" here because different groups refer to themselves differently, for example as denominations, congregations, brothers and sisters, churches, or Meetings.

> like racial discrimination. One preaches a gospel of personal salvation. The other preaches a gospel of political and social transformation" (para. 34).

Religiosity increasingly predicts partisanship, political party, and voting, especially for white Christians. Religious conservatives are growing in numbers. Religious liberals are being replaced by secular liberals because the religious liberals are ageing and dying out or abandoning religion altogether. Christianity is so associated with the conservative ideology that there is evidence that liberal Christians are choosing to identify as non-religious. There also evidence that ideological sorting along religious lines is a self-fulfilling prophesy (Perry, 2022).

This growing social violence brings us to my topic: how religious groups react to the threat of a mass shooting. My research deeply examines the response of some Christian groups in rural Virginia to the threat of a church shooting. A dissertation cannot solve polarization. But with a human-centered design based on research, I hope to build what bridges I can between Christian groups, academe, and/or emergency preparedness professionals.

Research Motivation and Goals

When I started this work in 2018, the U.S. was reeling in the wake of a series of shootings at places of worship. A course project had me visit and observe a peace church where I witnessed its reaction to a threat on its property. Although I understood the Christian group's approach, it contrasted with what I knew of armed defense teams in local churches. The idea for this project was born. This research examines a small corner of polarization: why groups with the same scriptural foundation have such different reactions to the threat of violence—peace churches that refuse violence in all forms and defense churches that turn to armed security.

Motivation

My motivation for pursuing this research was threefold. First, I hoped to clarify my own views on religion and violence. When I was a child, I developed a deep respect for the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), a peace church. I occasionally attended Quaker Meeting. As a teen, I attended and was baptized at a Southern Baptist Convention church. Such churches tend to be defense oriented.

Socially, I am a de-escalator and interpreter of perspectives. I am also a gun owner and long-time martial artist and believe people should learn to defend themselves. I hoped conducting this research would help me reconcile these seemingly opposing perspectives.

My second motive was to bring more voices to academe. My research brought law-enforcement and emergency-preparedness experts to my committee alongside traditional academic advisors. I hoped doing so would broaden the definition of inclusive research. My third motive was to encourage understanding and civil dialogue across religious and educational boundaries. I hoped to define and explain the differences between often-liberal peace churches and often-conservative defense churches in accessible, non-judgmental language. I hoped both religious groups and the larger population would gain respect for diverse others.

I am personally invested in this research and in interdisciplinarity. I am not politically or culturally polarized. I have attended both peace and defense churches. I am conflict-averse and

advise those around me “do not engage” when provoked, yet I practiced martial arts for 20 years and own firearms. I have had friends and family who are religious, atheist, liberal, reactionary, military, peace-loving, and hateful.

I do not believe a particular disciplinary approach is most valid. I work in academe, yet I am disparaged by academic elitism and academe’s often poor appreciation of religious perspectives. I have both engineering and social sciences education and experience. In all walks of my varied life, I have hoped to help those around me perceive fellow diverse humans as individuals, not categories.[2]

Qualifications

I am uniquely qualified to perform this research because I can connect to and empathize with both peace and defense perspectives. I attended an NRV peace church, and I went to a National Rifle Association training course at an NRV defense church. I worked with animal rescue groups, and I have taught self-defense. I volunteered at a children’s camp, and I have a permit to carry a concealed firearm. I have formed relationships with members and affiliates of peace churches, pacifist trainers, defense churches, church security advisors, and law enforcement personnel in my area. I was uniquely prepared to conduct this research because of the social capital I have built.

I have often found or placed myself between cultures. When I was an engineer, I translated between the science and engineering teams. When I lived in Southeast Asia, I helped explain local cultures to expats and vise-versa. When I worked in IT, I was in the space between technical teams and end users.

Now that I am a faculty member, I try to teach engineers communication concepts. I enjoy promoting understanding, empathy, and civil dialogue – all core outcomes of the proposed research.

Goals

The goals of this research are to:

- Inform my own views on religion and violence.
- Bring more practical voices to academe and vise-versa.
- Encourage understanding and civil dialogue across religious lines.
- Help academics and/or emergency-preparedness experts understand the theology of, and better relate to, religious groups.

I hoped to build bridges between these groups and discover ways religious groups, law enforcement, academe, and their communities can better interact to promote public safety and understanding. I hoped to build respect within academe in general and Virginia Tech in particular for the majority of Americans we profess to serve with our research, Christians. Last, I

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[2] I of course combat my own biases. This work challenged me in that regard!

hoped to inform emergency preparedness professionals how to better communicate with groups whose focus might be more spiritual than practical.

Interdisciplinary Approach

The Human-Centered Design IGEP's goal is to create new paradigms. My goals go beyond even traditional academic interdisciplinarity and would have been impossible to conduct if limited to academe. Therefore, my research was advised by practical experts and ecclesiastics in addition to traditional academics.

The Departments of Sociology and Religion and Culture don't have specialists in contemporary religion and violence. Nor does Virginia Tech house a divinity school with experts on theological (not literary) interpretations of the Bible. So, I was fortunate enough to include experts from various departments on my committee: James Hawdon, an expert on the sociology of violence and Douglas Cannon, an expert on public witness of Christian groups. Virginia Tech's Department of Sociology does not have a graduate program related to criminal justice. So, I included Mike Mulhare, Assistant Vice President of Virginia Tech Emergency Management, on my committee. I will also learn military perspectives from my husband who spent 31 years in the Army and led security teams for many of his deployments. He accompanied me on some church observations. Gerard Lawson, a counselor educator specializing in individual and community recovery from trauma, is also on my committee. I leveraged the expertise of Daniel Breslau in the Department of Science, Technology, and Society, and of Steve Harrison in the Department of Computer Science on how to perform ethnographic research. Although they do not specialize in contemporary religious groups, their guidance applied to this work.

Peace and defense churches design their physical environments, defense plans, and behavioral norms with G/god[3] as a main contributor. This research focused on how they did so. The results informed a human-centered design integrating both the people and the context in which the design produce would be used (Lyon, Brewer, & Arean, 2020). Scott McCrickard, the co-chair of the Human-Centered Design program is also on my committee.

Summary

I am uniquely qualified and motivated to research a pressing social issue: divisiveness surrounding how Christian groups respond to the threat of a mass shooting. I'm suited to conduct interdisciplinary work because I have a background in STEM and the social sciences. I can relate to different Christian groups, am familiar with law enforcement perspectives, and I have a diverse dissertation committee who are prepared to advise me.

This dissertation will first describe a broad history of Protestantism in the United States, followed by religious demographics today. With that background laid, I discuss different theological perspectives on violence and move on to my research questions and methods. Then I present the research results and a discussion of what they mean, followed by a human-centered

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[3] I use "G/god" because I respect those who believe in a divine "God" as well as those who believe "god" is a social construct.

design informed by my results that bridges the gap Christian groups and law enforcement. I end with a conclusion, reflection, and appendices.

Chapter 2: A Broad History of American Protestantism

Peace and defense groups arose in the unique context of American religious history. Even though they were formed in the same country from similar populations of people, they read the Bible and enact their religion differently. In this chapter, I discuss some reasons that is the case. I will start with a history of American Protestantism in general. I will begin with the colonial era and end in recent decades. In Chapter 3, I will describe in more detail the history and theology of the specific religious groups I researched and how that informs their approach to the threat of violence.

A Christian Nation

The U.S. is a majority-Christian nation, and 70.6% of Americans call themselves Christians. Of those Christians, 94% are absolutely or fairly certain God exists, and 85% rate religion as very or somewhat important in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2021). American Christianity is not homogenous. Religion in the U.S. is dynamic because of our government, which enshrined freedom of religion, and our culture of liberalism, capitalism, freedom of choice, and the marketplace of ideas. The U.S. has continuously been a hotbed of new religious ideas and competition between churches. This competition causes Christianity in the U.S. to be regional and polarized (Albanese, 2007; Finke & Stark, 2014; Stark R. , 2017). Below I attempt to provide basic historical context for today's polarization among Christian groups, with a focus on peace- and defense-oriented denominations.

Christianity is based on the Bible, a diverse, self-contradictory text. The Roman Catholic Church enforced a common interpretation of the Bible until the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s when Bible interpretations diversified. The U.S. was colonized during this period of religious tumult.

Where are the Catholics?

The omission of Roman Catholics from this research in no way indicates I believe Catholicism has had no effect on U.S. Christian culture. The effect of Catholicism has been profound. During colonial times, Catholics were poorly tolerated and stripped of their voting rights by the British. After the American Revolution, they were better tolerated. However, they were continually accused of being more loyal to Rome than to their country (Albanese, 2007).

The Catholic population in the U.S. has been repeatedly refreshed with German, Irish, Polish, and Latin American immigrants. Many Protestants saw them as a threat to the American way, which is largely based on civil Protestantism (Finke & Stark, 2014).[4] Catholics often lived in insular communities and created a parallel parochial school system to avoid the civil Protestantism entrenched in public schools. At the Second Vatican Council in 1962, Catholicism changed to allow Catholics to attend Protestant churches and eat fish on Fridays, among other liberalizations. Catholicism became more like Protestantism and became more acceptable in the

[4] My Lutheran mother's most obvious bigotry was against Catholics. She said they were loyal to Rome and called a Catholic neighbor "hail Mary." My Baptist church taught me that Catholics aren't Christian because they worship entities other than the trinity, like Mary and the Saints.

public eye. As of 2021, the U.S. has had two Catholic presidents, John F. Kennedy and Joe Biden.

American Catholicism is still highly cultural and regional. Catholics form the single largest Christian denomination in the U.S. and comprise 20.8% of American adults. Most Catholics are white or Latino. Lower New England, New York, and New Jersey have the largest percentage of white Catholics, and New Mexico and California have the largest percentage of Latino Catholics. Utah and the South have the lowest percentage of Catholics. As a whole U.S. Catholics have resisted political polarization, with 37% of Catholics Republican or Republican leaning and 44% Democrat or Democrat leaning. Catholics are almost equally divided on issues such as the size of government, welfare, evolution, and abortion (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Because Catholics are a minority in the South, and because as a whole they are not politically polarized, this work did not observe or consider Catholic churches.

American Protestantism

Much of today's religious tension can be traced to the divide between the East Coast elite and the frontier colonies. Prior to the expansion westward, though, the colonial inhabitants of the U.S. were regional and diverse. In New England, the Puritans, escaping persecution in England, created a homogenous, and ironically and equally persecutory culture. In the lower colonies, Anglicanism and Presbyterianism dominated but to a lesser extent than New England Puritans, who had a greater majority. Roman Catholics and Protestants both found homes in pluralist New York. The historic peace churches, Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren, were far more common and accepted in tolerant Pennsylvania. Calvinist Anglicans were the majority in Virginia (Albanese, 2007; Church of the Brethren, 2021; Mennonite Church USA, 2014).

The Puritans were challenged by emotive, experientialist preachers like George Whitefield (1714-1770) who criticized other preachers, a taboo at the time. Whitefield proved that even before the revolution, fervor had a place in the American religious economy. His influence caused church membership to shift from more reserved Puritan churches to more vibrant Baptist ones in what is called the First Great Awakening. Puritans became known as Congregationalists because they believed each church congregation should govern itself. Congregationalists reacted to fervent preaching by becoming even more secular and elitist than the offshoot Baptists (Finke & Stark, 2014).

During the Second Great Awakening, three established churches, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians/Anglicans, faced even more pressure. George Whitefield, who rocked New England's Congregationalist churches, also heavily influenced the Wesley brothers, the founders of Methodism. Whitefield established the tradition of traveling, fervent preaching later perfected by Methodist preachers active in the lower colonies. After the Revolutionary War, Methodists' Arminianism, the belief that man has free will and can choose to be saved, was more optimistic and attractive than Calvinism, the belief that only a predetermined "elect" were chosen to be saved. In the early 1800s, huge crowds attended Methodist revivals, and the church pulled adherents from Anglican and Presbyterian churches (Finke & Stark, 2014). At the same time, the Restorationists in central Appalachia rejected denominationalism and attempted to form "primitive" churches modeled after those in the Book of Acts. The Restoration Movement had

origins in Congregationalism, Baptist churches, and Methodism. Today's Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ have roots in the Restoration Movement (Albanese, 2007).

The Second Great Awakening wasn't restricted to the South. In western New York, Joseph Smith began forming what was to become the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and other splinter groups arose. The idea that dispensations, or eras, existed in Biblical history became popular during the Second Awakening. Some new Christian groups believed the current era is the Kingdom of God because Jesus came already and ushered it in. Others believed the current era directly precedes the Kingdom of God, which would be established after the Second Coming of Jesus (Albanese, 2007).

Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians reacted to the threat of traveling lay preachers and new religions. The clergy in New England prohibited traveling preachers and required their clergy to have orthodox educations.[5] Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians vowed not to convert each other's members, but Methodists traveled and converted everywhere. Congregationalists and Presbyterians united against Methodists. Their East-Coast urban churches funded missionary organizations and missions to the western frontier. However, they could not compete with Baptist and Methodist groups led by local lay preachers (Finke & Stark, 2014).

Religion was regional. The more reserved and elitist Congregational, Anglicans, and Presbyterian churches were largely in the East and Northeast, and the newer Baptist and Methodist churches were largely in the South and West. Quakers, Brethren, and Mennonites spread from Pennsylvania to Ohio and other Midwestern states. Religious culture was also regional. The East Coast churches viewed the newer religions as simplistic and decried their preachers' lack of education. East Coast churches believed their followers were susceptible to the lowest-common denominator religion. Churches in the interior were more emotive and lay-led. Many members mistrusted established seminaries (human institutions) to do God's work and preferred uneducated peers for preachers. These Christians also mistrusted the East-Coast elites and resented their condescension and interference (Finke & Stark, 2014; Prothero, 2007). Brethren and Mennonites were more insular than other groups and traditionally avoided politics (Bender, 1944).

The Civil War era created even more regional division. Presbyterians divided into Old School and New School churches in 1837. The Old School believed slavery was not a religious issue. The New School believed it was. These New School Presbyterians were mostly northern, were more liberal than the Old School, and usually approved of political activism (Balmer & Fitzmier, 1993). The two schools reunited after the Civil War. Baptists also divided into northern and southern churches in 1845 because northern Baptists would not allow slaveholders to be missionaries. Southern Baptists split away to form today's Southern Baptist Convention (Gjelten, 2018),[6] the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2021).

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[5] Ironically, New England Congregationalists once required emotional conversion experiences for church membership. When attendance dropped, they also allowed membership through family. (Albanese, 2007)

[6] The Southern Baptist Convention later fully denounced their stance on slavery and acknowledged their history of racism (Gjelten, 2018).

During and after the Civil War came the Third Great Awakening. By this time, Northern Baptists, now the American Baptist Churches, had become more secular and adopted well-educated and paid clergy like the Congregationalists (Finke & Stark, 2014). Methodists had also become well-established. Fewer preachers traveled, and clergy began to be formally trained. The Methodist church had become monetized like the East-Coast established religions (Finke & Stark, 2014). The Pentecostal-Holiness movement split away from its Methodist roots. Like early Methodists, Pentecostals believed in baptism in the S/spirit, speaking in tongues, and sanctification (purification) by the Holy Ghost. The Azusa Street Movement, a years-long, multi-ethnic revival that began in 1906, characterized the Pentecostal movement's openness and diversity (Albanese, 2007). Today's Pentecostal churches, Holiness churches, Churches of God, Churches of the Nazarene, Apostolic Churches, and Vineyard Churches all have roots in the Pentecostal-Holiness movement. I included Pentecostal defense churches in my research.

During the Third Great Awakening many Americans were disenfranchised by the mass poverty of the industrial revolution. The Social Gospel emerged as a mixture of Marxist socialism and Christianity and was an attempt to enact the Kingdom of God on earth through social justice, temperance, and missions. The movement had participants from many denominations, particularly among mainstream, traditional Protestants, but other groups rejected it. For example, Primitive Baptists did not agree with mainstream Baptists' participation in civil society, so they split off and formed their own denomination (Albanese, 2007). Like the Restorationists, Primitive Baptists focused on restoring the early church and were strongest in southern Appalachia. Another response to the Social Gospel was growing belief in premillennial dispensationalism, the idea that the current era precedes the millennium, or Second Coming. Those adopting this view believe the Second Coming is soon. They focus on the future, evangelism, and salvation through grace alone more than social work. They are largely the precursors to today's Evangelical Protestants. They include Southern Baptists, Restorationists, and the Churches of God, the defense churches I researched (Albanese, 2007).

The culture of academe and government has become increasingly secular throughout U.S. history and caused many Christians to feel sidelined. In the 1900s, scientific rationalism and the theory of evolution became increasingly accepted. The New England norm that one keeps religion out of politics was deeply entrenched (Albanese, 2007). Scholars and archeologists began to study the Bible through a historical lens. Fundamentalist Christians felt excluded from the public sphere, and their movement gained momentum. These fundamentalists were mostly premillennial dispensationalists and believed our era directly preceded the Second Coming. Premillennial dispensationalists often focused on the prophetic books of the Bible, particularly Revelation, and believed that the world was getting worse (Albanese, 2007) and that the Second Coming is imminent. They also believed the Bible is a literal, infallible history of man and decried other denominations' lack of Biblical knowledge (Prothero, 2007). By the mid-1900s, fundamentalist Christianity had matured and formed the American Council of Christian Churches and the National Association of Evangelicals. Huge churches emerged, as did televangelism and Christian influencers like Billy Graham (1918-2018, Southern Baptist) and Jimmy Swaggart (1935-, Pentecostal). Fundamentalist Christianity became increasingly political under the influence of Pat Robertson (1930-, Southern Baptist) and Jerry Falwell (1933-2007, Southern Baptist), who rejected liberalism and secular humanism. They argued for an increasing role of religion in government, prayer in schools, and teaching creation alongside evolution. They and others politicized the Christian right (Albanese, 2007) into the force it is today.

Academe remained the same secular, rationalist institution that had prompted fundamentalists' reaction in the first place (Prothero, 2007).

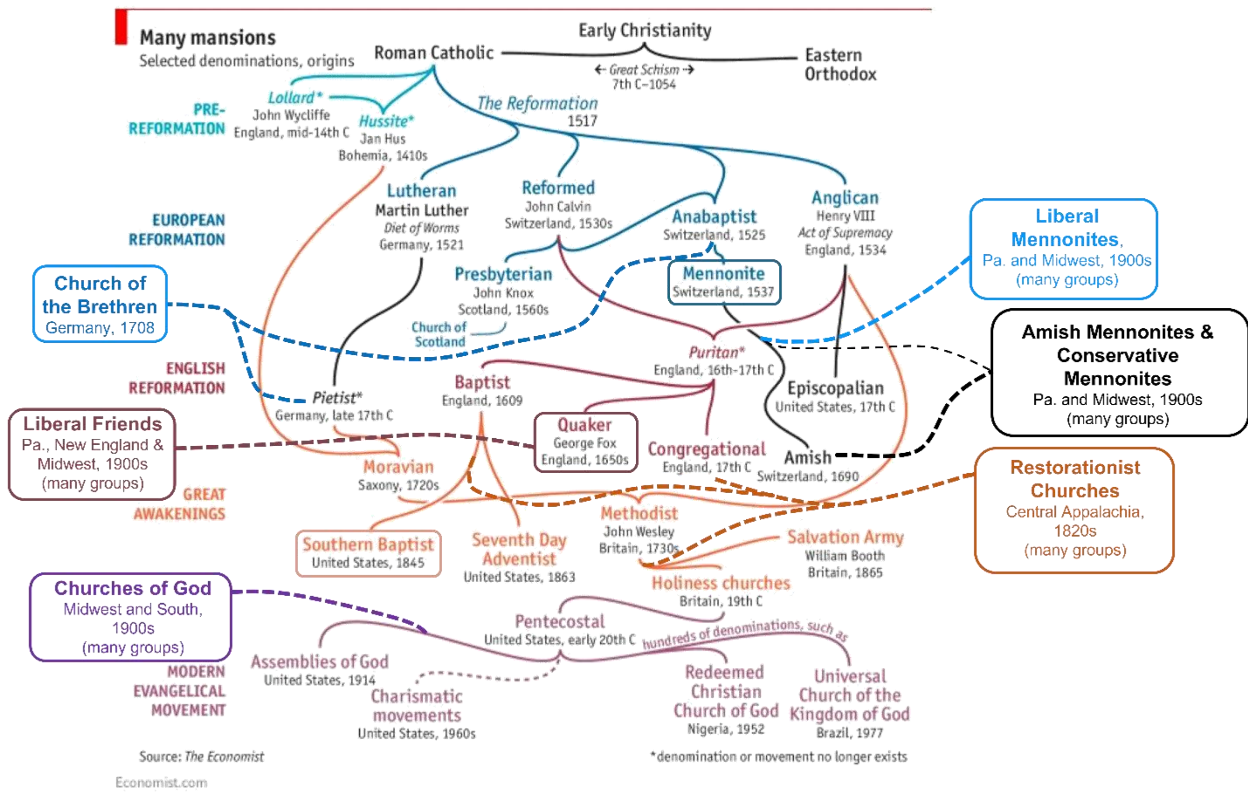
By this time, mainline Protestant churches, which now include Methodists and northern (American) Baptists, experienced declining membership. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) had split into two main groups, evangelical Christian Quakers and liberal Quakers. Liberal Quakers define themselves more by philosophy than theology and include agnostics and atheists. Mennonites also split into conservative and liberal branches. The Conservative Mennonites and Amish Mennonites largely consist of Amish who wanted to modernize their lifestyle but not liberalize their religion, and Mennonites who rejected the mainstream liberalization of their religion (Miller, 2012). Liberal Mennonites include U.S. Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonite Church USA. The peace churches I researched include liberal Quakers and liberal and conservative Mennonites as well as Churches of the Brethren.

Figure 1 shows a family tree of selected Christian religions with the groups I researched circled. The figure is originally from the Economist (2017) and already included three of my groups: Southern Baptists, Mennonites, and Quakers. I added three others using dashed lines: Christian Churches/Church of Christ (Evangelical Restorationists), Churches of God, and Churches of the Brethren.

How I group and describe the churches here depended not only on their historical lineage but also on protecting their anonymity. If a group did not have enough places of worship in the region where I performed my research to protect anonymity, I described it at a higher denominational level in its lineage. For example, instead of discussing Disciples of Christ, I discuss the larger group of Restorationist churches, which include Christian Churches, Churches of Christ, and Disciples of Christ. If a grouping was subject to interpretation because of different denominational influences (for example, Methodists have roots in both Anglicism and Pietism), I grouped it in a way that best protected anonymity.[7]

[7] I am deliberately vague. I choose to protect my groups' anonymity at the expense of accuracy.

Figure 1.
Partial Family Tree of Christian Denominations (The Economist, 2017)



Chapter 3: Religious Demographics in the U.S.

U.S. 1980-2010

Church membership has shifted between 1980 and 2010**,** according to the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA, 2010; ARDA, 2020). Archival data captured different religious groups in different decades. Religious groups are grouped to show trends and to preserve anonymity of the groups I researched. Data are not graphed because the groups' numbers of adherents differ by orders of magnitude. Instead, data are listed in Table 1.

The membership of the peace churches I researched has been comparatively low (hundreds of thousands) but steady among the Mennonites and Brethren. Quaker Membership is declining. Of the peace churches, Liberal Quakers are the most liberal. In the large defense churches I researched, membership in the more liberal Methodist church has been declining. Membership in the Southern Baptist Convention plateaued in the 2010s. Southern Baptist Convention data show peak membership was in 2006 at 16,306,246. Since then, membership has sharply declined to 14,089,947 in 2020 (Southern Baptist Convention, 2021). Of the smaller defense church groups, the Churches of God has increasing membership, and the Restorationist churches have had steady membership.

Table 1.
Number of Adherents in Peace and Defense Church Christian Groups: 1980 – 2010 (ARDA, 2010; ARDA, 2020)

		Number of Adherents (including Children)				
Christian Group	**Category**	**1980**	**1990**	**2000**	**2010**	**2020**
Quaker - All	Peace		113,086	113,086		89,815
Quaker - Evangelical/ Conservative	Peace				39,391	36,879
Quaker - Liberal	Peace				62,744	52,936
Mennonite - Conservative	Peace		8,243	39,624	58,116	52939
Mennonite - Liberal	Peace	184,432	217,307	184,487	169,291	114,366
Church of the Brethren	Peace	146,588	171,281	186,588	207,980	109,288
Churches of God	Defense	1,009,962	1,117,114	1,405,834	1,559,182	2,018,310
Methodist	Defense	11,552,111	11,091,032	10,350,629	9,860,653	8,018,629
Southern Baptist	Defense	16,281,692	18,940,682	19,881,467	19,896,279	14,089,947
American (Northern) Baptist	Defense	1,922,467	1,873,731	1,767,462	1,560,572	89,915
Restorationist	Defense	3,941,079	3,931,958	4,102,621	3,823,098	3,199,444

U.S. 2014

As of 2014, religion in the U.S. broken down by religious group is listed in Table 2. The data were taken by the Pew Research Center, which categorizes Christian groups and defines membership differently from the ARDA.[8] More recent Pew data is not available.

The Christian groups I focused on and their percent of U.S. adult affiliates are also listed. See Table 2. The defense-oriented groups I studied are: Southern Baptists, Restorationist churches, Methodists, and Churches of God, all categorized by Pew as Evangelical Protestant. Together, their adherents comprised 10.9% of U.S. adults in 2014. The historic peace churches are Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren, the last two of which Pew lists under Anabaptist. Pew data do not make clear if the Church of the Brethren fell under mainline or evangelical, but in either case, the church, with other Anabaptist groups, formed less than 0.03% of U.S. adults in 2014. Together with Quakers, peace church adherents comprised at most 0.6% of U.S. adults in 2014. Despite the lower membership in peace churches, the geographic region of this research had enough peace churches to help protect their anonymity.

Table 2.
Selected Religious Groups by Percent U.S. Adults, 2014 (Pew Research Center, 2015)

Religious Group	Percent U.S. Adults (2014)
Evangelical Protestant Churches	**25.4**
Baptist	9.2
Southern Baptist Convention	5.3
Restorationist (Church of Christ, Christian Church)	1.6
Anabaptist (Brethren, Mennonites)	<0.03
Pentecostal	3.6
Church of God (Cleveland, TN)	0.4
Unaffiliated	**22.8**
Catholic	**20.8**
Mainline Protestant Churches	**14.7**
United Methodist Church	3.6
Anabaptist (Brethren, Mennonites)	<0.03
Quaker	<0.03
Historically Black Churches	**6.5**

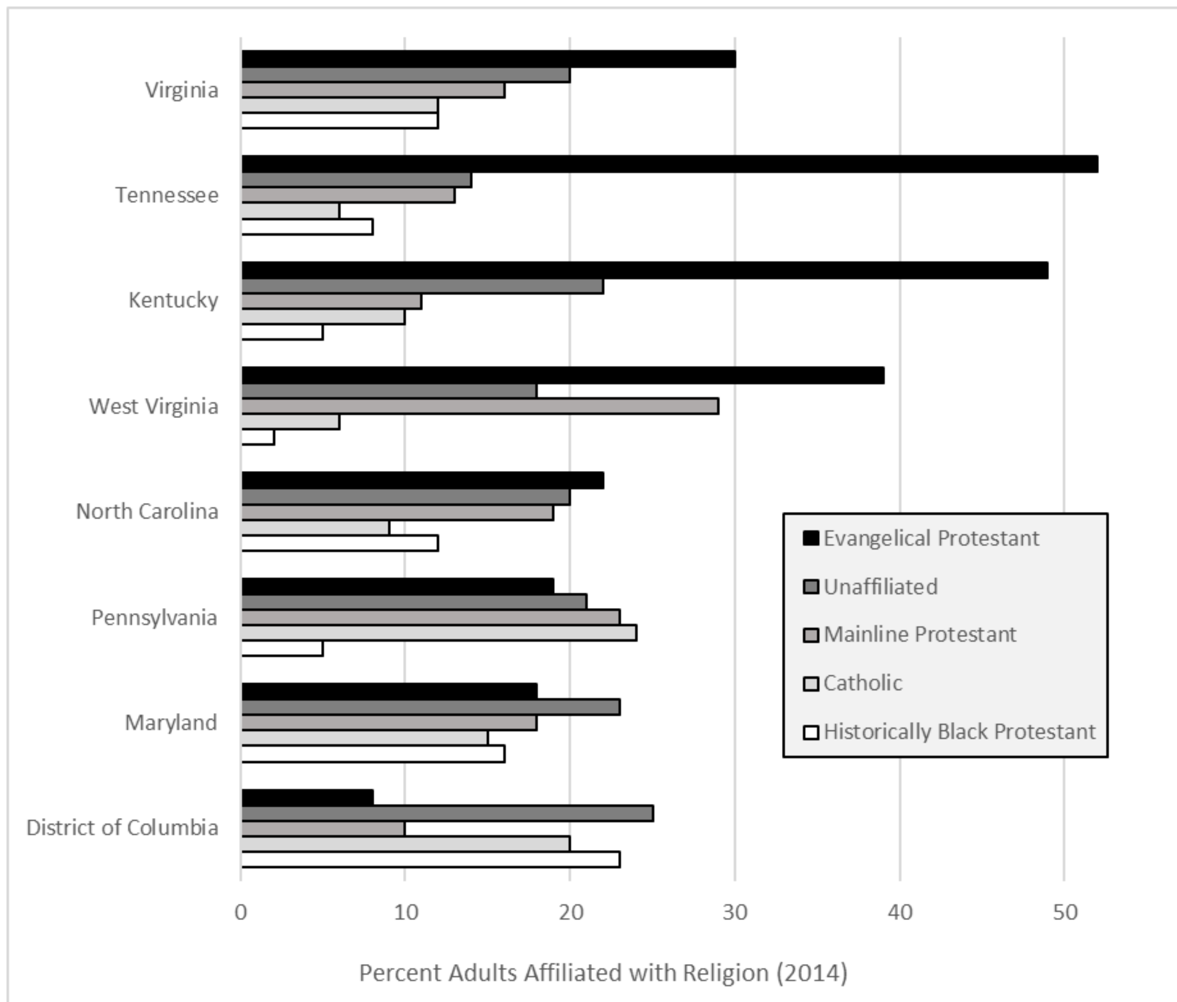
Virginia and Neighboring States: 2020 and 2021

Religion in the U.S. is still highly regional, with more Roman Catholics in urbanized, coastal states and in the Northeast, more Baptists in the South, and more Methodists in the South Central states. The historical peace churches are more common in Pennsylvania and the Midwest but have spread across the nation. Figure 2 shows religious tradition in Virginia and neighboring

[8] Pew categorizes fewer groups than the ARDA and reports percent of the population, not membership. Pew defines membership as adults. The ARDA includes children and called the category "Adherents."

states for selected religious traditions. See Religious Tradition by U.S. State for data on all religions and states. Southwest Virginia is Appalachian and has more in common geographically and culturally with Tennessee and Kentucky than with its coastal, northern neighbors Maryland and Washington, D.C. One can expect religion in the New River Valley, the Appalachian region of this research, to mirror the mostly evangelical Protestant trend of those states.

Figure 2. Percent of Adults in Selected Christian Groups in Virginia and Neighboring States (Pew Research Center, 2021)

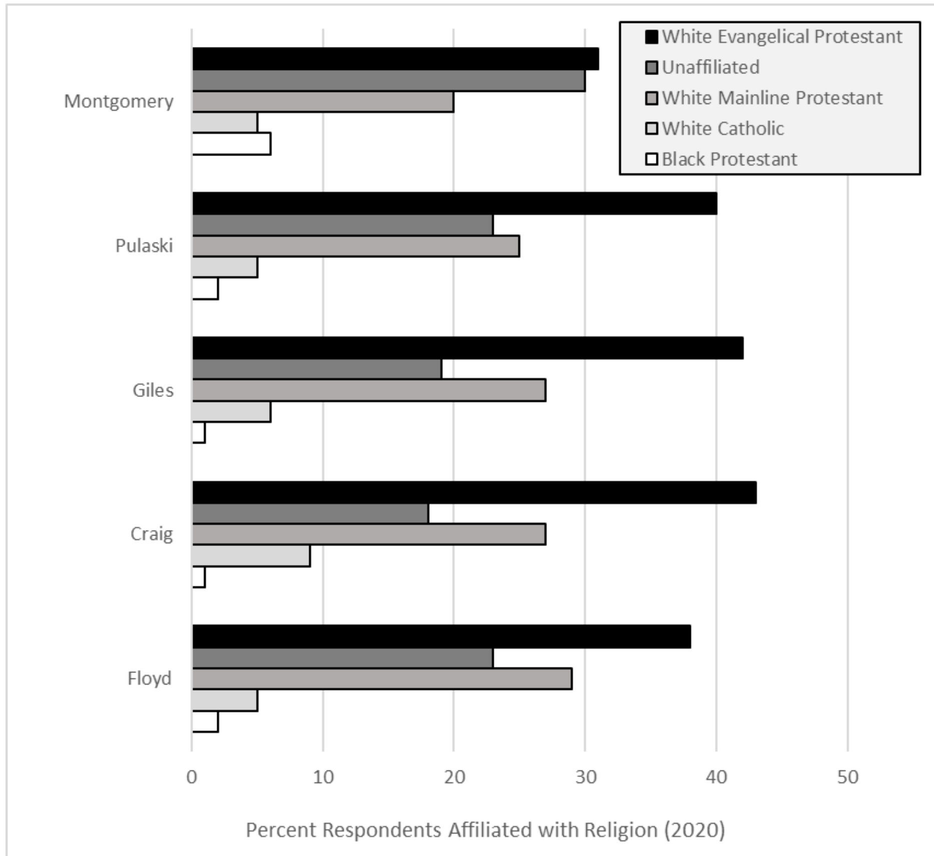


Data on religion from another source, PRRI, exist at the county level. PRRI categorizes Christian groups slightly differently from PEW and the ARDA[9] because PRRI separates religion by race: White, Black, and Latino. The five counties of the New River Valley and their percent of selected religions are shown in Figure 3. The religious identification in the New River Valley is closer to that of nearby Kentucky and Tennessee, with about 40% evangelical Protestants and few Roman Catholics or Black Protestants. Note that Montgomery County, home of Virginia Tech, has fewer White Protestants and more Catholics and Black Protestants than neighboring

[9] PRRI differentiates Hispanic churches from White and Black ones (The 2020 Census of American Religion, 2021). The New River Valley is predominantly white. This research did not include Black or Hispanic churches.

counties. The university attracts more diverse students and employees than would otherwise migrate to rural Appalachia and makes the region ideal for studying religious diversity.

Figure 3. Percent of Respondents who Identify as Selected Religions in New River Valley Counties (The 2020 Census of American Religion, 2021)



Religious Composition of U.S. Adults

Figure 4.

***Religious Composition of U.S. Adults* (Pew Research Center, 2015)**

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Summary Table: Religious Composition of U.S. Adults

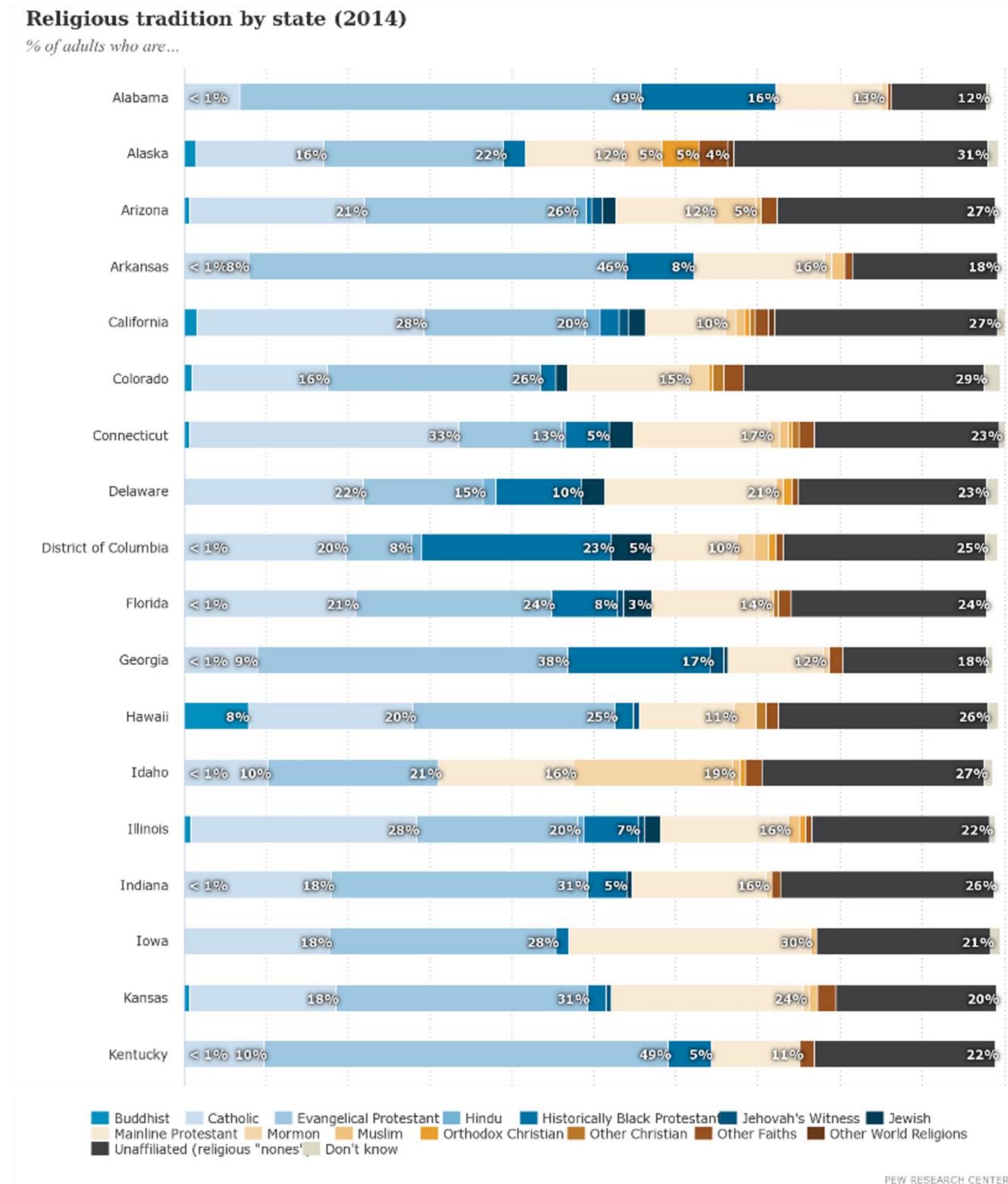
% of U.S. adult pop.	2007	2014
Evangelical Protestant churches	**26.3**	**25.4**
Baptist in the evangelical tradition	10.8	9.2
Southern Baptist Convention	6.7	5.3
Independent Baptist in the evangelical tradition	2.5	2.5
Conservative Baptist Association of America	<0.3	<0.3
Free Will Baptist	<0.3	<0.3
General Association of Regular Baptists	<0.3	<0.3
Missionary Baptist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Other Baptist in the evangelical tradition	1.1	1.0
Methodist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Nondenominational in the evangelical tradition	3.4	4.9
Nondenominational evangelical	1.2	2.0
Nondenominational charismatic	0.5	0.6
Interdenominational in the evangelical tradition	0.5	0.6
Nondenominational fundamentalist	0.3	0.3
Community Church in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
"Nondenominational Christian" in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Other nondenominational in the evangelical tradition	0.8	1.2
Lutheran in the evangelical tradition	1.8	1.5
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod	1.4	1.1
Lutheran Church-Wisconsin Synod	<0.3	<0.3
Other Lutheran in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	0.3
Presbyterian in the evangelical tradition	0.8	0.8
Presbyterian Church in America	0.4	0.4
Other Presbyterian in the evangelical tradition	0.4	0.4
Pentecostal in the evangelical tradition	3.4	3.6
Assemblies of God	1.4	1.4
Church of God (Cleveland, Tenn.)	0.4	0.4
Apostolic Pentecostal in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Calvary Chapel	<0.3	<0.3
Church of God of the Apostolic Faith	<0.3	<0.3
Foursquare Church	<0.3	<0.3
Nondenominational Pentecostal in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Pentecostal Church of God	<0.3	<0.3
Pentecostal Holiness Church	<0.3	<0.3
Other Pentecostal in the evangelical tradition	0.9	1.1
Episcopalian/Anglican in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Restorationist in the evangelical tradition	1.7	1.6
Churches of Christ	1.5	1.5
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	<0.3	<0.3
Other Restorationist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Congregationalist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Conservative Congregational Christian Conference	<0.3	<0.3
Other Congregationalist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Holiness in the evangelical tradition	1.0	0.7
Church of the Nazarene	0.3	0.3
Free Methodist Church	0.3	<0.3
Christian and Missionary Alliance	<0.3	<0.3
Church of God (Anderson, Ind.)	<0.3	<0.3
Wesleyan Church	<0.3	<0.3
Other Holiness in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Reformed in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Christian Reformed Church	<0.3	<0.3
Other Reformed in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Adventist in the evangelical tradition	0.5	0.6
Seventh-day Adventist	0.4	0.5
Other Adventist group in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Anabaptist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	0.3
Pietist in the evangelical tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Other evangelical/fundamentalist	0.3	0.3
Protestant non-specific in the evangelical tradition	1.9	1.5

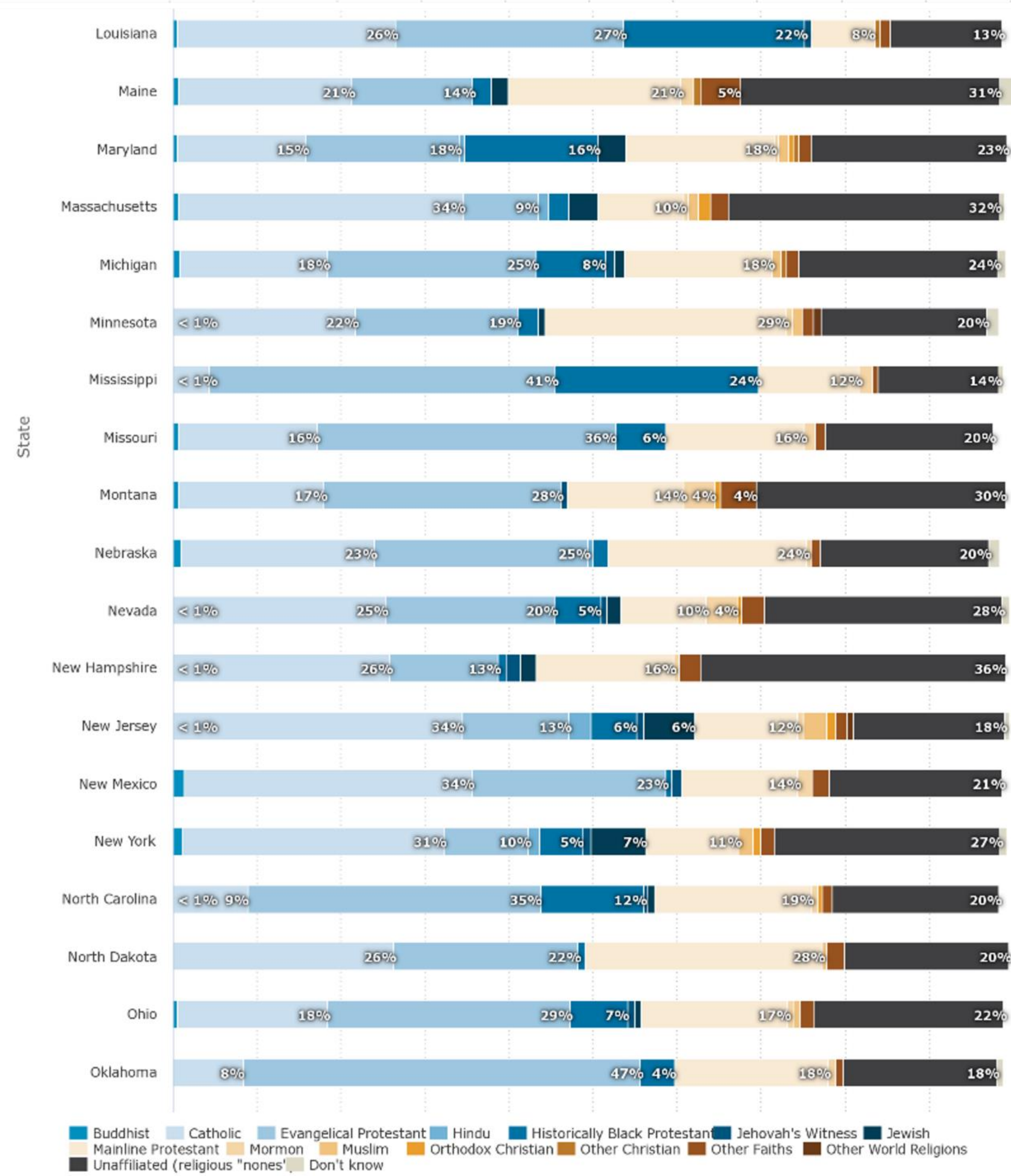
% of U.S. adult pop.	2007	2014
Mainline Protestant churches	**18.1**	**14.7**
Baptist in the mainline tradition	1.9	2.1
American Baptist Churches USA	1.2	1.5
Other Baptist in the mainline tradition	0.7	0.6
Methodist in the mainline tradition	5.4	3.9
United Methodist Church	5.1	3.6
Other Methodist in the mainline tradition	0.4	0.3
Nondenominational in the mainline tradition	0.9	1.0
Interdenominational in the mainline tradition	0.3	0.3
Other nondenominational in the mainline tradition	0.6	0.7
Lutheran in the mainline tradition	2.8	2.1
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)	2.0	1.4
Other Lutheran in the mainline tradition	0.9	0.7
Presbyterian in the mainline tradition	1.9	1.4
Presbyterian Church USA	1.1	0.9
Other Presbyterian in the mainline tradition	0.7	0.5
Episcopalian/Anglican in the mainline tradition	1.4	1.2
Episcopal Church	1.0	0.9
Anglican Church (Church of England)	0.3	<0.3
Other Episcopalian/Anglican in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Restorationist in the mainline tradition	0.4	0.3
Disciples of Christ	0.3	<0.3
Other Restorationist in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Congregationalist in the mainline tradition	0.7	0.5
United Church of Christ	0.5	0.4
Other Congregationalist in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Reformed in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Reformed Church in America	<0.3	<0.3
Other Reformed in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Anabaptist in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Friends in the mainline tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Other/Protestant non-specific in the mainline tradition	2.5	1.9
Historically black churches	**6.9**	**6.5**
Baptist in the historically black Protestant tradition	4.4	4.0
National Baptist Convention	1.8	1.4
Progressive Baptist Convention	0.3	0.3
Independent Baptist in historically black Prot. tradition	0.5	<0.3
Missionary Baptist in historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	0.3
Other Baptist in the historically black Prot. tradition	1.8	1.8
Methodist in the historically black Protestant tradition	0.6	0.5
African Methodist Episcopal	0.4	0.3
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	<0.3	<0.3
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church	<0.3	<0.3
Other Methodist in the historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Nondenominational in the historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	0.3
Pentecostal in the historically black Protestant tradition	0.9	1.0
Church of God in Christ	0.6	0.6
Apostolic Pentecostal in the historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	<0.3
United Pentecostal Church International	<0.3	<0.3
Other Pentecostal in the historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	0.3
Holiness in the historically black Prot. tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Protestant non-specific in the historically black Prot. tradition	0.5	0.4

% of U.S. adult pop.	2007	2014
Catholic	**23.9**	**20.8**
Mormon	**1.7**	**1.6**
Jehovah's Witness	**0.7**	**0.8**
Orthodox Christian	**0.6**	**0.5**
Greek Orthodox	<0.3	<0.3
Russian Orthodox	<0.3	<0.3
Orthodox Church in America	<0.3	<0.3
Other Orthodox Christian	<0.3	<0.3
Other Christian	**0.3**	**0.4**
Metaphysical	<0.3	<0.3
Spiritualist	<0.3	<0.3
Unity Church	<0.3	<0.3
Other Metaphysical	<0.3	<0.3
Other in the "other Christian" tradition	<0.3	<0.3
Jewish	**1.7**	**1.9**
Buddhist	**0.7**	**0.7**
Muslim	**0.4**	**0.9**
Hindu	**0.4**	**0.7**
Other world religions	**<0.3**	**0.3**
Other faiths	**1.2**	**1.5**
Unitarians and other liberal faiths	0.7	1.0
Unitarian (Universalist)	0.3	0.3
Spiritual but not religious	<0.3	0.3
Deist	<0.3	<0.3
Humanist	<0.3	<0.3
Bit of everything, "own beliefs"	<0.3	<0.3
Other liberal faith groups	<0.3	<0.3
New Age	0.4	0.4
Pagan/Wiccan	0.3	0.3
Other New Age	<0.3	<0.3
Native American Religions	<0.3	<0.3
Unaffiliated	**16.1**	**22.8**
Atheist	1.6	3.1
Agnostic	2.4	4.0
Nothing in particular	12.1	15.8
Don't know/refused	**0.8**	**0.6**

Religious Tradition by U.S. State

Figure 5.
***Religious Tradition by U.S. State* (Pew Research Center, 2021)**





Religious tradition by state (2014)
% of adults who are...
State
Louisiana
26%
27%
22%
8%
13%
Maine
21%
14%
21%
5%
31%
Maryland
15%
18%
16%
18%
23%
Massachusetts
34%
9%
10%
32%
Michigan
18%
25%
8%
18%
24%
Minnesota
< 1%
22%
19%
29%
20%
Mississippi
< 1%
41%
24%
12%
14%
Missouri
16%
36%
6%
16%
20%
Montana
17%
28%
14%
4%
4%
30%
Nebraska
23%
25%
24%
20%
Nevada
< 1%
25%
20%
5%
10%
4%
28%
New Hampshire
< 1%
26%
13%
16%
36%
New Jersey
< 1%
34%
13%
6%
6%
12%
18%
New Mexico
34%
23%
14%
21%
New York
31%
10%
5%
7%
11%
27%
North Carolina
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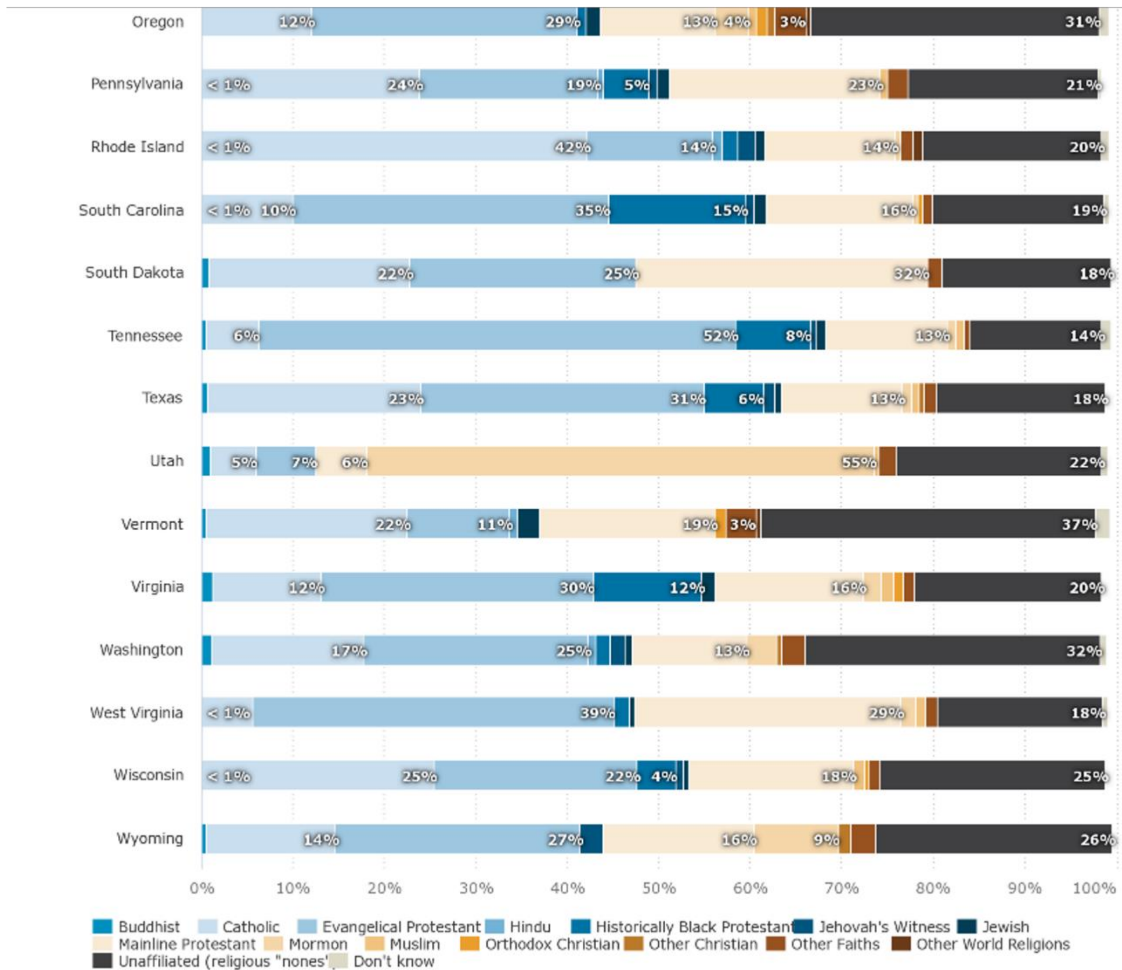
9%
35%
12%
19%
20%
North Dakota
26%
22%
28%
20%
Ohio
18%
29%
7%
17%
22%
Oklahoma
8%
47%
4%
18%
18%
Buddhist
Catholic
Evangelical Protestant
Hindu
Historically Black Protestant
Jehovah's Witness
Jewish
Mainline Protestant
Mormon
Muslim
Orthodox Christian
Other Christian
Other Faiths
Other World Religions
Unaffiliated (religious "nones"
Don't know
PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Summary

Membership in Quaker (peace), Southern Baptist, Restorationist, and Methodist (all defense) churches is declining. Membership in the Church of the Brethren (peace) and Church of God (defense) is increasing. As of 2014, Evangelical Protestants formed over 25% of the U.S. population. Mainline Protestants comprised only 14% of the population. Quakers and Anabaptists, historic peace churches, formed less than 1% of the population combined (Pew Research Center, 2015).

Virginia has more Evangelical Christians than any other religious or non-affiliated group (Pew Research Center, 2021). The New River Valley population is about 40% Evangelical Christian (The 2020 Census of American Religion, 2021). Montgomery County, home of Virginia Tech, has a comparatively lower population of Evangelical Christians and a comparatively higher percent of unaffiliated people than the surrounding New River Valley counties.

Different Christian groups have different theological perspectives on violence and support those views using different Biblical and secular frameworks. It is important to understand a group's theology with respect to violence to understand how they would react to it. Chapter 4 gives a brief background and history of Christian theologies of violence.

Chapter 4: Theological Perspectives on Violence

Christian ethics on war and violence has a rich history, but formal Christian theology has yet to thoroughly address today's mass shootings. I cannot do justice to the centuries-long discussion of the theology of violence. Instead, I will present a brief overview of Christian ethics related to peace and defense churches' perspectives. I will address factors affecting Bible interpretation, present a short history of peace and defense theologies, and describe how those theologies might be enacted by the peace and defense churches I selected for this research.

Dimensions Affecting Bible Interpretation

All Christian groups believe the Bible is scripture. How they interpret Biblical teachings on the use of violence depends on a few key factors: perspectives on the Kingdom of God and end times (eschatology), perspectives on the divinity of Jesus (Christology), the secular analytical framework through which they read the Bible (secular lens), and their Biblical analytical framework, or what portions of the Bible serve as a lens through which to view its entirety (Biblical lens).

Different Bible interpretations exist because of the nature of the Bible. It was written between 1100 B.C.E. and AD 150. It contains narrative books with law and poetry embedded, wisdom (advice on applying scripture to life), and prophetic books. The Hebrew Bible[10] documents the beginning of man and the history of the Jewish people. Its oldest books were written in the oral tradition of the Solomon era. The New Testament documents the life of Jesus and the early Christian church. The New Testament contains three not-quite-parallel narratives of Jesus' life, other narratives of the early church, and letters among early Christians. The Bible contradicts itself partly because it was written over a thousand years by different authors with different languages and cultures. It is also intentionally contradictory. The New Testament was written to supersede the Hebrew Bible. Later New Testament books were meant to supersede and interpret earlier ones (Barton, 2010; Riches, 2000). Theologists use a Biblical lens to render the portions they believe most important literal. The lens renders other, potentially contradictory portions allegorical.

Eschatology is the study of end times and related to the concept of the Kingdom of God. Early Christians believed that Jesus brought the beginning of the end and that the Kingdom of God and second coming of Christ would happen in their or their children's lifetimes. When that did not happen, Christians developed different eschatologies. Some Christian groups think the Kingdom of God was ushered in with Jesus and is present now (amillenial eschatology). Others think the Kingdom of God will be present on earth after the Second Coming (premillennial eschatology). Some Christian groups think the Kingdom of God is distant (deists); others believe it close at hand (Pentecostals). Some Christian groups believe the Kingdom of God is or will be present only among Christians (Amish); others believe it applies to all people. Groups exist that believe in any combination of the above. Beliefs about the Kingdom of God affect how Christians interpret the command to be peaceful. For example, those who believe the Kingdom of God is present now might act peacefully as Jesus did. Those who believe the Kingdom of God is distant might choose violence to defend themselves while they await the Second Coming. Views on the

[10] I use "Hebrew Bible" and "New Testament" because "Old Testament" subordinates pre-Christian scripture.

Kingdom of God also affect Christians' motivation to behave ethically. Some behave ethically because they had an emotional conversion experience in a present Kingdom of God. Others behave ethically out of obedience to G/god while they await the Second Coming (Cahill, 1994).

In addition to views on the Kingdom of God, the secular analytical framework and social and political environment of a theologian or Christian group affect how he or she interprets the Bible's teachings on violence. Early Christian thinkers were apolitical pacifists who relied almost exclusively on the Bible and not on other philosophies. Later thinkers**,** like Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Martin Luther (1483-1507), John Calvin (1509-1564), and Gustavo Gutierrezs (1928-), used secular lenses such as natural law, humanism, and the social sciences through which to interpret scripture (Cahill, 1994; Gutierrezs, 1971).

Last, because the Bible is contradictory and ambiguous, Christians make sense of it by using part of scripture as a window through which to view the whole. This perspective renders some parts of the Bible more important and immediate, some parts more literal, and other parts more allegorical. For example, Christians not belonging to peace churches believe the Sermon on the Mount, during which Jesus taught his followers, "Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also" (English Standard Version Bible, 2016, Matt. 5:39b)**,** is allegorical, and that Christians do not need to practice non-resistance to violence (Cahill, 1994).

Early History of the Theology of Violence

The vast majority of Christians believe G/god commands peace, but how they applied that belief has evolved.

Early Christians were a minority population in a strong empire. Early Christian thinkers looked only to the Bible for guidance and took literally the commands of peace and non-resistance as taught in the Sermon on the Mount. After Constantine the Great (306-337) Christianized the Roman empire, Christianity became political. Roman thinker Augustine (354-430) viewed the Bible through an Aristotelian secular lens to form the earliest Just War theories. To him, the full realization of the Kingdom of God was so distant that Christians were forced to grapple with worldly politics. He avowed that peace was best and said individual Christians should practice non-resistance. He also stated that God-appointed authorities could wage war in specific cases. Augustine rationalized violence as an act of punishment out of parental-like love (Cahill, 1994).

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) viewed the Bible from a philosophical, natural-law secular lens. He could not tolerate Augustine's paradox of love warranting violence. Instead, Aquinas reasoned that limited violence could be used for the common good and in defense of self and the weak. Both theologians wrote that only civil authorities, as appointed by God, should command war. They both thought that the Kingdom of God was distant and unattainable in the world and that the goal of war was peace (Cahill, 1994).

These early Catholic thinkers opened a door in Christian theology for condoning violence, through which some Reformation leaders walked while others turned their backs (Cahill, 1994).

Reformation Theologies

During the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the 1500s and 1600s, vassal states warred, governments distanced themselves from the corrupt Vatican, and theologians struggled to make sense of the violence (Cahill, 1994). Theologians Menno Simmons and George Fox, founders of peace churches, lived in this time, as did Martin Luther and John Calvin, founders of Protestant denominations from which defense churches sprang.

Peace Churches

The historic peace church denominations grew from two distinct theologies: Anabaptist theology characterized by the teaching of Menno Simmons and the Quaker theology of founder George Fox. Simmons and Fox hoped to return to purely Biblical sources for their teachings. They also rejected the Augustinian teaching that different levels of adherence to Biblical teaching apply to different Christians (Gwyn, Hunsinger, & Roop, 1991).

Anabaptist Menno Simmons (1496-1561, The Netherlands) viewed the entirety of the Bible through the work and sayings of Jesus. Anabaptists view the Gospels as their Biblical lens. They believe the laws of the Sermon on the Mount, including non-resistance of violence, are literal and should be followed in everyday life. They believe scriptural passages supporting violence are allegorical. Regarding eschatology, Simmons believed that Jesus ushered in the Kingdom of God for believers and that it is close at hand but not yet realized. Because only Christians live close to the Kingdom of God, Simmons and other Anabaptists taught that Christians should separate themselves from the rest of the world to avoid interacting with corrupt civil society and government. Anabaptists are motivated to live ethically both because of the emotional conversion experience of living in the Kingdom of God and out of a desire to obediently follow Jesus' teaching (Cahill, 1994). Anabaptist denominations include Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren peace churches.

Puritan George Fox (1624-1691, England) founded the Religious Society of Friends, or Quakers. He believed that the Kingdom of God is present and that pacifism is possible in the world. Early Quakers believed the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. Unlike the Anabaptists who separated themselves from secular society, Fox believed Quakers should actively work in civil life to promote a peaceful society. Quaker motivation to promote peace stemmed more from their religious passion and less from a desire to be obedient to Jesus' teaching. Quakers believe the Bible should be interpreted individually by using the Inner Light, or Holy Ghost, as a guide (Cahill, 1994). The handful of Quaker denominations today have roots in Fox' Religious Society of Friends.

Modern peace and defense churches' approaches to violence reflect their theological roots and apply them in a modern context. Peace churches believe that the Kingdom of God is present and that believers should follow the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-40, ESV):

> And [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Peace Church Publications on Violence

The Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers, as a union of historic peace churches, wrote *A Declaration on Peace* (Gwyn, Hunsinger, & Roop, 1991) alongside the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Much of *A Declaration on Peace* reiterates the teaching of Reformation peace theologians. For example, peace church and meeting members are taught to emulate Jesus' self-sacrificing love in an effort to transform the world into the Kingdom of God. *A Declaration on Peace* combines Quaker perspectives, that Christians should be motivated to act out of love and religious fervor, and the Mennonite perspective, that Christians should be obedient to God. The declaration goes beyond Reformation teaching by applying the peace doctrine to modern life. For example, A *Declaration on Peace* applies the peace doctrine to nature and ecology, calls for Christians to practice solidarity with the victims of authority, and calls Christians to practice civil disobedience (Gwyn, Hunsinger, & Roop, 1991). The peace churches' goal is to be a living testament to the Kingdom of God's presence in this world. Documents that preceded the declaration are included in its appendices. These documents reiterate the normative nature of the Sermon on the Mount and counter common arguments against the peace doctrine (World Council of Churches, 1953; Buttrick, 1948).

Individual peace churches can have guidelines more specific to their theologies. The Religious Society of Friends defines peace as something promoted internally by living simply, because consumerism leads to exploitation. Friends believe the peace doctrine applies to all aspects of life and society. They encourage Friends to "wage peace boldly and positively" to promote broad social change (Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 2021, p. 26). Like Fox, Quakers believe the Kingdom of God can be actualized in the world. Today's liberal Quakers reject all violence, including defensive violence when threatened.

Similar to the Friends, the Mennonite Church USA's statement of faith commands peace, but unlike the Quakers, it does not advise members to promote social change. Instead**,** it focuses more on the Mennonite church itself and encourages obedience and discipline (Mennonite Church USA, 2014). The Mennonite Church USA's statement of faith reflects Simmons' teachings on obedience and that the Kingdom of God is present only among believers. Today's Mennonites reject violence even if threatened and continue to revere past martyrs.

Defense Churches

Like Simmons and Fox, Reformation thinkers Luther and Calvin argued that their perspectives were purely Biblical. However, they approached the Reformation from a different secular framework from Simmons and Fox and from each other.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) lived in a time of turmoil in Germany. He witnessed the corruption of purchasing indulgences through the Vatican. He was an Augustinian monk and adopted much of Augustine's theology. For example, he believed the Kingdom of God was so distant that states were not bound by the Sermon on the Mount. Instead, Luther believed that civil authorities should act separately from the church and that civil authorities may use violence to maintain order. On the personal level, Luther believed that Christians should behave out of peace and love and that individuals should use violence only to protect others (Cahill, 1994). He believed direct spiritual experiences should be the Biblical lens through which to interpret God's commands.

Calvin (1509-1564) was a humanist who used reason to interpret the Bible, which he saw as literal truth, albeit in historical and cultural context. Calvin believed the Bible outlined a firm set of laws for believers. Like Augustine and Luther, he believed that the world was divided into a G/godly kingdom of believers and a worldly kingdom of sin. He approved of coercion and punishment to defend and promote Christianity. Unlike Luther, Calvin condoned cooperation between the church and secular powers in enforcing Biblical law, both for stability and to encourage Christianity. Calvin was focused on the rule of Christian law more than the experience of conversion. His motivation to behave ethically was out of obedience to G/god, not love of fellow man (Cahill, 1994). Throughout their history, Calvinists have used violence to enforce their religious rules.

An offshoot of Calvin's teaching, Puritanism, emerged in the late 1500s. Puritans believed that governments may use violence to enforce the will of God. Puritan thinkers focused more on the wars of the Hebrew Bible and did not attempt to reconcile their belief in violence with the command to love thy neighbor. For them, love manifested in loyalty to their church (Cahill, 1994). From the Puritan tradition came Southern Baptist denominations and unaffiliated Baptist churches.

The Wesleyan denominations, led by Charles and John Wesley, emerged in England in the 1700s from Arminian roots. Wesleyans believe the Hebrew Bible and New Testament are complementary and that neither supersedes the other. They believe the New Testament explains how to make present the Kingdom of God, "the state in which God's will is enacted. It is a kingdom of the heart (Luke 17:21)" (Dunn, n.d.). Wesleyans believe the Kingdom of God was initiated with Jesus but has yet to come to fruition. It can be experienced and enacted in people through sanctification, where the Holy Ghost manifests H/himself in individuals. Those individuals are purified, made holy, and are able to live sinless lives. Believers live out G/god's love to help achieve the Kingdom of God (Dunn, n.d.).

Defense Church Publications on Violence

Modern defense churches vary in their approach to violence but share the belief that the Kingdom of God is distant and that believers must make compromises to survive. Unlike historic peace churches, there is no unified statement from the Restorationists, Southern Baptists, and Wesleyan groups. So, I referred to the following church defense training materials to attempt to discern a common theological perspective:

- *Peace With God* by Billy Graham. Graham is a Southern Baptist in the Puritan tradition.
- *What They Don't Tell You About Church Safety* by Bryan Donihue, who runs the security team at a Wesleyan church.
- *Tactical Bible Stories: Personal Security Tips from the Bible* by Rob Robideau, a missionary supported by independent, conservative Baptist churches.
- *Pistol in the Pulpit* by Tim Rupp, who is affiliated with both Baptist and Wesleyan traditions.

The authors of the above defense-church publications view the Bible through a practical lens and believe that the Sermon on the Mount's command to turn the other cheek is allegorical. Graham (1984) casts the Sermon on the Mount as an unattainable ideal, akin to Hebrew Bible law. Rupp

(2016) and Donihue (2014) argue that the Sermon on the Mount's command to turn the other cheek (Matt 3:39) is allegorical and actually refers to how Christians should respond to minor insult and ridicule, not physical assault. Donihue and Robideau's Biblical lens treats the Sermon on the Mount as allegorical and renders literal some New Testament and Hebrew Bible passages that condone violence. Donihue (2014) points out Luke 22:36b (ESV): "And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one." Robideau (2012) argues that John 18:10-11a (ESV) was just an example of Peter overreacting: "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear… Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath.'" Rupp (2016) points out that that Jesus did not explicitly rebuke Peter's violence. Rupp and Donihue also highlight the story of Nehemiah, in which the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem's walls used weapons to protect themselves (Donihue, 2014; Rupp, 2016). Robideau (2012) argues that deception is Biblical by citing Judges 16:5-10, in which Sampson doesn't disclose where the secret to his strength lies.

Defense church theologies are rooted in the belief that the Kingdom of God is distant. Restorationists and Baptists think the Kingdom of God will come in the Second Coming. Methodists think it has begun but is far from fruition. Defense churches believe Christians must make compromises to survive in our dangerous world. These churches interpret the Bible through a lens of Christian vigilance and view the Sermon on the Mount as allegory, not law. They use reason to interpret the Bible and focus on both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

Many Restorationist and Southern Baptist churches are defense-oriented and have security plans. The United Methodist Church rejects war, but unlike the historic peace churches, does not explicitly denounce violence in defense of a country or person. The United Methodist *Safety and Insurance Handbook for Churches* (United Methodist Insurance, 2016) has advice on church violence and how to prepare for it.

Contemporary Church Responses to Mass Shootings

Christian groups have reacted differently to the 23 fatal shootings at U.S. churches since 1999. These reactions depend on their theologies and preparedness perspectives. The historic peace church and Wesleyan churches forgave out of a desire to live in a present Kingdom of God and emulate Jesus. The Protestant denominations influenced by the Puritan tradition (Baptists) and the Unitarians offered victims comfort and prayer, set up memorials for victims, and gave practical advice on church defense. See Table 3.

Table 3.
Selected Church Shootings and Responses

Year	Location	Event	Denomination	Church Response
1999	Fort Worth, TX	A man killed seven and committed suicide.	Southern Baptist	Prayer for comfort and healing (Wedgewood Baptist Church, n.d.)
2005	Milwaukee, WI	A man killed seven and committed suicide.	Church of God (Wesleyan)	Bewilderment and forgiveness (Kosmicki, 2006)
2006	Nickel Mines, PA	A man killed five girls and committed suicide.	Old Order Amish (Mennonite)	Forgave the shooter within hours (Walters, 2016)
2007	Colorado Springs, CO	A man killed two and was killed by church security.	Evangelical Protestant (nondenominational)	Promoted church security teams (Wilson, 2017; Kovaleski, 2018)
2008	Knoxville, TN	A man killed two and was stopped by church members.	Unitarian Universalist	Prayer for strength and comfort; church renamed hall and library for those killed (Skinner, 2008)
2012	College Park, GA	A man killed one and was later arrested.	Evangelical Protestant (nondenominational Black church)	Calls for donations for victim's family, prayer (Dominguez & Gomlak, 2012)
2015	Charleston, SC	A man killed nine, fled, and was caught.	African Methodist Episcopal (Wesleyan historic Black church)	Victim families forgave shooter (Ali, 2020)
2022	Vestavia Hills, AL	A man killed three, was stopped by church member.	Episcopal Church (mainline Protestant)	Promoted church security teams (Thornton, 2022)
2022	Ames, IO	A man shot two and killed himself.	Evangelical Protestant megachurch	Prayer for comfort and healing (Des Moines Register and Ames Tribune Staff, 2022)

Summary

Christianity started out as a pacifist religion. That changed when it became politicized during the Roman Empire as theologians struggled to reconcile governmental violence with the Bible. The Catholic Church enforced its interpretation of the Bible until the Reformation, when both peace and defense churches were born based on their own Biblical interpretations. Two millennia later, peace and defense churches differ in three dimensions affecting Bible interpretation. First, peace churches believe the Kingdom of God has arrived and attempt to enact it. Defense churches believe the Kingdom of God will come with Jesus' Second Coming and that in this imperfect world, violence in defense is justified. Second, many peace churches, such as the Amish, have a

purely Biblical lens through which they view the world, while many defense churches see the world through a rational lens. Last, peace churches tend to view the Bible through the lens of the New Testament and the sayings and teachings of Jesus. Defense churches tend to view the Bible as a whole. In the past decades, a group's peace or defense stance has affected how it has responded to a mass shooting. Peace churches stress forgiveness, and defense churches stress prayer and security.

The next two chapters will dig deeper into the history and theologies of the peace and defense churches I included in this research.

Chapter 5: Peace Churches

Here I discuss the history and theology of the peace churches included in this research, Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers, and how their history and theology influences their reaction to the threat of violence.

The historic peace churches are three Christians groups committed to Christian pacifism and nonresistance to violence: The Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

Anabaptists

The Brethren and Mennonites both have Anabaptist roots in the Radical Reformation. In the early 1500s, Reformation leader Martin Luther (1483-1564) feared that his changes to the church didn't improve the morality of man. Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531), a Swiss priest, also attempted to reform the Roman Catholic Church but feared the same result as Luther, that man wouldn't grow more moral. Luther and Zwingli considered restricting the church to devout Christians to keep it pure but decided not to because they feared low membership. So, their churches included masses of nominal Christians alongside the devout.

In contrast, Anabaptists believed that only devout Christians should form the church. Anabaptists did not care about number of members. Anabaptist beliefs differed from Catholic beliefs in that Anabaptists believed that to be a true Christian, one should not have to perform the ritual and sacraments of the Catholic church. Anabaptists differed from Reformation thinkers like Luther in that they did not believe faith in Christ and grace were all that was needed to be saved. Instead, Anabaptists believed Christians must become disciples and transform their entire lives and behave as moral Christians toward all others. To Anabaptists, the church was their community of believers. A commitment to this life was publicly demonstrated through adult baptism. At this time, Catholics and Lutherans performed infant baptism. A second baptism was seen as deeply sacrilegious.[11] The mainstream Christian groups at the time acknowledged that Anabaptists were more pious, humble, moral, and plain living than themselves (Bender, 1944).

Anabaptists focused on Christ's life as described in the Bible more than other Biblical texts and modeled themselves after H/him. Anabaptists lived in sharing, supportive communities that were committed to conforming to G/god's world. They did not conform to surrounding society, which they viewed as non-Christian and worldly. Anabaptists were deeply committed to non-violence and nonresistance and strove to act sacrificially as Christ did on the cross. Many Anabaptists were willing to die for their beliefs. Anabaptists did so in the thousands. Martyrdom was and is a central pillar of Anabaptist religions (Bender, 1944).

Mennonites

Mennonites take their name from Menno Simmons (1496-1561). Simmons, a priest, converted to Anabaptist Christianity in the mid-1500s and brought it to his native Holland where it became a

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[11] Anabaptist means to baptize again and was originally a pejorative name for these Christians.

main sect. In the 1600s, the Amish split from Mennonites because they favored a more conservative church and more separation from society than the Mennonites.

In the 1700s and 1800s, Swiss German Mennonites migrated to escape continuing persecution in Europe. Some moved to Russia. More moved to Pennsylvania. From Pennsylvania they spread to Midwestern states and throughout the continent. In the late 1800s, Mennonites from Russia and Ukraine also moved to the Midwest. In the 1900s, tension arose between conservative Mennonites and liberal Mennonites. The conservatives wanted to preserve a more conservative lifestyle and adhere to the original church teachings. The more liberal Mennonites wanted to adapt their lifestyles and church teachings to changing times. Today's liberal Mennonites include the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, which merged to form Mennonite Church USA, and the Russian-Mennonite U.S. Mennonite Brethren. Conservative Mennonites intermingled with and have much in common with more liberal Amish communities, the Amish Mennonites (USMB, 2017; Mennonite Church USA, 2020). Today's conservative Mennonites include Conservative Mennonites, Old Order Mennonites, and Amish Mennonites.

Church of the Brethren

The Church of the Brethren was founded by Alexander Mack (1679-1735) in Schwarzenau, Germany. Mack shared beliefs with both Anabaptists and Pietists (Church of the Brethren, 2021). Pietism was an influential Christian tradition. Theories about its origins differ (Strom, 2002), but all histories of Pietism acknowledge the importance of Lutheran pastor Philipp Spener (1635-1705). In the mid-1600s Spener believed orthodox Lutheranism did not focus enough on individual faith and devotion. Spencer and his followers stressed the importance of the emotional experiences of conversion and Christianity, the priesthood of the laity, and a practical and enacted Christianity. They encouraged questioning the status quo (Prout, 1947). Like Anabaptists, Pietists believed Christians should be transformed spiritually and live devout, pious lives, and practice evangelism. They also taught Christian pacifism and nonresistance to violence. Today's Pietist churches include the Moravian Church and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America. Pietists heavily influenced American Methodists (Zuck, 2002).

Mack and his followers baptized each other as adults in 1708. They taught peace, plain living, and community. Like the Pietists, they were devoted to evangelism. The Brethren fled persecution in Europe and moved the U.S. in the 1700s. They first established a community in Pennsylvania and later spread east to New Jersey and south to Maryland and Virginia. They continued to expand westward in the later 1700s (Church of the Brethren, 2021).

The Church of the Brethren believes in obedience to Christian teaching. The church emphasizes the primacy of the New Testament over the Hebrew Bible and models the lives of members after Jesus. Brethren encourage in peace and reconciliation, speaking the truth, living simply, family values, and service to near and far neighbors. Brethren used to live separate, plain lives and not take part in civil society. However, today's Brethren are encouraged to spend wisely and to affirm, not swear, oaths (Church of the Brethren, 2021). Today's Church of the Brethren is decentralized. Different Churches of the Brethren have different cultures and stress different Christians teachings.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

Quakers, also called Friends, the Religious Society of Friends, Society of Friends, or Friends Church, are members of a Christian denomination founded by George Fox (1624-1691) during and after the English Civil War. Fox was dissatisfied with the Church of England and instead taught that individuals could connect with Christ without the help of the clergy (Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2021). Early Quakers stressed the importance of the Holy Ghost, or Inner Light, and thought that through the Inner Light they could directly experience G/god. They believed in community and leading through consensus but not in priesthood, sacraments, or holidays. Like Anabaptists, early Quakers believed religion should be lived and not ritualized. They practiced plain living, pacifism, and priesthood of the laity (Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2021). To this day, Quakers and Amish are often confused. As part of their separation from established churches, Quakers held Meeting, not church, and held it on "First Day," not Sunday.

The Quaker religion grew in England and Wales and peaked at 1.15% of the population - about 60,000 followers (Wrigley & Schofield, 1989). Quakers were considered heretics by English Protestants and faced persecution (Levy B. , 1992). Many Quakers moved to North America in the 1600s but were persecuted there too. Beginning in 1656 Quakers began moving to more accepting states, like the areas Quaker William Penn (1644-1718) established in West Jersey in 1676 and Pennsylvania in 1682. Virginian Quakers suffered persecution from the Anglican Church, so they moved to North Carolina and Maryland (Rollings, 1989). Quaker numbers grew, and like members of other Pennsylvania-area peace churches, they began to spread through the Midwest. In the 1800s, some Quakers adopted the Enlightenment ideals of liberalism and renewal. In the Great Schism of 1827, the more conservative Orthodox Quakers focused on the Bible and salvation. The more liberal group, the Hicksites, focused on the Inner Light and individual religion. The Orthodox Quakers further split into evangelical and conservative groups. The Hicksite Quakers form the more liberal branches of Quakerism (Quaker Information Center, 2011).

Today's Quaker groups include the Friends United Meeting of more conservative orthodox Quakers, the Evangelical Friends Church of evangelical Quakers, and the Friends General Conference of liberal Hicksite Quakers. Orthodox and evangelical Quakers have pastor-led, programmed worship. Liberal Quakers have unprogrammed worship where they worship together but in silence, unless someone feels moved by the Inner Light to speak. Liberal Quakers are not necessarily Christian. Instead, they stress four main doctrines: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity Equality, and Sustainability, and continue to run Meetings through consensus.

Commonalities and Differences

Table 4 lists some commonalities and differences among the three historic peace churches. Mennonites and Brethren have comparatively larger membership. Of the three, Quakers are the staunchest pacifists, followed by conservative Mennonites, liberal Mennonites, and Brethren. Only the liberal Quakers practice silent worship, no longer rely on the Bible as their sole scripture, and are led by laity.

Table 4.
Comparison of Views of Historic Peace Churches

Views	Mennonites (Conservative & Liberal)	Church of the Brethren	Liberal Quakers
Role of Bible	Central	Central	Peripheral
Focal Scripture	Life of Jesus	New Testament	Life of Jesus
Other Central Texts	No	No	Yes
Views on Violence	Pacifist / Pacifist ideal	Pacifist ideal	Pacifist
Worship	Programmed	Programmed	Unprogrammed
Leadership	Pastoral	Pastoral	Lay
Membership (ARDA, 2010)	227,407	207,980	62,744

Summary

Mennonites, Brethren, and Quakers all view the Bible through the New Testament, particularly the life and teachings of Jesus. All have roots in the early Reformation, Mennonites in the 1500s and Brethren and Quakers in the 1600s. Traditionally, Mennonites and Brethren separated themselves from the secular world and Quakers entered it to enact the Kingdom of God. For this research, I interacted with two Quaker groups, two Churches of the Brethren, and two Mennonite groups, one conservative and one liberal.

The next chapter describes the history of the three defense churches I included in this research: Restorationists, Southern Baptists, and Wesleyan churches.

Chapter 6: Defenses Churches

I defined “defense churches” as those that I knew, either through direct experience or research, had armed defense teams or general defense plans. Defense churches include most evangelical Christian groups.

The three groups described below agreed to participate in my research. They are a convenience (not representative) sample of defense churches. That said, they cover three main branches of evangelical Christianity. Restorationist churches formed an early branch of U.S. Christianity and are native to southern Appalachia. Southern Baptists are the largest Protestant denomination today. Wesleyan churches include the large United Methodist Church and many denominations of Pentecostal-Holiness churches. The Pentecostal-Holiness tradition is the fastest growing branch of Christianity. Some Pentecostal Churches of God have local roots in southern Appalachia and the Midwest (Church of God, 2022).

Restorationist Churches

The Restoration Movement in the early 1800s began as two movements. One was led by Barton Stone (1772-1844), the other by father Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) and son Alexander Campbell (1788-1866). All began their careers as Presbyterian ministers. Alexander Campbell led churches in Baptist associations in Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania[12] but caused strife because his views differed from other ministers. Both of Campbell’s associations ended up dissolving, but many former members continued to follow Campbell’s leadership. Campbell’s followers rejected any denomination or creed and refer to themselves as simply as Christians. Thomas Campbell engaged in interdenominational activities and condemned the fact that different denominations had different doctrines. He wanted Christian unity and a church based on the Bible alone. Stone’s work preceded that of the Campbells. He was active in Kentucky and influenced by camp meetings (made most popular by Methodists) (Albanese, 2007). He believed strict Calvinism discouraged conversion and instead adopted an Arminian approach (Finke & Stark, 2014). Arminianism is the belief that people have free will to choose to accept the grace of G/god, as opposed to Calvinism, the belief that only the elect are predestined to go to heaven. Stone and his followers declared themselves members of the Body of Christ and of no other denomination. They called themselves “Disciples.” Campbell and Stone met in Kentucky in 1824. In 1832 they united their groups. Restorationists spread West from the Ohio Valley (Pedlar, n.d.; Albanese, 2007).

Restorationists differ from other branches of Protestantism in that many early Protestant churches relied on liturgical texts. Early Restorationists looked to the Bible only for how to perform religious services. Restorationists follow the commands of the New Testament. Where no Biblical command exists, they remain silent. They believe all Christians should be unified under a Bible-only church. Singing is the only form of worship in the New Testament, so early Restorationists rejected instrumental music. Another major difference between Restorationists and other Protestant churches is that Restorations teach that full-immersion baptism of adult believers is required for salvation. Most other Protestant churches consider baptism is an outward

[12] Eastern Ohio and Western Pennsylvania are part of Ohio River watershed, which also includes West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia’s New River Valley.

sign of the conversion experience and not required for salvation. Restorationists also perform weekly communion, unlike Baptists who typically perform communion once a month (Albanese, 2007; Kimborough, 2002; Kimborough, 2003).

In the 1900s the Restoration Movement split into the three main groups existing today: The more conservative acapella Churches of Christ, the Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, and the more liberal Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). All are pastor-led, stress the sacraments of baptism and communion, and reject denominational labels.

Southern Baptists

The Baptist tradition arose in England in the 1500 and 1600s. Baptist Puritans opposed any influence of the Roman Catholic Church on worship, particularly the Catholic church's ritual sacraments. Regarding the sacrament of baptism, Catholics and Anglicans baptized children. Baptists believed baptism should be a choice made by devoted adults. In the 1700s in the U.S., early Baptists rejected how the established churches influenced colonial culture and government. Baptists believed such inculturation led to a culture of religion, not true devotion. Baptists argued that religious freedom was required for adults to choose to be saved and that individual churches should be independent and self-governing. Early Baptists were predominantly Calvinist and believed only the elect, a subset of churchgoers, were predestined to be saved. Now Baptists have both Calvinist and Arminian beliefs. Arminianism is the view that people have free will and choose whether to be saved (Albanese, 2007; American Baptist Churches USA, n.d.).

Prior to the Civil War Baptists split along northern and southern lines. Northern Baptists believed in more missions, social engagement, and slaveholding as a sin. They were involved in the Social Gospel movement, equality, and diversity. In 1950, they renamed themselves the American Baptist Association and are now the most diverse Protestant group in the U.S. Northern Baptists have about one tenth the members as the Southern Baptist Association (American Baptist Churches USA, n.d.). Southern Baptists were originally slaveholders and did not denounce slavery until the 1900s. In 1995, the Southern Baptist Convention formally apologized to African Americans and in 2017 condemned white supremacy. In 2018, Southern Baptists fully documented their role as the church of slaveholders and later as propagating a racist agenda (Gjelten, 2018).

Today's Southern Baptist Convention is an association of independent churches that believe in the Baptist Faith & Message. Southern Baptist churches do not recite or promote a specific creed. Their religious doctrine stresses the total depravity of man, that man was born into and cannot escape sin without the grace of G/god. Southern Baptists consider baptism an outward sign of conversion and required for church membership but not for salvation. Southern Baptists believe Christians should try to end war by sharing the Gospel but do not explicitly endorse nonresistance to violence. Southern Baptists reject racism and all sexual sin (sex acts outside of man-woman marriage), and they teach that men should lead families (Southern Baptist Convention, 2000). Southern Baptists form the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. but are experiencing declining membership, albeit at a slower rate than evangelical Protestants in general. Southern Baptists are whiter and more conservative than the greater population of evangelical Protestants (Fahmy, 2019).

Wesleyan Churches

Methodism, the main branch of Wesleyan Churches, began with Charles (1707-1788) and John Wesley (1703-1781), sons of an Anglican minister who both went on to study at Oxford University. While at Oxford in the 1720s, the brothers began leading a group of fellow students in Christian practice. The group performed communion weekly out of devotion (not as a ritual sacrament). Most surrounding groups practiced it monthly. Wesleyan group members prayed, fasted, studied the Bible, and acted charitably in an effort to live their Christianity, not just practice it. Most of the Oxford group went on to be ministers and missionaries (United Methodist Church, 2016). The brothers themselves went on a mission to Georgia in the U.S. in the 1730s before returning dissatisfied to England. The brothers were then influenced by Moravian (Pietist) missionaries and began to include the Pietist ideas of individual sanctification and religious rebirth in their preaching. Their movement became regularized with rules, regional groups, and a travelling network of lay preachers (United Methodist Church, 2016).

Methodist lay preachers from England arrived in the U.S. in the 1760s. The Wesleys supported England in the Revolutionary War because they led an offshoot of the Church of England. Therefore, American Methodists formed their own church in 1784. Between then and 1850, the Christian group expanded to become the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. (United Methodist Church, 2016). The Methodist church also grew because it was adapted to the areas in which it operated, the less-populated West, by using circuit and lay preachers who commanded low or no salaries (Albanese, 2007; Finke & Stark, 2014). Methodism was attractive because it didn't require worship be performed according to specific guidelines. Instead, the Wesleys taught that groups and individuals should worship according to the practices of the early church. During the Second Great Awakening, worship was free and sometimes raucous. Methodists were different from other contemporary Christian groups because of their vibrant worship and because they believed in the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification is the belief that the Holy Ghost purifies Christians, some of whom may exhibit special gifts like speaking in tongues. Early American Methodists would be overcome by the Holy Ghost at camp meetings and shake, collapse, and speak in tongues (Finke & Stark, 2014).

After 1850, the Methodist Church became more regularized and monetized like the established churches of the East and Northeast: the Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. Experiencing the gifts of the Holy Spirit became taboo. Lay preachers were traded for the seminary-educated and well-paid. Methodist churches experienced a sharp decline in membership. Instead of being a vibrant, controversial sect, the Methodist church became an established church from which other sects sprang (Finke & Stark, 2014).

From the Methodist Church and the Wesleyan tradition came the fastest growing Christian tradition in the 20th century, the Pentecostal-Holiness movement. The movement follows the original teachings of the Wesley brothers regarding sanctification and not succumbing to secularization. The Pentecostal-Holiness movement is sectarian and therefore highly fractured. Pentecostal-Holiness churches resemble early Methodist churches. Many practice baptism in the Holy Ghost and speaking in tongues. Some still invite lay and traveling preachers. Pentecostal-Holiness churches include multiple Churches of God (Finke & Stark, 2014) and dozens of other denominations.

Commonalities and Differences

See Table 5 for a comparison of some beliefs and practices among Restorationist, Southern Baptist, United Methodist, and Pentecostal-Holiness churches. Most groups have seminary-trained preachers. All tolerate defensive violence. According to my readings and experience, some promote violence to actively defend their faith from evil. For example, many defense church groups support military action in Muslim countries.

Table 5.
Comparison of defense church beliefs and practices.

Aspect	Restorationist Churches	Southern Baptist Convention	United Methodist Church	Pentecostal-Holiness Movement
Differentiating belief	Restore the church of the Book of Acts & focus on sacraments	Total depravity of man & salvation through grace alone	Free will & enacting the Holy Ghost through love of neighbor	Baptism in the Holy Ghost & speaking in tongues
Worship Music	Acapella or instrumental	Varies	Typically instrumental	Typically instrumental
Pastoral Leadership	Seminary-trained	Seminary-trained	Seminary-trained	Varies, includes traveling preachers
Views on Violence (all hold pacifism as ideal)	Defensive violence tolerated	Defensive violence tolerated or encouraged	Defensive violence tolerated	Defensive violence tolerated or encouraged
How to Promote Peace	Varies	Evangelism	Living loving Christian lives	Varies
Membership in 2020*	3,823,098	17,649,040	9,860,653	~8,202,257**

* (ARDA, 2020; Vijgen & van der Haak, 2021)
** Rough estimate based on data from the World Christian Database stating that 12.63% of U.S. Christians were in the Pentecostal tradition (Vijgen & van der Haak, 2021) and ARDA's (2020) reported population of Christians.

Summary

Baptists split from Puritans in the 1600s, with Southern Baptists emerging in the U.S. prior to the Civil War in the 1800s. Restorations emerged in the 1700s, as did Wesleyan groups. Pentecostal-Holiness groups emerged in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Generally speaking, defense churches are newer denominations than peace churches. Defense churches think the Kingdom of God is not realized and that violence is permitted in defense in today's imperfect world.

For this research, I interacted with two Baptist groups, one Southern Baptist, the other nondenominational but Southern Baptist in orientation; three Restorationist groups; one Methodist; and two Pentecostal-Holiness groups.

Peace and defense churches are only part of this research. The two other groups are academics and emergency-preparedness professionals, particularly law enforcement. I did not observe academics and law enforcement, so my baseline for understanding them comes from the review of literature in the subsequent chapters. First, though, is a summary of Christian views on academe and law enforcement, also stemming from a review of the literature.

Chapter 7: Christian Views on Academe, Law Enforcement, and Violence

Prior chapters discussed the history and theology of peace and defense churches in the U.S. but did not address Christian views on academe, law enforcement, and violence. In general, Christians approve of and promote higher education but are wary of trends in teaching liberal and Marxist-based critical theory. Evangelical Christians tend to support the police, but Mennonites and Quakers do not (AFSC, 2020; Alexis-Baker, 2007; Compelling Truth, 2023; Mennonite Church USA, 2021). As described in Chapter 4: Theological Perspectives on Violence, in general, Christians who believe the Kingdom of God has been realized either separate themselves from the ungodly and violent secular or work to further enact the Kingdom of God on earth. Christians who believe the Kingdom of God will be realized in the Second Coming think violence is acceptable in self-defense in today's dangerous world.

Christian Views on Academe

As discussed in Chapter 2: A Broad History of American Protestantism, the mainstream Protestant denominations in the Northeast decried the lack of education among the newer Baptist and Methodist religions. The East Coast churches viewed the newer religions as simplistic, disparaged their preachers' lack of education, and thought their followers were susceptible to the lowest-common denominator religion. Churches in the interior were more emotive and lay-led. Many members mistrusted established seminaries (human institutions) to do God's work and preferred uneducated peers for preachers (Finke & Stark, 2014).

Today, Christian thinkers and teachers argue that higher education is important for personal Christian development (Ooms, 2020; Rutland, 2016; Bowers, 2017). I couldn't find published statements from Christians that criticized higher education in general. However, some Christian groups criticize a major trend in secular education, the widespread promotion of Marxist-based critical theory. Accreditors of U.S. universities require undergraduates of all majors to take courses in the humanities, social sciences, and critical analyses, areas that typically touch on critical theory (Southern Association of Collages and Schools, 2017; New England Commission of Higher Education, 2021). Virginia Tech requires students to take three credits on a critical analysis of identity and equity in the U.S., six credits in reasoning in the social sciences, and six credits in critical thinking in the humanities (Pathways General Education, 2023). Both the Conservative Baptist Network and the Center for Renewing America denounce critical race theory as anti-Biblical (Jones & Davie, 2021).

Christian Views on Law Enforcement

Christian views on law enforcement depend on denomination and peace or defense orientation. The Mennonites, a peace church, wrote that Anabaptists should not join law enforcement because the job is violent in nature (Alexis-Baker, 2007). The Mennonite Church USA developed and disseminated a nine-week curriculum on defunding the police (Mennonite Church USA, 2021). The Quaker political organization, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) also called for the police to be defunded to counter systematic racism (AFSC, 2020). In contrast, evangelical Christian encourage their members to join the police. Evangelical

Christians bolster that position with Hebrew Bible references to pursue justice,[13] mentions of watchmen, guards, and judges,[14] and New Testament book Romans 13, which orders Christians to obey civil authorities (Compelling Truth, 2023). Another reason evangelical Christians give for joining the police is to enact change in policing from within (Holmes, 2016). Multiple Christian law-enforcement organizations exist in the U.S., including the Fellowship of Christian Police Officers – USA, Brotherhood of Christian Law Enforcement Officers, and the Christian Law Enforcement Fellowship.[15]

Christian Views on Violence

Christians vary in why they think G/god permits violence in the world. For example, Baptists think humans are inherently corrupt. That corruption causes us to act badly (Southern Baptist Convention, 2000). Anabaptists think that Christians should act morally to ensure salvation. Anabaptists also think that non-Christians and hypocritical Christians do more wrong compared to themselves (Bender, 1944). Anabaptists also differ in how they respond to violence. Historic peace churches reject violence even in self-defense because they are acting out the Kingdom of God (Gwyn, Hunsinger, & Roop, 1991). Defense churches do not believe the Kingdom of God has been realized or fully realized, and they condone violence for self-defense (Cahill, 1994).

Christian groups respond to the threat of violence in different ways. A 2020 survey found that 80% of surveyed Protestant pastors replied that they have a security plan in place, and about half replied that they have armed security. By denomination, 71% of Pentecostal pastors said they have armed security, followed by Baptist pastors and 65% Restorationist pastors at 53%. Evangelical pastors are more likely to have armed security than mainstream pastors. Pastors that have a no-firearms policy account for 27% of respondents (Earls, 2020a).

Summary

Both mainstream and evangelical Christians approve of higher education, but some evangelical Christians are wary of a liberal, critical-theory curriculum. Peace churches and defense churches are sharply divided in their approval of law enforcement. The Quakers and Mennonites want to defund the police, and evangelical Christians support the police. When it comes to Christian views on violence in general, they are again divided along denominational lines. Historic peace churches reject violence in self-defense. Defense churches support violence to protect oneself and others. Pentecostals, Baptists, and Restorationists are the most likely to have armed church security.

The next chapter cover academic views of Christians, law-enforcement personnel, and violence in general.

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[13] Deut. 32:4, Deut 16.20, Ps. 82:3-4

[14] Ezek. 33:6, Neh. 4:13, Ezek. 44:24

[15] Fellowship of Christian Police Officers: https://www.fcpo.org/ | Brotherhood of Christian Law Enforcement Officers: https://bcleo.us/ | Christian Law Enforcement Fellowship: www.sdclef.org |

Chapter 8: Academic Views of Christians, Law Enforcement, and Violence

Because I did not observe academics nor interview them about their views on Christians, law enforcement, or violence in general, I reviewed academic literature about religion, law enforcement, and violence. Academics have mixed feelings about religion in general; some academics believe religion is a social evil; others are ambivalent. Academics often fail to understand law enforcement's fast-paced, results-driven culture. Or they treat their police collaborators as objects of research, not people (Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Last, academic views on violence can be based on psychology, sociology, critical theory, and more. Some academics believe Academic theories of violence encompass psychological, social, historical, and institutional causes. Some academics believe religion is the root of violence (Juergensmeyer, Kitts, & Jerryson, 2013). This chapter will cover some of the nuances of academic viewpoints, particularly their views on religion and Christianity.

Academic Views on Religion in General

The definitive Christian belief is that that the one and only G/god gave the world his S/son Jesus, who died on the cross so humanity could be saved from the consequences of sin, death. Almost all groups calling themselves Christian agree Jesus died for their sins so that their members can have eternal life. Most Christians believe that they should share this news with others to save them from hell and that Christians should act with compassion to make the world a better place (Armstrong, 2000). Christians' beliefs are *supernatural.*[16] Many *feel* G/god's presence in their lives. To devout Christians, religion is not a fictional narrative nor a way to understand a confusing world. To them, religion *is* the foundation of our lived experiences, what gives life meaning, and what makes the afterlife possible (Stark R. , 2017).

In contrast to Christian's near unity on salvation through Jesus, scholars and historians cannot even agree on the definition of religion. Prothero reduces religion to culture. He argues that religion forms a collective history and "chain of memory" for a culture and that when religious literacy is lost, it breaks the connection between a culture and its history (2007, pp. 8-9). Armstrong (2000) believes fundamentalist religion is destructive coping mechanism. She believes that humans create religion to cope with their changing world and that fundamentalism is a "tradition of…militant piety" (p. xi). Similarly, Froese and Bader (2010) write that "humans try to make sense of the competing, often contradictory, aspects of the world by embracing or creating a 'narrative' to explain them" (p. 7). Stark (2017) argues that religion follows general economic rules. He says religion is a personal choice influenced by cost-benefit pressures. Albanese (2007) refuses to define religion and instead describes it as "a system of symbols (creed, code, cults) by means of which people (a community) locate themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values" (p. 9). Her description is reminiscent of Prothero's "chain of memory" definition and reminds me of the definition of culture. These scholars are unified only in that they do not believe religion is *supernatural*. Only Stark (2017) acknowledges the potential that the supernatural exists and doesn't reduce religion to culture. He writes, "It is at least plausible that many religions are based

[16] "Supernatural" here means anything metaphysical, that cannot be defined by science. It could be the G/od of monotheistic religions, the belief in spirits, superstition surrounding good luck and bad luck, karma, etc.

on authentic revelations as God has communicated within the limits of human comprehension" (p. 16).

The gap in worldview between devout Christians and academics creates great tension. The definitive Christian belief is belief in G/god and salvation through Jesus (Dockery, 2023). In comparison, only about 35% of professors in the U.S. are certain G/god exists (Gross & Simmons, The Religiosity of American College and University Professors, 2009). Finding commonalities and mutual respect between these groups is a challenging human-centered design problem.

Academic Views on Christianity in the U.S.

Scholars are divided in their interpretation of the history of American Christianity and polarization between evangelical and mainstream Protestants. On one side, Stephen Prothero, a Harvard and Yale[17] alumnus and professor of religion at Boston University, praises the mainstream, elitist religions of New England (Prothero, 2007). He wrote that the Calvinist required schooling in New England and that Calvinist readers spread south and west to promote Calvinist, Protestant culture, which had a positive effect on U.S. culture. He also praises New England universities for their classical and Bible-based deist educations. Prothero laments Biblical illiteracy among Baptists and Methodists and praises the Bible tract societies that attempted to educate the upstart sects in the South and West. He (2007) doesn't even acknowledge the upstart sects s as denominations; instead, he writes "by the early nineteenth century the acids of nondenominationalism were starting to erode religious content" and called the new religions "nonsectarian Protestantism" (p. 107). Prothero equates the Second Great Awakening, a Christian movement from the late 1700s to 1830, with vulgar sexual sin: "The genteel revival style of colonial New Englanders (heartfelt but orderly) capitulated in theses revivals to orgies of sobbing, shrieking, shouting, and other spiritual ecstasies" (p. 112). Some other scholars agree with Prothero. Albanese, of the University of Chicago, and Armstrong, of St. Anne's College in Oxford, also write that religion is a cultural phenomenon, not necessary a good one.

In contrast to the above scholars, from northern U.S. cities and the U.K., two different scholars have written extensively about an economic model of religion. They do not make value judgements about its effect on U.S. culture. Rodney Stark spent most of his career at the University of Washington and spent his last years at Baylor University, a Baptist university in Texas (Stark R. , 2012). His frequent collaborator, Roger Finke, earned his Ph.D. from Washington University and co-directs the Association of Religious Data Archives at Penn State (Finke R. , 2023).

Finke and Stark wrote (2014) deism, overly technical and scripture-based sermons, a corrupt clergy, and lack of fervent worship caused declining membership in New England Congregational churches, not just the existence of less-literate, more vibrant offshoots. Stark acknowledges that Baptists and Methodists were less educated but does not make the value judgements Prothero does. Stark describes the Bible tract societies that attempted to educate the

[17] Harvard University was founded to counter the threat of a less orthodox, more vibrant offshoot of Puritanism (Chlorazzi, 2016). Yale was founded by conservative Congregationalists (Schultz, 2019).

upstart sects in the South and West, the societies Prothero praised, as a last-ditch effort by the East Coast mainstream churches to stem their membership decline. Stark validates the religions Prothero (2007) called “nonsectarian Protestantism” (p. 107) by naming them: Baptists and Methodists. Stark (2014) acknowledges that the Great Awakenings were raucous, but they were well-planned and organized evangelical events, not the spontaneous “orgies of sobbing” (p. 112) Prothero derided (2007).

Prothero (2007) acknowledges the complex history of U.S. religion but is biased toward the traditional religions of New England and the culture of literacy and temperament they promote. Growing up in Massachusetts I learned openly discussing religion is a regional taboo. I was shocked when undergraduates in Virginia mentioned G/god and Jesus. New England culture includes the notion that adherents to more emotive religions are less intellectual as demonstrated by New Englander Prothero’s writing (2007). Most academics agree Weber and Tschannen’s secularization theory, that developed society will become more rational and less religious, has been disproven (Swatos & Christiano, 1999). Still, many academics still follow radical, activist, and Marxist philosophies, particularly among the social sciences and humanities (Caplan, 2015). Marx wrote that religion is “the opiate of the masses,” which hinders people’s participation in activist causes (Blackwood, 2020). In the Marxist perspective, enlightened communists and socialists must be pragmatic, rational humanists, not believers in the spiritual. The notion that Christian groups are backwards and unenlightened and have a negative influence on the U.S. is condescending, dehumanizing, and obviously, polarizing. I believe that unless academics can openly acknowledge the possibility of the supernatural (because they can’t disprove it) and value the beliefs of American Christians, the academic-religious divide cannot be crossed.

Academics and elites hold positions of power in our society. If the academic-religious divide is going to be crossed, those in power should make the first move. I hoped that this research would portray members of peace and defense churches as individual humans behaving rationally and in the best interest of themselves and their communities. I hoped the results would find commonalities between Christian groups, academe, and/or emergency preparedness professionals. I hoped my readers would those common points and change their thinking about violence in churches.

Academic Perspectives on Law Enforcement

Academics come from a culture of inquiry. They’re trained to research problems, produce data, and hopefully have their work benefit broader society (Canter, 2004; Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Academics freely and publicly challenge each other’s ideas and focus on posterity and professionalism. Many academics focus on uncovering and remedying injustice (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Many academics reduce police to a monoculture (Goode & Lumsden, 2016) that inhibits collaboration and to whom they have to dumb it down (Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Some academics treat police as subjects, not people (Huey & Mitchell, 2018) or think that the burden is on the police to obtain higher education to be able to relate to them (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Academics fail to recognize the hierarchal, reactive, fast-paced, and results-driven nature of law enforcement (Goode & Lumsden, 2016; Flemming, 2010). Academics can feel threatened when questioned by police, harassed when repeatedly asked for updates, and disappointed when their research results are met with resistance because the results are not immediately applicable to police practice (Flemming, 2010;

Goode & Lumsden, 2016). Some academic researchers view themselves as objective observers, but no one is truly objective. Failure to acknowledge their own perspectives hinders academics' ability to truly collaborate with police (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Huey & Mitchell, 2018).

Academic Perspectives on Violence

Untold scholarly volumes have been written on the theoretical causes of violence and how to respond to it. Here I wish to contrast only a portion of academic perspectives with theological ones. Academic theories of violence encompass psychological, social, historical, and institutional causes. Different theories examine violence at the personal, regional, ethnic, and country levels and focus on the relative importance of personal verses social and historical factors. Some theories treat violence as a normal part of the human condition; others treat it as unconditionally evil (Barak, 2006). Academic theories often don't address the supernatural or divine. Many portray religion as a negative cultural phenomenon. For example, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence* (Juergensmeyer, Kitts, & Jerryson, 2013) begins with, "The dark attraction between religion and violence is endemic to religious traditions. It pervades their images and practices, from sacred swords to mythic conquests, from acts of sacrifice to holy wars" (p. 1). I wished to connect with the corner of academe that views religion as a cancer. I hoped to portray modern Christians as ordinary people trying to do good in a confusing world.

Summary

This chapter covered academic views on the other groups included in this research: Christians and emergency-preparedness professionals, and some academic viewpoints on violence. Academe in the U.S. began in elite, religious universities in New England. Academics have psychological and social theories for the existence of religion, but only one academic I reviewed acknowledged the possible existence of the supernatural. East Coast academics decry that emotive nature of newer Protestant denominations and continue to focus on orthodox education. Many academics have a Marxist, critical-theory perspective, believe religion is a negative social influence, and work to promote a rational society. This view is condescending and a hinderance to bridging the academic-religious divide. Some academics are similarly condescending towards law-enforcement personnel and treat them like objects of research, not worthy collaborators. Some researchers fail to understand that police work in a fast-paced, results-driven environment where data without immediate application is not valuable. Last, academics have an astronomical number of theories on why violence occurs and how to mitigate it. Most of those theories don't acknowledge the role of religion, and some of those that do write that religion is a cause of violence.

The next chapter will describe emergency-preparedness professionals' views on Christians, academics, and violence.

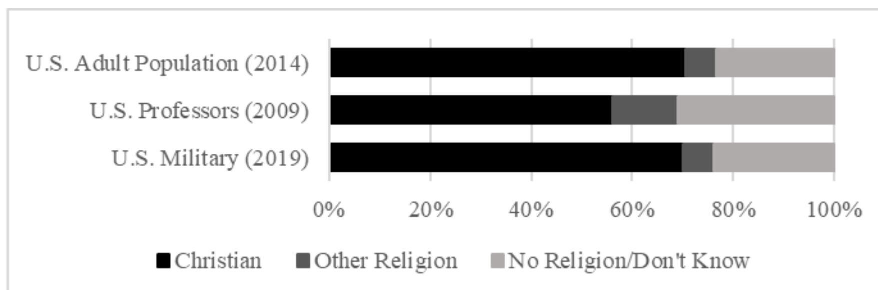
Chapter 9: Emergency Preparedness Views of Christians, Academics, and Violence

The emergency-preparedness professionals I focus on in this chapter are law enforcement. The police have the same percent of religious members as the population as a whole, a greater percent of religiosity than that in academe. Police focus on gathering specific evidence to solve specific crimes and dismiss research results that they can't readily apply. They are mistrustful of academics who have historically portrayed them badly. Law enforcement views on violence reflect their vigilance, and police officers have trouble connecting with the civilian mindsets (Canter, 2004; Goode & Lumsden, 2016). As of 2021, 665,380 police officers were employed in the U.S., compared to an adult population of 258 million (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Most adults in the U.S. are civilians, including most academics and Christians.

Police Perspectives on Christianity

I couldn't find literature that discussed police views of Christianity, so I resorted to demographics. Demographics for religion among law enforcement personnel weren't available, so I used statistics about military personnel as a proxy. About 70% of military personnel are religious compared to 100% among Christians. Military servicemembers share approximately the same distribution of Christian, Other Religion, and No Religion/Don't Know with the general population of U.S. adults (Gross & Simmons, 2009; Kamarck, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015). See Figure 6. Data were from different sources, so only the basic categories of Christian, Other Religion, and No Religion could be compared.

Figure 6.
Religion of U.S. Adults, Professors, and Military Personnel (Gross & Simmons, 2009; Kamarck, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015)



Police Perspectives on Academics

Police views on academics are characterized by a lack of understanding and trust. Law enforcement personnel live in a world of constant vigilance (Gilmartin, 1986). Police officers are trained to be vigilant because vigilance keeps them alive. Their workplace is hierarchical. They are results-driven, and any research they do is to find actionable evidence to respond to crimes (Canter, 2004). Police function in a workplace restricted by finances and influenced by politics (Canter, 2004; Goode & Lumsden, 2016). Police are reactive by nature, and to them academic solutions take too long. They want research results that are understandable and usable in their world (Goode & Lumsden, 2016). The police have been treated harshly be academics in the past and are afraid of being criticized and negatively portrayed (Huey & Mitchell, 2018; Engel &

Whalen, 2010). Academic jargon makes the police uncomfortable, but so does the perception that police are being talked down to (Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Demographically, law enforcement professionals have more in common with the general population than with U.S. professors. Professors are about 55% religious compared to 70% religiosity among the military and the population of the U.S. as a whole (see Figure 6). Of academic Christians, a larger percent is Mainline, not Evangelical (Gross & Simmons, 2009), That distribution is different from the U.S. population.

Police and Military Perspectives on Violence

Government and law enforcement perspectives on preparedness often fail to acknowledge civilian and religious viewpoints. For example, Virginia Commonwealth employees are required to complete online Active Shooter Training presented by the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, 2020). The nationally marketed training's messages were clear: (1) you are not safe and (2) if you fail, people will die. The training began with a worst-case scenario, a 911-recording of a teacher in the Columbine High School library. The teacher did not act appropriately, and children were murdered. The phone call was followed by a graphic of the U.S. with bubbles indicating mass shootings growing and overlapping to eventually obscure the nation. The training recasts civilians as "immediate responders" upon whom safety responders depend to save lives. The DCJS training reflects a law-enforcement mindset: hypervigilance. Law enforcement officers, "are trained and learn their very survival can depend on their interpreting most aspects of their environment as potentially lethal" (Gilmartin, 1986). This hypervigilant perspective contrasts with that of civilians who have not undergone police training and who are therefore less vigilant, creating a disconnect.

Another example is a church security review performed by a deputy in the New River Valley area for one of the churches I observed.[18] The document advised the church to purchase cameras and insurance, install tempered-glass windows, prevent malicious access to heat pumps, automatically lock doors, and formalize the key-issue policy. An example security plan included at the end of the report required the security team to submit proof of marksmanship twice a year. Nothing in the security review or example security plan was specific to religious institutions (Unidentified Deputy, 2020).

Even though 21% of Americans say they have had a personal experience with gun violence, the risk of being in a mass shooting is around 1 in 11,000 (Mosher & Gould, 2018; Williams & Price, 2022). We are, by and large, safe from the risk of dying in a mass shooting (Wallace, 2021), and few people are trained and prepared to make life-and-death decisions in the event of an active shooter. Yet the DCJS training assumed civilians, including Christians and academics, could step into law-enforcement shoes. The advised actions (avoid, deny, and defend) were out of touch with both civilian and religious perspectives, because "the average citizen travels the streets of his community daily oblivious psychologically and neurologically to the events unfolding before him" (Gilmartin, 1986). Few civilians know how to harden a target, take on a combat mindset, and prepare to be mortally wounded. Worshipers cannot be situationally aware while engaged in deep prayer or fervent worship. The training might be suited to a subset of

[18] Identifying information omitted

commonwealth employees, but it also makes stark the gulf between law enforcement and civilian and religious perspectives on defense preparedness. Similarly, the church security review advised the church to put bullet-resistant windows on the first floor and to train the security team to the level of a police officer, a level of vigilance not shared by the church staff. The church didn't take the deputy's advice because church leaders didn't share the same perspective.[19]

I hoped this research would inform emergency preparedness professionals about the reality of defending places of spiritual worship. I also hoped it would familiarize religious people with the vigilant worldview of most law-enforcement officers. Building on that common ground, I hoped my design solution could lead to collaboration and increased safety.

Summary

Demographically, law enforcement professionals have more in common with Christians than academics. The police have had a fraught history with academics. Academics don't understand police worldviews and are condescending. Police officers don't trust academics to fairly portray them or to provide research results they can use. The disconnect between law enforcement and civilians affects police views on Christians and academics. It is difficult for police to take on a civilian mindset and, for example, respect a Christian pacifist viewpoint. Similarly, many vigilant law-enforcement professionals cannot relate to the academic perspective that statistically, because violence is rare, we are safe.

The next chapter is an overview of basic demographics of peace and defense churches, academics, and law enforcement.

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[19] I learned this during IRB-approved interaction with the group.

Chapter 10: The Demographics of Polarization

I compared demographics between the groups of interest to highlight how differences in religion, and profession correlate with political ideology. Christian and non-Christian groups, police officers, and university professors have members with different average levels of education and different political ideologies. Professors are the most educated and liberal, and police officers the least educated. Evangelical Christians were less educated and the most conservative (Pew Research Center, 2021; Sokaru, 2023).

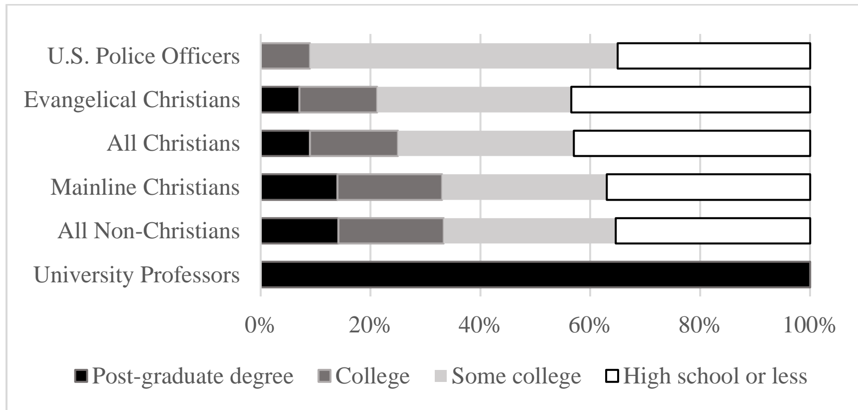
Education

The data below are from six different sources, were collected at different dates, and use different categorizations of religious groups. Therefore, they cannot be directly compared and are only for illustrating trends. In each case I describe the source, date, and categorization method. For more information on religious demographics, see Chapter 3: Religious Demographics, Religious Composition of U.S. Adults, and Religious Tradition by U.S. State.

Pew Research Center (2021; 2015) categorizes Christian groups as Mainline or Evangelical. Their Mainline Christian category includes churches I categorized as both peace and defense churches: The United Methodist Church (defense), Anabaptist (peace), and Quakers (peace). Pew's Evangelical Christian category includes only churches I categorized as defense: Restorationists, Churches of God, and Southern Baptists. Pew's categories place more of my peace churches in the Mainline category and more of my defense churches in the Evangelical category. Therefore, I use Pew's categories as a rough proxy for peace and defense churches when analyzing church membership rates, education, and political affiliation. In 2014, 25.4% of the adult population were Evangelical Christians, and 14.7% were Mainline Christians (Pew Research Center, 2015). Because the percentage of Evangelical Christians is higher, statistics for both categories combined are skewed toward the Evangelical category.

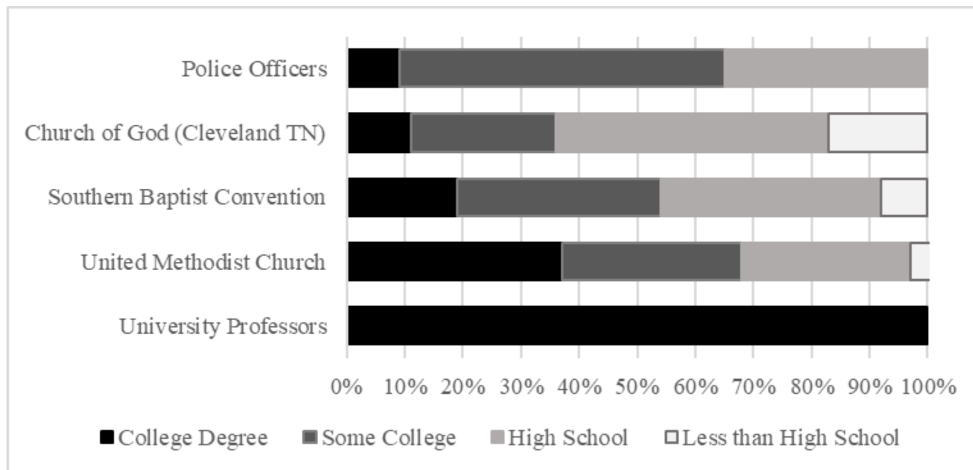
In general, Mainline Christians (proxy for peace churches) have more education than Evangelical Christians (proxy for defense churches). All groups are more likely to have a post-graduate degree than the average police officer, and academic professors are all expected to hold college degrees. See Figure 7.

Figure 7.
Education among Christians, Non-Christians, Police Officers, and Professors (Pew Research Center, 2021; Sokaru, 2023)



Where denominational data were available (see Figure 8), they indicated differences in education among defense churches. Data showed that 37% of Mainline Methodists had college degrees, compared to 11% of members of the Evangelical Church of God (Cleveland, TN) (Pew Research Center, 2018). Police officers were the least educated and university professors the most.

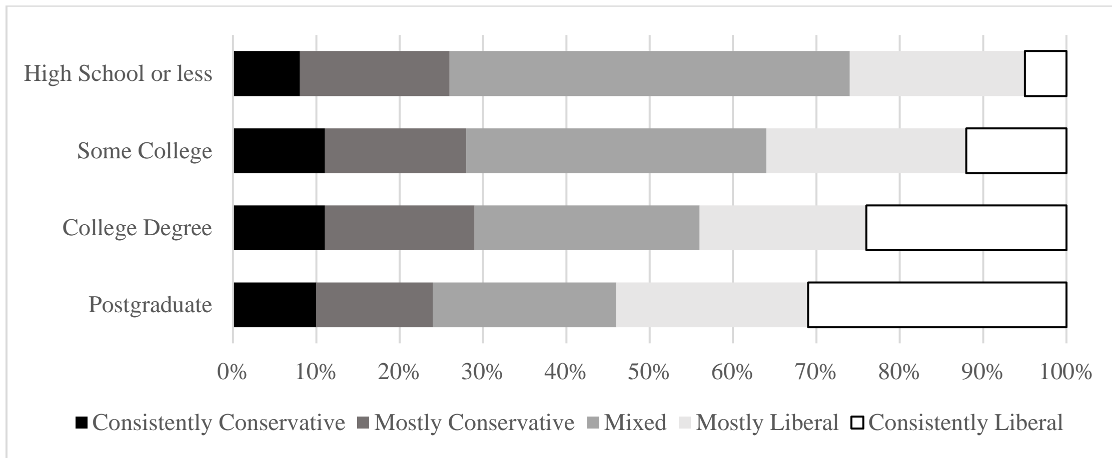
Figure 8.
Education of Select Christian Denominations, Police Officers, and Professors (Pew Research Center, 2018; Sokaru, 2023)



Political Ideology

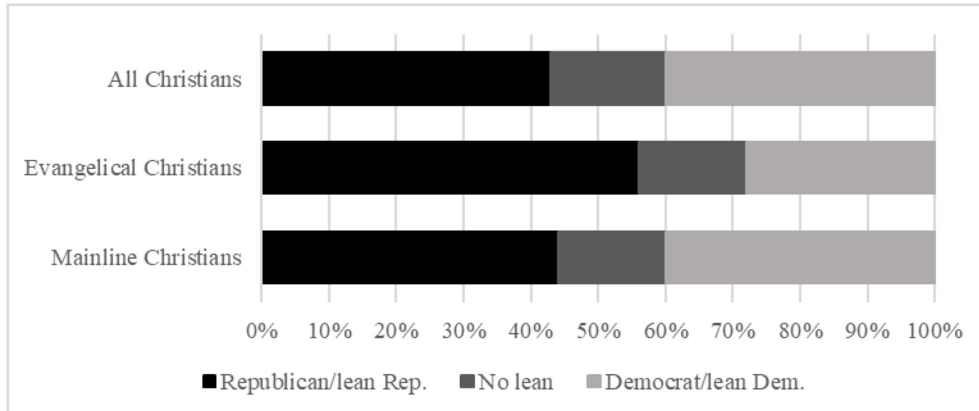
Level of education correlates with political ideology; the more highly educated a population is, the greater the percent of that population will be liberal. See Figure 9.

Figure 9.
Education vs. Politics (Pew Research Center, 2018; Sokaru, 2023)



Religion also correlates with political ideology. Mainline Christians are more likely to have liberal ideologies and vote Democrat than Evangelical Christians. For example, 37% of Mainline Christians identify as Conservative compared to 55% of Evangelical Christians. See Figure 10.

Figure 10.
Political Ideology and Party Affiliation among Christians and Mainline and Evangelical Christians (Pew Research Center, 2021)



Because of these trends, I expected the peace churches I study to be more liberal than the defense churches. Like theology and culture, political ideology affects approaches to the threat of violence and was considered during data analysis.

Summary

The most educated group are by nature academics, and the least educated are the police. Mainstream Christians, which includes the peace churches, are more educated and have higher incomes than evangelical Christians. Education correlates with political ideology. The more educated tend to be more liberal, and the less educated tend to be more conservative, so I expected academics to be more liberal and police more conservative.

In the prior chapters I covered the history of Christianity in the U.S., the theology of violence, peace and defense church history, the viewpoints of Christians, Academics, and Law Enforcement on each other, and the basic demographics of religion, education, and political ideology. My research hopes to build connections between my groups of interest. So, the next chapter will describe the efforts of those who came before me to do the same or similar work.

Chapter 11: Prior Attempts to Bridge Divides

Prior research has been conducted on how to battle polarization and how to find common ground between religious groups and between academics and law enforcement. Prior research has determined it is impossible to create a unified version of Christianity (Finke & Stark, 2014). Christians do have the common believe that G/god is loving, though, which could be used to build bridges. Christians and law-enforcement professionals often lack mutual understanding, but that problem can be bridged by focusing on shared values (Rockenbach, et al., 2020; LaHurd, 2018).

Ecumenical Initiatives

Ecumenicism is the principle of Christian unity, which has been attempted by many and achieved by none, because ecumenicism counters the natural development of religion as described by the church-sect theory (Stark R. , 2017). According to the church-sect theory, religions grow, evolve, remain, or die because of a tendency for radical religious groups to break away from the mainstream, gain converts and grow, only to become less and less radical and fizzle out. Mainstream churches have a moral culture similar to the surrounding civil culture, what Stark (2017) calls low social distance. Sects, with greater social distance, arise and are usually smaller than the established churches. Sects have stricter social norms and higher expectations than mainstream culture and attract the disenfranchised. When sects grow larger and more diverse, they accommodate their new members by slowly shifting their norms closer to those of the surrounding culture and become churches. The movement from a church splitting off sects, those sects growing and becoming more mainstream, and eventually becoming churches is cyclical. It happened when radical Puritans became elitist Congregationalists and Baptists split off and when Methodists traded in their traveling lay-preachers for the seminary-trained and Pentecostals split off. Sects will continue to develop when people feel their churches don't meet their moral expectations or speak to their dissatisfaction with modern culture (Stark R. , 2017).[20] Some, like the Pentecostal movement, continue to grow and may soon be the majority, particularly in the global South (Vijgen & van der Haak, 2021). Most, like the Westboro Baptist Church, which protested homosexuality at military funerals, gradually soften their message and stagnate or fade (Gray, 2018; Stark R. , 2017). Because of the cyclical nature of religion in the U.S., efforts to form a unified Christianity will fail.

History has also taught us that Christian unification fails. The Bible Tract societies and attempts to missionize the Methodist and Baptist West failed because rural lay preachers rejected East-Coast elitism. Urban, liberal elites wanted to unify churches and argued that doctrinal differences could be ignored. This approach worked only in churches with declining membership and weak doctrine (Stark R. , 2017), like the Quakers and Unitarians.

This research did not try to find ways to unify Christian groups. Instead, I tried to find enough common ground between them for respectful dialog about how to prepare for the threat of violence.

[20] A minority, like the Amish, isolate themselves and remain a sect.

Interfaith Initiatives

Some work has been done on how to successfully bridge religious divides. Froese and Bader (2010) describe polarization based not on religious group but on an individual's conception of G/god. According to them, evangelical Christians are more likely to believe in an authoritative G/god who is judgmental of humans and deeply and personally engaged in our lives. Mainstream Christians are more likely to believe in a distant G/god who is neither judgmental nor greatly involved in the world. But both groups strongly believe that G/god is loving. Sharing a loving G/god could be a bridge between Christian groups. It could be a bridge to secular humanists, whose love of mankind drives their work. Love could be a bridge to emergency preparedness professionals, whose duty to protect life likely stems from love, no matter the religious or secular foundation.

Appealing to shared values is a well-known strategy for building bridges. Lutheran professor and author Carol LaHurd and interfaith researchers at the Interfaith Youth Core agree that focusing on shared values, increased exposure to diverse groups, and interfaith collaboration on public service projects can bridge divides (Rockenbach, et al., 2020; LaHurd, 2018). LaHurd encourages faith leaders to become more like the interfaith leaders of the 1960s. My research included observations of the role of a loving G/god in preparing for the threat of violence. Results noted any interfaith initiatives and collaborations between Christian groups.

Academic-Religion Initiatives

The prior section on interfaith initiatives addressed some perspectives on religion. It did not specifically focused on bridging the gap between academics and religious people. However, some of the work of Frank Richardson, professor emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin, addresses the reasons academics don't value religion. Richardson (2006) writes that psychologists and sociologists believe they are objective observers but that in reality they are not objective at all. Social scientists' false sense of objectivism interferes with their ability to acknowledge the positive effect of the healthy practice of religion on human well-being. Social scientists have a bias toward naturalism, the theory that the world is governed purely by natural, not supernatural, forces. This bias affects their ability to recognize the benefit of healthy religion on mental and physical health. In addition to academics' bias toward objectivism and naturalism, Marxism also interferes with academic-religious mutual understanding. Liberal academics often reduce the world to a dichotomy between oppressed and oppressor. If social scientists challenge naturalism, they might view themselves as oppressed by the larger scientific community, an uncomfortable worldview (Richardson, 2006).

To address many academics' beliefs in objectivism, naturalism, and a world that revolves entirely around the oppressor-oppressed dichotomy, Richardson argues that social scientists, psychologists in particular, should leverage philosophical hermeneutics when interpreting the social effect of religion (Richardson, 2006). Hermeneutics as the reflective interpretation that acknowledges the effect of the self on observations and value judgements. If social scientists can be more reflective, they could acknowledge and reduce their own biases and eventually be more open-minded toward religion (Richardson, 2006).

Academic-Police Initiatives

Academics live in an abstract world of ideas. They can condescend towards police and blame the lack of collaboration on the police, not themselves (Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Police live in a results-driven world full of threat (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Gilmartin, 1986), resent academic condescension, and want only research results they can immediately apply (Goode & Lumsden, 2016; Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Despite those differences, some effort has been made to reconcile academics and police. Recommendations for academics include listening, avoiding specialist language and saying "dumbing it down," acknowledging that police have many cultures, communicating better, including police officers as knowledgeable participants, and being clear about the results expected from research, including weaknesses (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Flemming, 2010; Goode & Lumsden, 2016; Huey & Mitchell, 2018). Engel and Whalen (2010) suggested police officers become more educated to increase partnerships between police and academics. Recommendations for both academics and police include focusing on developing rapport and interpersonal relationships (Goode & Lumsden, 2016).

Political Polarization Initiatives

Social psychologist Peter Coleman researches polarizing conflicts. He runs a lab at Columbia University (Columbia Climate School, 2023), where he pairs people with different opinions on divisive issues in conversation. Coleman discovered successful conversations have a ratio of positive interactions to negative interactions of 3:1. One way to promote positive interactions and goodwill is to prime participants on the complexity of the issue by having participants read a nuanced article about the divisive topic. Individuals who were exposed to the nuanced, complex information had more satisfying conversations than those exposed to articles merely listing pros and cons of the topic (Ripley, 2018).

Summary

History and theory have taught us that forming a unified version of Christianity in the U.S. is impossible. However, Christian groups could find connections in a shared belief in a loving G/god and a shared desire to do good in the world. Academics could better understand and value religion if academics were more self-reflective. Academics could better connect with law-enforcement professionals by respecting them, including them in research, and making research results as actionable as possible. No prior research was found on bridging the gaps between Christian groups and emergency preparedness professionals. This gap ultimately became the focus of my human-centered design.

The prior chapters have painted a detailed picture of Christianity in the U.S. and of challenges to initiatives to build bridges between peace churches, defense churches, academe, and emergency-preparedness professionals. Those chapters also have led directly into my research questions, which are described in the next chapter.

Chapter 12: Research Questions

Peace churches and defense churches have different histories, theologies, and demographics. Christians in general have different levels of education and political ideologies from both academics and emergency-preparedness professionals. Academics differ greatly from both Christians and emergency-preparedness professionals in that they are more educated and generally more liberal than the other groups. Understanding those differences, plus my motivation and qualifications, led me to the following research questions.

The first goal of this research is to understand the perspectives of different Christian groups with respect to the threat of violence. RQs 1 and 2 address that goal:

- RQ1: How do the (a) communication practices, (b) politics, (c) demographics, (d) community relationships, (e) theologies, and (f) worldviews of peace and defense churches differ with respect to the threat of mass shootings?
- RQ2: (a) How do peace and defense churches differ in their practical responses to the threat of mass shootings, and (b) how do those differences stem from the findings in RQ1?

The second goal of this research is to design an approach to bridge the divide between academics, Christian groups, and emergency-preparedness professionals. RQ3 addresses that goal:

- RQ3: (a) What common ground exists between peace and defense church's perspectives on the threat of violence, (b) what common ground exists between religious groups, academics, and emergency preparedness experts, and (c) how can common ground be leveraged to promote mutual respect and understanding?

The Methods section below describes how I collected information from Christian groups in an effort to address my research questions.

Chapter 13: Methods

RQ1 asks how peace and defense churches differ from each other in a number of areas related to the threat of a mass shooting. RQ2 asks how peace and defense churches differ in their practical response to the threat of a mass shooting and how those differences stem from the findings in RQ1. To investigate RQ1 and RQ2, I first used ethnographic observations of one peace church, one defense church, and a revival at a Pentecostal-Holiness church following the procedures described in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I chose ethnographic methods to gather rich data. I did observations and interviews in the New River Valley because of its proximity to Virginia Tech and its diversity of religious groups. To get information from a broader range of Christian groups than I could feasibly observe, I interviewed 15 members of both peace and defense churches. I used semi-structured interviews so I could compare responses between interviewees, ask follow-up questions, and allow interviewees to freely express themselves (Babbie, 2010).

RQ3a and RQ3b ask what common ground exists between peace churches, defense churches, academics, and emergency-preparedness professionals with the respect to defense against a mass shooting. I used the Cambridge Academic Dictionary's definition of common ground: "Shared interests, beliefs, or opinions between two people or groups of people who disagree about most other subjects" (Cambridge University Press, 2008). To answer RQ3 for Christian groups, I used the results of my ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. To answer RQ3 questions for academics and emergency-preparedness professionals, I referred to my review of the literature in Chapter 8: Academic Views of Christians, Law Enforcement, and Violence and Chapter 9: Emergency Preparedness Views of Christians, Academics, and Violence. In Chapter 17 I identify common ground between the groups and other key takeaways.

RQ3c asks how the common ground I identify in RQ3a and RQ3b can be used to promote mutual understanding among my groups of interest. To answer that research question, I turned to human-centered design, a method that relies heavily on understanding the context in which the design product is used. Human-centered design is typically used to create digital products, but it can also be used for psychosocial applications (Lyon, Brewer, & Arean, 2020). In my case, the people using the design, my groups of interest, are the human context. Religious groups trying to stay safe in the event of a church shooting is the social and situational context.

Rationale for Ethnographic Methods

The goal of this research is to deeply understand groups of people and use that understanding to build bridges between them. Deep understanding calls for qualitative research, in this case ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews.

Recruitment and Consent Process

Prior to data collection, I sought approval from Virginia Tech's Institutional Review Board. Approval to conduct this study and of the consent forms was granted under IRB-20-072. Recruitment and consent forms are attached in Appendix A: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Forms.

Observations

To gain consent to observe worship, I first attended a public worship service. Then I spoke with the pastor, minister, or leader. I introduced myself and the purpose of the study and asked for a meeting. In the second meeting I spoke in depth about the research, read aloud the recruitment materials, and offered the leader or leaders copies of the consent form. After that, I set a date to meet and pick up the forms. Consent to observe public worship required signatures from the leader(s) of the group.

To observe Sunday School and staff meetings, I required consent forms from each attendee. I attended Sunday School sessions, introduced myself and the study, read recruitment materials, and handed out consent forms. I returned the following week to collect the forms.

Interviews

I first created a spreadsheet of groups whose leaders I wanted to interview. I divided the groups into peace and defense, then by specific religious tradition: Quaker, Brethren, Mennonite, Restorationist, Wesleyan, and Baptist. Then I searched on Google Maps for religious groups in the New River Valley in each religious tradition. When I found a church or group, I added the URL of its website and contact information to a spreadsheet. Depending on what was listed on their website, I then contacted the groups either by phone, email, or Facebook. I followed up two weeks later by using the same method. I followed up four weeks later with phone calls. If someone responded, I gave the participant a consent form either on paper or email, collected the signed form, and scheduled an interview. I did not get consent to perform interviews with enough groups after the first round of contacts. Therefore, I expanded the geography of my search to the counties surrounding the New River Valley and repeated the above.

That procedure worked for all but Baptist and Wesleyan churches. So, to contact more of those groups, I drove to churches on Sunday mornings and introduced myself and the study to the pastor, minister, or preacher. I left a consent form and my phone number and asked to meet another time. At the second meeting, I explained my study and obtained consent. That procedure worked for all but the last interview I needed, one with leaders of a Baptist church. By then I had been rejected or ignored by six Baptist churches. So, I leveraged personal contacts to be introduced to the pastor of a Baptist church who consented to participate.

Location

I performed observations and interviews in and around the New River Valley, a Southwestern Virginia region that includes Montgomery, Pulaski, Giles, and Floyd counties and the city of Radford. The New River Valley's religious demographics are more similar to those in neighboring Appalachian states, Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia, than they are to Virginia overall, because Virginia also has heavily populated coastal and urban regions. For more details on the region's religious demographics, see Chapter 3: Religious Demographics.

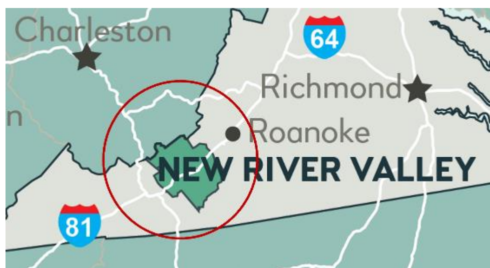
Virginia Tech and Blacksburg, located in the New River Valley, is the perfect context to examine polarization because it is the home to both liberal academics affiliated with the university and conservative Appalachian communities. If church location is any indication, the dominant religion seems to change as one moves away from Virginia Tech. Within a mile of

campus are mainstream churches: Methodist, Unitarian, liberal Baptist, Latter-Day Saints, Anglican, and Lutheran. A few miles away are Churches of the Brethren, Quakers, and dozens of Pentecostal-Holiness and conservative Baptist churches. The area, home to liberals and conservatives, professors and farmers, and traditional and newer Christian groups, is a microcosm of the urban-rural and intellectual-working class divides.

The groups don't necessarily relate well to each other. Most land-grand universities like Virginia Tech, which were originally tasked to provide agricultural and technical education to their communities, have become major research institutions. Thousands of students come to study liberal arts, humanities, business, and urban studies (Virginia Tech, n.d.) in addition to the original technical disciplines. As Virginia Tech has grown, it has become more disconnected from its surrounding community. A hundred years ago, the university was the local agricultural and technical college. Now I've heard it called "the plantation" and the place where "those academics" sit and look down on the locals. My husband, a New River Valley local, told me, "I don't want to go there near all those people who think they're better than me." In contrast, I've heard a Virginia Tech instructor lament that when her children go to middle school, they will encounter children from "other parts of Blacksburg," likely those living in low-income housing or a trailer park.

The circled region in Figure 11 is where the study was conducted.

Figure 11.
Area for Ethnographic Interviews (Onward New River Valley, 2021)



Ethnographic Observations

Selected Christian Groups

I observed one peace church for nine months and one defense church for six months. I attended a revival service at a second defense church.

The peace church, a Quaker Meeting, had already agreed to participate in research for an earlier project. I continued to observe this church out of convenience. Of the defense churches I contacted, two declined, one of which because it wanted to focus only on its evangelical mission, the other because it distrusted my motives. Both were in the Baptist tradition. A Restorationist church was the first to agree to participate in observations.

Observations

Ethnographic observations included observations of public worship service and of small groups for Bible study or church staff meetings. The Quakers consented to observations of worship and their smaller monthly meeting for business. If anyone did not sign a consent form, I did not include data from that person in my analyses. The Restorationist church leaders consented to my observing worship services. However, Sunday School attendees did not consent to my observations. Therefore, I have no small-group observations for a defense church other than the one staff meeting I attended. The pastor of a Pentecostal-Holiness church consented to my observing worship during a revival. I observed that group once.

During observations, I took notes in a small journal or on handouts given to worshippers. I began observations from when I pulled into the parking lot until I left the grounds. I observed general demographics of attendees, the type of music played, and conversations I had overheard. I wrote down the main points brought up in worship and any scriptural references. I observed architecture, furniture, and electronic equipment. I observed security staff and whether they were carrying weapons. My husband helped me identify security measures. After performing observations, I typed up field notes at home by following the procedure described in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Ethnographic observations are prone to observer bias that cannot be mitigated. I interacted with, sang with, and worshiped with these groups. I could not avoid being affected by what I saw. Therefore, I took notes about my reactions to what I observed. At home as I typed notes, I separated observations from my own reactions and opinions. I recorded not only what I saw but also how I reacted to it. Doing so accounts for bias instead of trying to eliminate it.

Interviews

Selected Christian Groups

For peace churches, I chose groups from the historic peace churches: Quakers, Mennonites, and the Church of the Brethren. For defense churches, I chose area faith groups that I knew had armed defense teams or that my research identified as likely to have armed defense teams: Restorationists, Wesleyan, and Baptists. I conducted three interviews with the groups in the same tradition as those I observed: Quakers and Restorationists. I conducted a minimum of two interviews with the remaining groups.

I contacted 36 religious groups and conducted 15 interviews. Of the groups I contacted, 12 didn’t respond, 4 responded but didn’t follow through, and 6 declined to participate. I interviewed two people in one Quaker group. The breakdown of group contacts is in Table 6 below. I had a much higher response and consent rate with historic peace churches (70%) than defense churches (30%).

Table 6.
Interviews Conducted by Religious Tradition

Type	Religious Tradition	Groups Contacted	Interviews Performed
Peace	Quaker	4	3
Peace	Church of the Brethren	3	2
Peace	Mennonite	3	2
Defense	Restorationist	9	3
Defense	Wesleyan: Methodist	4	1
Defense	Wesleyan: Pentecostal-Holiness	5	2
Defense	Baptist	9	2
	TOTAL	37	15

Interviews

The interviews used open-ended questions and followed in interview guide (Babbie, 2010). See Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Guide. The main questions were:

- What is your religious history?
- What is your history with your church?
- What do you like and dislike about your church?
- Are you worried about a mass shooting or other violence at your church?
- Do you know of any times where your church was under threat?
- Are you familiar with your church's defense plan?
- What is the spiritual or scriptural foundation of your defense plan?
- Please let me know anything else you'd like to share about: Your faith, your church and church peers, and violence in the world and in your community.

I opened with a question about the church history to give context and to give the interviewees an easy starting question. Then I asked about their theologies and other beliefs and how it affected their approach to the threat of a mass shooting. Interviewees had as much time as they liked to respond.

After obtaining consent and scheduling the interview, I began the interview with introductions, a brief overview of the study, and asked if the participant had any questions. I then turned on a recording device. If the interview was in person, I used my phone. If the interview was over Zoom, I used the Zoom recording feature. I then proceeded to ask questions from the interview guide until all questions were all answered. The recordings were transcribed using a professional human captioning service.

Qualitative Data Analysis

To analyze the interview transcripts and observation notes, I coded them from the bottom-up as if I were writing an ethnography (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I ended up with over a

hundred descriptive and insightful codes, but none directly addressed my research questions. I then merged categories and re-coded based on my research questions. I ended up with far fewer codes, and they were more informative. See

Appendix C: Qualitative Data Codes. I trained another coder, and he coded 6 of the 15 interviews. Intercoder reliability was 75%. After the codes were established, I analyzed the data by filtering by religious group and the code or codes pertaining to the research question.

Summary

My research methods: ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, and a review of the literature on academic and law-enforcement views, were tailored to my research questions and the constraints of this project. The unique contribution of this research is my ethnographic research on peace and defense churches in the New River Valley and surrounding counties. The following describes the nature of the data I collected.

Chapter 14: Data Descriptions

Before describing the results of my research, in this chapter I describe my observations of the groups' facilities and worship. I also describe my interview participants, their respective religious groups, and their general demographics.

Observations

My observations provided context for the interview results. I observed a Quaker group for over a year, and a Restorationist group for six months. I observed their facilities, worship, and leadership meetings. I also observed a revival at a Pentecostal-Holiness church.

Quakers

I observed one Quaker group for six months and call them "Apple Area Friends Meeting." My first set of observations were in October and November of 2018 and performed as part of a class project. I continued to attend and observe through March 2019, after which I attended intermittently. In 2022, the group asked me to record their meeting minutes every three months. I also was added to the group's listserv where I receive meeting minutes.

Apple Area Friends Meeting were the first peace church to approve of the study. The Apple Area Friends are associated with Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM), a regional Quaker association for Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. BYM in turn is affiliated with Friends General Conference, a liberal Quaker association. I learned through interviews that BYM has internal conflict between the more conservative Christ-centered meetings and the more liberal meetings that include those of all spiritual beliefs, including atheists.

Facility

Because there are only about 10 Quaker Meetings in and around the New River Valley, I won't describe Apple Area's facility or demographics. I refer to individuals who consented to be observed by pseudonym: Adam, Alicia, Amy, Avery, Abby, Anton, and Ashley. Anton was the Clerk of the Meeting and was succeeded by Ashley. The Meeting has committees that oversee operations: Ministry and Oversight, Building and Grounds, Peace and Social Concerns, Stewardship and Finance, Treasurer, Religious Education (for children), Adult Education, and Hospitality and Outreach.

Crimes occurred near where the Apple Area Meeting worships. Law enforcement contacted the meeting to ask for permission to search the grounds for a weapon. None was found. These unfortunate events allowed me to observe the Apple Area Friends' spiritual and practical response to the threat of violence.

Worship

Quakers, including the Apple Area Friends, practice silent worship. One room in the facility is set aside for worship. There is no official call to worship; instead, people trickle into the worship room and sit facing the center of the room. Most attendees have favorite seats. Those in the room often make eye contact with those entering and smile. Latecomers, who often take off their shoes, slip in the door and to a back seat. During the first 15 minutes of the meeting, people

shuffle and sigh. At 15 minutes, any children and the children's program leaders go to another room where the children are taught about Quakerism. Then the meeting settles. People's breathing slows, and their movements quiet down. Many close their eyes. If worshippers feel encouraged by the Inner Light to give a message, it is usually in the last half or third of the meeting. While I observed, one to four messages were shared at any given meeting.

Once a month, queries meant to prompt spiritual though are read. The queries come from Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice (2021). For example, a query related to the peace testimony is (Baltimore Yearly Meeting, 2021, p. 29):

> "Do you endeavor to live 'in virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all wars'? Do you work to make your peace testimony a reality in your life and in your world? Do you weigh your day-to-day activities for their effect on peace-keeping, conflict resolution and the elimination of violence? Are you working toward eliminating aggression at all levels, from the personal to the international?"

Messages from attendees varied wildly in content and tone. One longtime Quaker spoke in the voice of a preacher, referenced the Bible, and taught that peace must come from within. A newer member lightheartedly discussed the turning of the seasons and the coming and going of loved ones. She laughed when someone made eye contact with her and for a moment lost her train of thought. A different longtime member discussed the nature of harmony, if it was like a cake where diverse ingredients are mixed, or like a salad with opposing, complementary ingredients. One time, someone spoke only of her gratitude. Someone else spoke about how a scientific article about the Milky Way inspired her spiritually.

I heard about a third of those attending speak during in Meeting for Worship. The rest of the group remained silent listeners. Listeners reactions ranged from nods and noises of approval to eye rolls. If a message-giver rambled, others fidgeted.

Toward the end of the meeting, people would shuffle and look at their watches. I wasn't sure who conducted the rise of meeting, but each time I was there, someone had a watch that beeped when the hour was over. If the meeting didn't end soon after the beep, the shuffling grew more insistent. The meeting ended when someone stood up and shook their neighbor's hand. Then everyone else did the same. Then the group formed a circle and everyone said their name, discussed joys and concerns, and made announcements.

Restorationist

I observed one Restorationist group for five months and call them "Gumtree Grove Christian Church." Gumtree Grove does not have "Disciples of Christ" in its name, but the congregation use modern, instrumental music, unlike acapella Churches of Christ. I performed observations in February and March 2020 when the COVID pandemic interrupted the project. I resumed observations in June 2021 and continued through August of that year.

I observed Gumtree Grove Christian Church because it was the first defense church to approve observations. Gumtree Grove is a large Restorationist church. With consent, I addended worship,

a staff meeting, and performed interviews with two pastors. I asked but did not get consent to observe Sunday school classes or midweek Bible-study groups.

Facility and People

The facility is on a main road in a medium-sized community in the New River Valley area. The facility was purpose built for a large group of worshippers. The door facing the road leads into a main hallway. The main hallway is tall, wide, and well-lit and has a door on the opposite end to more parking. Near the door facing the road is an administrative office with glass walls. In the main hallway is an information booth with brochures. Before the COVID pandemic, the main hallway had coffee and snacks for worshippers where elderly convened to chat. The main hallway divides the building in half. To one side is the worship area and offices. The worship area has projection screens and a stage, green room, sound system, hidden baptismal pool, and connecting chairs for worshippers. The worship room is wide, and seating is circled around the stage. A sound and lighting booth overlooks the worship area. The other side of the main hallway has a kitchen and Sunday-school rooms for children. Parking surrounds the building. Parking attendants direct traffic before worship. Sometimes a law enforcement officer directs traffic for exiting worshipers.

At Gumtree Grove, Gregory is the lead pastor, Gabe the assistant pastor, George the youth minister, and Gavin the worship minister. A woman, Gabby, is the administrator.

Worship

Gumtree Grove is a friendly place. People smile at me in the parking lot. The pastors, Gregory, Gabe, and George, all greet entering worshipers. They remember my name.

Worship services have slick, professional lighting, well-mixed sound, and synced projection. Transitions during worship between music, communion, and sermon are practiced and smooth. Gumtree Grove practices communion weekly, as expected from a Restorationist church. Sermons integrate both custom and purchased videos. The traditional service music is accompanied by a piano. The contemporary service has rotating bands and upbeat, modern songs. Singers and musicians range from Gavin, who sounds like he could be on the radio, and other enthusiastic, off-key singers.

Outreach is deliberate and organized. The staff at Gumtree Grove has a “pipeline” where newcomers enter requests for more information. The leadership team rotates who contacts these newcomers first, second, and third. The leadership continues to learn and train on following up with newcomers.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

I observed one revival with a guest preacher at a Pentecostal-Holiness church and call it “Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church.”

I didn’t plan to observe Pentecostal-Holiness groups, but I was invited to a revival at what I call Nutmeg Notch. I was curious. Revivals are multi-day, lively events with guest preachers that are common at Pentecostal-Holiness churches. Revivals stem from the Methodist tradition of travelling preachers. This revival lasted three days. I attended the second day. I only attended one service, so I don’t claim my experience was typical.

Facility
Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church is medium sized and plainly decorated. A small parking lot surrounds the church. The preacher's house is next door. The church's front doors open into the worship area. At the front of the worship area are a pulpit and raised stage for a band. Framed pictures line the walls. The worship area has about 10 rows of pews, stocked with hymnals. Projection screens hang in the front of the room. A second door is to one side of the stage.

The pastor of the church, Nathan, consented to my observing worship. I did not attend any small group Bible studies or staff meetings. My observations were startling, so I protect this church's anonymity by not identifying Nutmeg Notch's specific denomination among the hundreds of Pentecostal-Holiness groups.

Worship
Nathan, the main preacher, started worship. He spoke in casual, familiar tones and said he was ready for a promotion – to Heaven – and said Jesus was coming down soon. While he spoke, the group chimed in with "amen" and "Praise the Lord!" He led the group in praying for an exciting service. The worshippers looked down or toward Nathan and prayed out loud with him. Some worshippers their hands toward the podium.

The worship team, a drummer, bass player, guitar player, and three singers, then assembled on the stage. The group sang from the "red book." The lyrics weren't on the projector, and my pew didn't have a book, so I couldn't sing along. Nathan's wife, Nancy, sang the loudest at a different pitch from the rest of the group. During a hymn about the Holy Spirit coming down, one man took his Bible to the front of the worship area, held his hands up, and said "Praise God!"

After we sang hymns, the visiting revival preacher, Nick, went to the pulpit. He spoke on a variety of topics and switched between praise, prayer, and calls for action. His main theme was that the world was at war, with liberals influenced by Satan on one side and Christians with God on their side. He said that the pandemic was an end-of-days fulfillment and that Devil worship abounds. Nick denounced technology and the Democratic Party. He mocked transgender people and bemoaned the culture accepting them. He said he wanted to shut liberals' mouths up and said they'd pay the price for trying to play God (later he said not to confront liberals directly and to trust in God's plan). While he was preaching, Nick began twitching and making utterances like "ha manana tata makai." Others at Nutmeg Notch, including Nancy, spoke in what sounded like mock-Hebrew glossolalia.

Another of Nick's themes was that vibrant worship fights the Devil. Nick said that going to church was attacking the Devil and that if you go to church but don't loudly praise God, that you might as well stay home. He talked about Jehoshaphat, whose army worshipped before battle and caused God to turn the enemy on themselves. The army then collected the spoils. Nick gave the group example of people and churches he visited who displayed vibrant worship.

Nick taught that God is on Christian's side in a larger spiritual battle. He cited Ephesians 6:11-12 (HCSB), "Put on the full armor of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens." He told the

group to put on their war clothes, pass the Devil's test, and go to church. He moved his head and dodged around behind the pulpit as he pretended to dodge attacks form the Devil. Nick said that, when armored, Christians could dodge Satan as if they were playing dodgeball. He led the group to chant "God is on our side!" He gestured as if he were throwing the power of God down on the group and said "Take that, Devil! Take that, Liberals!" The service ended with singing *I'm on I'm On The Battlefield*[21] and a prayer led by Nathan.

I didn't see formal outreach at the church – no cards to fill out nor greeters to hand out flyers. Attendees kept to their own groups, and the only ones to specifically greet me were Nathan and Nick.

Summary and Comparison

Quaker worship was silent with worshipers occasionally sharing personal messages. Many messages had a seed, like a book the person read, the turning of the seasons, or scripture that the speaker developed into a message. All messages touched on improving the self, for example one's inner peace, patience, and gratitude. Restorationist worship included traditional and contemporary music, communion, and a preached message. Messages taught how people should be more attuned to following God in heart and action and how that attunement will make the religion attractive to others. Pentecostal-Holiness worship had traditional music and worshipper participation. Worshippers called out "Amen!" and "Praise God!" and approached the pulpit. The message taught that the U.S. was in the middle of a great spiritual war that touched on culture and politics and that Christians should fight, with God on their side, for the truth.

Observations alone did not inform me specifically about the groups' defense plans. For that, I conducted semi-structured interviews.

Interviews

I conducted 15 interviews, 7 seven with members of peace churches and 8 with members of defense churches. Interviews were recorded, and the recordings were professionally transcribed. I then anonymized the transcripts by changing the group and interviewee names. I removed or broadened potentially identifying information. For example, I changed the interviewees' home cities to home regions and reported the denomination of seminaries they attended, not the seminary names. I created a spreadsheet with demographic descriptors, such as approximate age, sex, level of education, denomination, peace/defense orientation, and the interview transcript. I added my observations notes to the spreadsheet and entered the appropriate descriptors. A full list of descriptors is included in

[21] The hymn was written by various writers. Lyrics are here: https://churchhymnlyrics.com/home/im-on-the-battlefield/

Appendix C: Qualitative Data

Here I give background on interviewee demographics. A sample of 15 is far too small to draw any conclusions regarding response rates, so I discuss general demographic trends. Chapter 15: Results addresses my research questions.

Interviewees

Peace Churches

A greater percent of historic peace churches (78%) than defense churches (30%) responded and agreed to be interviewed. I contacted four Quaker groups, three liberal and one orthodox, Christ-centered group. All Quaker groups replied. Only the Christ-centered group declined to participate. Participating interviewees included Amy from Apple Area Friends Meeting and Bonnie and Beatrice from Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting, another liberal Quaker group. I contacted three Churches of the Brethren. Interviewees from two groups agreed to participate, Chris from Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren and Dan from Dogwood District Church of the Brethren. One Church of the Brethren did not reply. I contacted three Mennonite groups, two conservative and one liberal. One interviewee from each subgroup agreed to participate, Ed from Elm East (liberal) Mennonite church and Fred from Fir Forest (conservative) Mennonite Church. One conservative Mennonite group did not reply.

Defense Churches

I contacted nine Restorationist churches for interviews. Three replied and participated. Interviewees included one person from a traditional Church of Christ, Henry from Hickory Hill Church of Christ, an acapella Restorationist group, and three interviewees from modern, instrumental Churches of Christ: Gabe and Gregory from Gumtree Grove interviewed together, plus Larry from Laurel Lowland Church of Christ. Wesleyan groups were divided into Methodist and Pentecostal-Holiness subgroups. I contacted four Methodist groups. Only Mary from Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church agreed to participate. Two other Methodist groups did not reply, and one declined to participate. I contacted five Pentecostal-Holiness groups, of which two agreed to participate and three did not reply. Pentecostal-Holiness interviewees were Pete from Pawpaw Place Church of God and Rob from Redbud Ridge Church of God. I struggled the most to find Baptist participants. I contacted nine groups, five of which declined to participate and two didn't reply. I interviewed Steve from Spruce Spring Baptist Church, and I used personal connections to find the last interviewee, Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist Church. See Table 2.

Table 7.
Interview Request Responses

Type	Religious Tradition	Groups Contacted	Did Not Reply	Declined	Interviews Performed
Peace	Quaker	4	1	1	3*
Peace	Church of the Brethren	3	1		2
Peace	Mennonite	3	1		2
Defense	Restorationist	9	6		3
Defense	Wesleyan: Methodist	4	2	1	1
Defense	Wesleyan: Pentecostal-Holiness	5	3		2
Defense	Baptist	9	2	5	2
	TOTAL	37	15	7	15

*two people were interviewed from one Quaker group

Interviewee Demographics

Most interviewees were male, were middle or late-middle age, were leaders in their groups, and had formal religions education. See Table 8, Table 9, and Appendix D: Interviewee Descriptors. Five of the seven historic peace church interviewees were originally from outside Appalachia. Conversely, only two of the eight defense church interviewees were from outside Appalachia. The interviewees' home regions reflect the demographics of the New River Valley, where locals tend to be more conservative and religious than those in other U.S. regions (see Chapter 3: Religious Demographics).

Table 8.
Basic Interviewee Demographics

Religious Tradition	Group Name*	Group Worldview**	Interviewee Name*	Sex	Age
Quaker	Apple Area Friends Meeting	Liberal	Amy	F	Late Middle
Quaker	Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting	Liberal	Beatrice	F	Elderly
Quaker	Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting	Liberal	Bonnie	F	Elderly
Brethren	Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren	Conservative	Chris	M	Middle
Brethren	Dogwood District Church of the Brethren	Liberal	Dan	M	Late Middle
Mennonite	Elm East Liberal Mennonite Fellowship	Liberal	Ed	M	Early Middle
Mennonite	Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship	Conservative	Fred	M	Late Middle
Restorationist	Gumtree Grove Christian Church	Moderate	Gregory & Gabe	M	Late Middle
Restorationist	Hickory Hill Church of Christ (Acapella)	Traditional	Henry	M	Late Middle
Restorationist	Laurel Lowland Church of Christ	Conservative	Larry	M	Late Middle
Methodist	Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church	Liberal	Mary	F	Elderly
Pentecostal-Holiness	Pawpaw Place Church of God	Moderate	Peter	M	Late Middle
Pentecostal-Holiness	Redbud Ridge Church of God	Moderate	Rob	M	Late Middle
Baptist	Spruce Spring Baptist Church (SBC)	Conservative	Steve	M	Middle
Baptist	Walnut Wash Baptist Church (Independent)	Conservative	Warren	M	Late Middle

*Names changed to anonymize information
**Worldview determined from interview, not denomination

The interviewees' education broadly reflects their groups' demographics. The two interviewees from Churches of God had pastor training only and no formal secular or religious secondary education (Table 9). Nationally, 11 percent of Church of God (Cleveland, TN) members hold college degrees. All other interviewees had formal secular or religious training. Nationally, 19% of Baptists and 37% of Methodists hold college degrees (Pew Research Center, 2018). Data for other groups were not available.

Analysis of why people change religion is outside the scope of this research. However, interviewees provided that information. Of the 15 interviewees, only 4 (27%) grew up in families affiliated with their current religious group, one each of: Quaker, Brethren, Mennonite, and Baptist (Table 9). That contrasts with the 47% national average of adults remaining in their childhood faith (Pew Research Center, 2009).

Again, interviewee descriptions are for context only. One cannot draw statistical conclusions from 15 data points.

Table 9.
Interviewee Background

Religious Tradition	Name	Role in Group	Home Region	Childhood Religion	Secular Higher Education	Religious Education
Quaker	Amy	Elder	Southwest	Liberal Quaker	Graduate Degree	None
Quaker	Beatrice	Elder	South	Methodist	Undergrad Degree	Graduate Seminary
Quaker	Bonnie	Elder	Midwest	Methodist	Undergrad Degree	None
Brethren	Chris	Leader	Appalachia	Brethren	Undergrad Degree	Christian Undergrad
Brethren	Dan	Leader	North	None	Undergrad Degree	Pastor Training
Mennonite	Ed	Leader	North	Mennonite	Undergrad Degree	Graduate Seminary
Mennonite	Fred	Leader	South	Evangelical Protestant	Undergrad Degree	Christian Undergrad
Restorationist	Gregory	Leader	Appalachia	Evangelical Protestant	Undergrad Degree	Christian Undergrad
Restorationist	Henry	Leader	Appalachia	None	Graduate Degree	Graduate Seminary
Restorationist	Larry	Leader	Appalachia	None	Graduate Degree	Graduate Seminary
Methodist	Mary	Leader	Midwest	Wesleyan	Undergrad Degree	Undergrad & Pastor Training
Pentecostal-Holiness	Pete	Leader	Appalachia	None	Some Undergrad	Pastor Training
Pentecostal-Holiness	Rob	Leader	Appalachia	Wesleyan	None	Pastor Training
Baptist	Steve	Associate Leader	North	Southern Baptist	Undergrad Degree	Graduate Seminary
Baptist	Warren	Leader	Appalachia	None	None	Graduate Seminary

Chapter 15: Results – Differences in Communication, Politics, Community Relationships, Demographics, Theologies, and Worldviews

RQ1 asks how the (a) communication practices, (b) politics, (c) demographics, (d) community relationships, (e) theologies, and (f) worldviews of peace and defense churches differ with respect to the threat of mass shootings. RQ2(a) asks how peace and defense churches differ in their practical responses to the threat of mass shootings.

To address these research questions, I performed participant observations of three Christian groups: a Quaker Meeting, a Restorationist church, and a Pentecostal-Holiness church. I conducted interviews with 15 members of Christian groups, three each from Quaker and Restorationists, two each for Mennonite, Brethren, Pentecostal-Holiness, and Baptist churches, and one from a Methodist church. Typically research results from ethnographic research are composed in an ethnography that paints a thorough, holistic portrait of the group. I partially did so when I described my observations in the prior chapter. However, this research centers on my research questions and is not the type of open-ended discovery typical of many ethnographies. Therefore, in my results chapter, I describe how my observations and interviews informed my research questions.

For my interviewees, the extent that an entire group communicates about security depends on whether the group comes from a peace or defense church and the approximate age of the group's denomination.

Regarding internal communication for decision making, the older and more traditional denominations used consensus-based decision making, and the newer denominations used leadership-led decision making. Whether the leaders shared the defense plan did not align with peace or defense group. Regarding politics, peace- and defense-orientation did not uniformly reflect liberal and conservative politics. I don't report demographics, because doing so might identify the groups. With respect to the churches' relationships with their communities, most of the defense churches collaborate with law enforcement officers. Peace and defense churches both try to create a greater peace in their communities, peace church through charity and defense churches through evangelism. Theologically, the peace churches take "turn the other cheek" from the Sermon on the Mount literally, but the defense churches believe it is allegorical. The peace churches and the Methodist interviewee think the Kingdom of God has arrived but has not yet reached fruition, but the defense churches think the Kingdom of God will arrive with the Second Coming. The Quakers, Methodists, and Pentecostal-Holiness interviewees believe they can interact with the Holy Spirit within them. The other groups did not mention the Holy Spirit. All interviewees think the world is a dangerous place, but the nature of that danger was tangible to some groups and metaphysical to others irrespective of peace or defense stance.

Regarding security plans, five of six of the peace churches do not have a defense plan. The sixth group, liberal Mennonites, have a plan to evacuate. All the defense churches have armed security. Whether a group used prayer as part of their security plan did not align with peace or defense orientation.

I initially categorized the Church of the Brethren as a peace church, but one brethren interviewee had a defense stance. I initially categorized Methodists as defense-oriented, but the minister I interviewed had a more peace-oriented stance.

Communication Practices

RQ1(a) asks how the communication practices of peace and defense practices differ with respect to the threat of a mass shooting. I include in this category the groups' communication during worship and outreach and the groups' communication with respect to threats among leadership and members.

Quaker

In October 2018 law enforcement notified Apple Area that a drug sale occurred near the worship area. At the next Meeting for Business, The Apple Area Friends decided to delegate the security discussion to the Building and Grounds and Ministry and Oversight Committees. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee reported having discussed the threat of crime on the property. The crime created a "buzz," and the Apple Area Friends did not reach consensus on how to respond. So, the Apple Area Friends scheduled a special meeting to discuss security. During the special meeting, the group reiterated local law enforcement's recommendations. The Apple Area Friends listened to everyone's input, including mine. The Apple Area Friends approached the threat with open communication and decision making and included all present.

In August 2021 I interviewed Beatrice and Bonnie from the Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting. In October 2021, I interviewed Amy from the Apple Area Friends Meeting. By then I had witnessed Apple Area's communicative, consensus-based approach to the threat of crime near the Apple Area Meetinghouse. Boxwood Borough Friends communicate about threats differently. In the wake of a church shooting, Bonnie and two others from her meeting attended a church protection workshop run by law enforcement. When Bonnie returned to Boxwood Borough to report on what she learned, she said,

> "[Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting] wouldn't even allow me to say to 'block access and defend.' They wouldn't even allow me to say that. I just talked about emergencies, and the upshot of what happened is I drafted an emergency plan. That was all that I was allowed to put on there. I was not even to talk about guns. We have something about what happens if there's a fire, what happens if there's a tornado, what happens in the case of…. and there's a first-aid kit." [Caroline: What might you have said about physical threats?] "Well, I would have said here are the things we flee. That's what I would have told them. Then when I came to the part about defense, I knew that they wouldn't do anything, and I didn't even talk about it."

Apple Area Friends acknowledge threats, openly discuss them, and react to them by communicating via signs how their property is to be used and by discussing an evacuation plan, even though the plan was never completed. Boxwood Borough Friends did not want to discuss violent threats or discuss how to peacefully react to them. Denomination did not predict how Quakers communicate about threats and safety plans.

Brethren

I spoke with the leaders of two Churches of the Brethren: Chris from Cottonwood Creek, a medium-sized conservative church, and Dan from the Dogwood District, a small liberal church. Chris described how Churches of the Brethren communicate to make decisions, including those about threats:

> "In the Church of the Brethren, [decision making] is autonomous. It is ruled by the body [members] of the church, who choose a council. It is very much congregationalist. The council is a chosen board from the body and meets quarterly. They handle the business of the church. If something is important enough to take to the church body for a vote, they do so. And the body chooses by two-thirds majority whether or not what the council have proposed will be passed and adopted or not."

Chris then described how his former church responded to threat. Chris said he alone made the decision to call law enforcement and that he and law enforcement developed a security plan. He said only a quarter of attendees knew about the security plan. Communication about threats at Chris' former church was not congregational, nor did the former church's security plan follow the Church of the Brethren's historic peace stance. In contrast, Dan said that Dogwood District communicated internally and came to a consensus to react peacefully to threats. Dogwood members decided that they would see attackers coming and flee.

Mennonite

I interviewed two leaders of Mennonite groups: Ed from Elm East Liberal Mennonite Fellowship and Fred from Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship. The liberal and conservative Mennonite groups approach internal communication and decision making differently. Fred said:

> "Our church would be much more congregational than a typical [liberal] Mennonite Church. At a [liberal] Mennonite Church, the leadership would make more of the decisions and then relate those decisions down to the laity. In an Amish-background [conservative] church, the congregation decides more things together. The ministry are viewed as servants of the church, the managers of the church."

Ed confirmed Fred's description of liberal Mennonites:

> "The Administrative Council would be making all administrative decisions and building-related stuff. Technically they rule by vote. But practically they survey the congregation, especially when we've been making decisions about COVID and how much mask wearing we want."

Ed said that Elm East has not shared the Administrative Council's role in the event of an emergency. In an emergency, the Administrative Council would assume leadership and communicate with worshippers how to evacuate. It was unclear if the council has a specific evacuation plan.

Restorationist

I interviewed Gregory and Gabe from Gumtree Grove Church of Christ, Henry from Hickory Hill Church of Christ, and Larry from Laurel Lowland Christian Church.

Gregory said that Gumtree Grove makes decisions differently depending on the situation:

> "I think the level of the decision determines the factor. If it's just day-to-day, Gabe and I are talking about should we collect food for the homeless people? Yeah, sure. Let's go, let's do it. Should we change the vision statement of the church? Well, let's talk to the elders and make sure they're on board with this as well. Should we start a new church in [the NRV]? We want to talk to the congregation and the elders as well as staff. So, it just depends on the level that we're talking about."

At Gumtree Grove, the security plan did not involve communication among elders or the congregation. The leadership team delegated the security plan to Gabe, who researched what other churches needed and adapted it for Gumtree Grove. Only the leadership and safety team are aware of the security plan. The leadership does not share the security plan with all members because:

> "We just want our safety team members to blend in and be unnoticeable because if you walk in and you see somebody with a bulletproof vest on and they've got a gun and a rifle, I don't know if I will go to church here." (Gregory)

When Henry's old church, also in the NRV area, was threatened, he said the leadership sought members who were law enforcement for advice. The leadership gathered information and passed it to the elders,[22] who made decisions and explained the security plan to the congregation "so they can feel safe and secure."

Larry's church also has elders who make major decisions, like designing the security plan. Unlike Gumtree Grove and similar to Hickory Hill, Laurel Lowland leadership tells members aware of the security plan, because as Larry said,"In the event that there was a gunman or a shooting, [we tell them to] stay calm and allow the authorities to come in and to mitigate that situation."

Wesleyan – Methodist

I spoke with Mary from Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church. Mary said her church made decisions "off of consensus and try to discern depending on what it is." She acknowledged, "Now in smaller churches [like Magnolia Marsh], that's obviously easier to do because you have less people to toss their own opinion than in the ring." For example, the whole group discussed whether to lock the doors in the wake of church shootings. She said she thought some members

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[22] Some churches have "elders," "deacons," "bishops," and/or "shepherds," with different leadership roles and lengths of service. My research questions do not ask details about church governance, so I reduced these groups to "elders." All elders discussed here are men.

had concealed weapons. She said her church never openly discussed armed defense or emergency training.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

I spoke with Pete from Pawpaw Place Church of God and Rob from Redbud Ridge Church of God. Both are head pastors of their respective churches. Pete said that when his church encountered a threat, two law enforcement members approached him about creating a security plan. Pawpaw Place offers optional training on preparedness but does not discuss the plan nor do emergency drills with the whole church. Rob said decisions at Redbud Ridge were made by the council,[23] who communicate among themselves about issues. When Redbud Ridge made a security plan, Rob told all members how they should respond in the event of a mass shooting.

Baptist

I spoke with Steve from Spruce Spring Baptist Church and Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist Church. Steve at Spruce Spring says that the staff and ministry teams communicate among themselves, after which the staff made the final decision. Steve is the staff liaison for the security team. The Spruce Spring congregation is consulted for decisions regarding church philosophy or major spending, but "in the end the buck stops with the [head pastor]." The security team periodically trains the childcare and Sunday School leaders. Spruce Spring leadership does not inform the congregation about the security plan nor do drills.

Warren says that Walnut Wash elders communicate among themselves to make decisions by consensus and without involving the congregation. Walnut Wash leadership communicates the church's security plan to the congregation:

> "We have our men with armbands that identify them as security. I know that we have signs posted, but we let our congregation know that our security team is in place. We have instructed our congregation as to how they should respond if there is a threat of violence."

Summary

For my interviewees, the extent that an entire group communicates about security depends on whether the group comes from a peace or defense church and the approximate age of the group's denomination. The information in Table 10 is for comparison only because I can't draw statistical conclusions from a small sample.

[23] Church of God council members can be women, so I use a different term.

Table 10.
Group Communication about the Threat of Violence and Security Plans (Peace Churches Shaded)

Group	Communication & Decision Making	Communication with Congregation
Apple Area Friends Meeting	Congregational Consensus	Yes
Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting	Congregational Consensus (limited discussion)	No
Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren	Congregational Vote	No
Dogwood District Church of the Brethren	Congregational Consensus	Yes
Elm East Liberal Mennonite Fellowship	Leadership Vote	No
Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship	Congregational Vote	Unknown
Gumtree Grove Christian Church	Leadership Led	No
Hickory Hill Church of Christ (Acapella)	Leadership Led	Yes
Laurel Lowland Church of Christ	Leadership Led	Yes
Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church	Congregational Consensus	No
Pawpaw Place Church of God	Leadership Led	No
Redbud Ridge Church of God	Leadership Led	Yes
Spruce Spring Baptist Church (SBC)	Leadership Led	No
Walnut Wash Baptist Church (Independent)	Leadership Led	Yes

Among churches I interacted with, the peace churches were more likely to involve their congregations in decision making but were no more likely than defense churches to share the security plan with the congregation. Exceptions were liberal Mennonites and Methodists. The age and tradition of the denomination better predicted how much they involved the congregation in communication and decision making. The older, more traditional denominations (Quakers-1600s,[24] Brethren-1700s, and Conservative Mennonites-1500s, and Methodists-1700s) used consensus decision making and congregational involvement with respect to security. The more modern denominations (Restorationists-1800s, Wesleyans-Methodist-1700s, Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness-1900s, liberal Mennonites-1900s), and Southern Baptists-1900s)[25] used leadership-led communication and decision making with respect to threats, except for Magnolia Marsh, which is small enough to use consensus decision making.

Politics

RQ1(b) asks how the peace and defense church politics with respect to the threat of a mass shooting. When designing the open-ended interview questionnaire, I did not include a direct question on politics, which could have alienated my interviewees and prevented me from asking other questions.

No one I interviewed or observed mentioned politics with respect to mass shootings. Not all interviewees mentioned politics directly. So, here I discuss where groups brought up polarizing political issues like racism, sexism, LGBTQ rights, COVID, environmentalism, abortion, social justice, and gun control.

[24] Liberal Quakers emerged in the 1900s, but maintain their tradition of consensus decision making.
[25] See Figure 6 for dates.

Quaker

The Apple Area friends did not address politics outright during Meeting for Worship. Quakers in general have been political, though, in their pursuit of peace. For example, the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FNCL) lobbies Congress for legislation supporting peace and equality (2022). The Peace and Social Concerns Committee suggested Apple Area Friends meet with FNCL representatives to discuss legislation. The Apple Area Friends also suggested meeting members form relationships with our government representatives and specifically encouraged them push politicians to repeal of the Authorization of the Use of Military Force law passed after the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Apple Area and Boxwood Borough Friends both support LGBTQ rights and fight racism and sexism, all liberal political stances. Bonnie from Boxwood Borough said:

> "We get out and state our beliefs, like being for LGBTQ, supporting Black Pride, or gay marriage… and political polarization [causes you to get] reactions to your stance on some issues."

Beatrice's also spoke about racism ("Some of our members have taken…classes on what being white means and what does that mean in this world with other racial issues") and LGBTQ issues, ("We are diverse. Sexually diverse, that sounds weird. But we have gay people in the meeting.") Both Apple Area Friends Meeting and Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting have posted rainbow signs and symbols to welcome the LGBTQ community. Even though Boxwood Borough Meeting members are overwhelmingly liberal, they decided to pray every day for President Donald Trump to "be held in the light," to be blessed with wisdom and good intention.

Brethren

Neither Chris from Cottonwood Creek nor Dan from nor Dave from Dogwood District Churches of the Brethren mentioned politics or political topics in their interviews. Chris did mention that at his former church he was fortunate that some members carried concealed weapons, so I assume he approves of gun ownership, a typical conservative stance.

Mennonite

Ed from East Elm and Fred from Fir Forest Mennonite churches said little about politics. Ed mentioned protecting the environment, a typical liberal view: "The costs of consumption are becoming so clear. It's not like we can imagine that there's infinite forests full of deer in front of us and an infinite ocean full of fish behind us." Fred said Fir Forest has more in common with Amish groups than liberal Mennonites. Most Amish are apolitical and don't vote because they believe they should separate themselves from the secular, including politics (Amish America, 2020). Fred said that many at Fir Forest refuse government aid, such as stimulus checks and government supported medical insurance. Elm East members are likely apolitical.

Restorationist

Restorationists think that Christians should speak only on topics addressed in the Bible (Albanese, 2007). Gabe taught about sexual sin in general, not homosexuality specifically.

Gregory preached about societal polarization with respect to Christianity. He described how our culture is not moving closer to God and how since the mid-20th century there has been less and less Jesus. He said our culture was divided and discontinuous and lamented that many young Christians leave the faith. His solution was to encourage listeners to contact and help three people: one who was struggling spiritually, emotionally, and physically. He said to act as strong, sympathetic witnesses and open the door for others to meet Jesus. Gregory focused on matters of faith, evangelism, and applying the Bible to individual lives. He focused less on politics and specific social issues. Henry from Hickory Hill Church of Christ mentioned two politically polarized topics. He said he left his former denomination because it "was pro-abortion and that was troubling to us, we couldn't understand how that could be [Christian]." Conservatives typically take an anti-abortion stance. On societal polarization, Henry said, "It's too easy to divide us along those [polarized] lines using that natural fear." He believes "that the country that we're living in right now…was founded clearly on Christian principles," a tenet of the Christian Right political movement (Armstrong, 2000).

Wesleyan – Methodist

Mary from Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church spoke about politically polarized topics. Mary is originally from the Midwest and is disrespectful when she describes church security teams in the New River Valley, "and I think the average good old boys—and some of these churches that are doing that—would kill a lot of innocent people because they're not used to." Mary mentions racism when she discusses Gabby Petito's disappearance.[26] Mary asks, "Why do we have updates on the white girl every day when there are women of color, native women, and Latino women [in the same circumstances]?" She decries the sexism that causes her to "get disparaging phone calls from time to time from people that tell you you're sinning because you're a woman pastor." Speaking out against rural Americans, racism, and sexism are all liberal political stances.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

I learned during the revival at Nutmeg Notch that Nick believes U.S. views politics as part of a larger cosmic war between God and Christians against the Devil and liberals. He thinks that Christians have a special truth that allows them to see how ridiculous government policy is and to fight liberalism. Nick said liberals would turn on each other and that God will overcome them. He said that there is a darkness coming from D.C. and Richmond after Democrats won elections. He bemoaned an American people who want to take "God" out of the Pledge of Allegiance and support gay marriage. He said the church stood for the truth.

In my interviews with other Pentecostal-Holiness pastors, only Pete from Pawpaw Place Church of God spoke at length about political issues, particularly the Trump presidency:

> "I had somebody ask me why is, or they didn't ask me personally, but they asked on Facebook, why is the Christians so enamored with Donald Trump and what in all his moral failures, why are they upholding him and all this? And he says, I want an answer but not a given answer that's been formed by something else. And

[26] Gabby Petito was a young white woman who disappeared when on a road trip with her fiancé. He had murdered her, but her body wasn't found until weeks later (Hauser, 2023).

> I've read a lot of what people were answering this guy. I went to high school with him…. I said it's not that we're enamored with him. We just understand the spiritual aspect and the moral aspect of what's going on in our country. He (Trump) is more apt to stand up for our beliefs and Christians and for our freedom. That if the others get in office, we're going to see freedoms being taken away, possibly. And so that's the only reason that we're supporting him because he's coming out saying that I'm going to support these things…. A lot of people will say all Christians are Republicans. No, it's not that we're all Republicans. We are trying to vote our moral values. And sometimes you got to pick the lesser of the two evils."

Pete makes issues-based political choices based on who he thinks will better protect his rights as a Christian. Protecting the rights of the majority and supporting Trump are typical conservative stances.

Baptist

Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist Church mentioned political topics. Warren believes in promoting social justice:

> "I would like to see us become more engaged with our community and with our culture, especially in this day and age with all of the emphasis upon social justice and injustices. Caroline, I believe with all my heart that there's a gospel answer for those things."

The Walnut Wash website (which is now offline and which I couldn't identify anyway) said that marriage should be between a man and woman, a conservative stance, but also says that individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.

Summary

RQ1(b) asks how peace and defense churches differ with respect to politics. A summery is in Table 11. Nick at Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church was the most overtly political. Because he was a guest preacher, I cannot speak broadly about the group. The Apple Area Friends discussed political issues, but none were heavily engaged in politics. Gumtree Grove stayed silent on politics and instead focused on scripture and evangelism.

Table 11.
Political Views (Peace Churches Shaded)

Group	General Political Approach	Politically Polarized Topics Discussed
Apple Area Friends Meeting	n/a	-
Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting	Liberal	LGBTQ, Racism
Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren	Conservative	Gun Ownership
Dogwood District Church of the Brethren	n/a	-
Elm East Liberal Mennonite Fellowship	Liberal	Environment
Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship	Apolitical	-
Gumtree Grove Christian Church	n/a	-
Hickory Hill Church of Christ (Acapella)	Conservative	Abortion, Political Christianity
Laurel Lowland Church of Christ	n/a	-
Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church	Liberal	Racism, Sexism, Rural Populations
Pawpaw Place Church of God	Conservative	Trump, Religious Freedom
Redbud Ridge Church of God	n/a	-
Spruce Spring Baptist Church (SBC)	n/a	-
Walnut Wash Baptist Church (Independent)	Conservative	Social Issues, LGBTQ

Among the groups I interacted with, peace- and defense-orientation reflected liberal and conservative politics, respectively. Exceptions were Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren, a peace church, which has a conservative pastor who supports gun ownership, and Mary from the Methodist church, which I thought would be a defense church, has liberal views with respect to social issues.

Community Relationships

RQ1(c) asks how the peace and defense church differ in their relationships with their communities with respect to the threat of a mass shooting. Here I describe their general interactions with and views on surrounding communities: law enforcement and other faith groups. I also discuss their charity work, because the ultimate goal of community service is to promote a broader peace.

Quaker

With respect to the threat of violence, Apple Area Friends discussed how to mitigate it. After a crime occurred near their place of worship, I attended a Peace and Social Concerns Committee meeting. Most attendees talked about emergency preparedness, but one elderly member, Amelia, kept on changing the topic to community engagement. She wanted to discuss how society should treat addicts instead of jailing them, how to protect them. She wanted to be more supportive of the mentally ill instead of jailing them. She advocated brainstorming how to create peace in the broader community as a strategy to reduce the threat of violence. Others in the group kept talking over her and going back to practical and logistical questions.

Interviewees mentioned relationships with other communities in the context of responding to threats. Amy from Apple Area attended a church protection workshop at nearby mainline Protestant church. Her main takeaways were that the workshop was too long and “that no matter

what your plan is, that you should have one." Adil, another member, said the NRV area was sensitive to the topic of violence because of the Virginia Tech shootings. After the crime on Apple Area's property, law enforcement encouraged the church to put up flood lights and no trespassing signs. Amy said, "The police have told us very clearly that unless it is posted, private property, no trespassing they can't do anything." Adrian mentioned collaborating with a nearby pacifist group to train on reacting to emergencies. Ultimately, though, the Apple Area Friends never ended up collaborating with other communities or following law-enforcement advice. Amy said, "It's been like a year, and nothing has happened [regarding signage]. But that is just a drop-the-ball problem." At Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting, Bonnie said a local fire inspector approved of the meeting's emergency plan. That was the only emergency-preparedness collaboration she mentioned.

Apple Area Friends listened to law enforcement advice but did not follow it to the extent that trespassers could be prosecuted. Church members mentioned collaborating with other peace-oriented groups, but I don't have notes of that actually happening. Instead, Amelia advocated over and over for peaceful community engagement to reduce crime in general. Apple Area collaborates with other churches to distribute food and clothing to the needy. Members attend community interfaith events. Boxwood Borough Friends' approach is the same. Boxwood Borough takes advice from civil experts but does not actively collaborate with them. Instead, Boxwood forged collaborations with Black churches to celebrate Martin Luther King Day with the goal of creating a greater peace.

Brethren

When discussing how his former church responded to the threat of violence, Chris from Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren said, "We got such a good rapport with the sheriff and the deputies that are frequently in and out of here…. The response time here would be minimal. But no, we're not worried about it [violence]." Cottonwood Creek's relationship with law enforcement gave him a sense of safety.

Chris and Dan did not talk about collaborating with other faith groups, doing charity work, or generally engaging the broader community.

Mennonite

Neither Mennonite leader discussed collaborating with others to defend against violence. Besides being pacifist, Conservative Mennonites separate themselves from government, civil charities, and other faith groups. For example, Fred from Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship said:

> "If you think about Obamacare, our church would be considered Obamacare exempt. Our people qualify for religious exemption, and I would not be aware of any person in our church or family that would participate in a government-subsidized health program. We have our own medical waiver program in our congregation where we collect contributions on a quarterly basis and then we pay the medical bills out of that."

In the event of a medical emergency, Fir Forest relies on a foundation supported by Conservative Mennonites and Amish groups. Regarding charity, Fir Forest members perform it as individuals and families, not as part of a larger charity organization. Fred said:

> "Quite a number of people in our congregation would have what we call personal mission projects. Maybe it's an employee they took on from outside the church. This is not a person that maybe they would have hired otherwise or retained in employment. But this person has needs in their life. So, they'll retain that employee for the sake of reaching into their broken situation. We get a fair number of attendees from the community, people who come to church, not joining church. But you come on a given Sunday, and you'll see people and some of it's fairly visible. And sometimes maybe you pick it up after a while that this person isn't really from here. This person isn't part of this church, but they're attending here. Those tend to be people from broken type situations who have been mentored."

Restorationist

Gumtree Grove is involved in charity with the local community. Gumtree Grove thinks charity can promote evangelism and that bring more people to Christianity will bring greater peace. For example, Gregory encourages worshippers to donate money for the church's charity projects and blood to the community. Gregory taught in one sermon that Christians should have compassion for all and serve all equally. He quoted Matt 9:37-38: "Then he [Jesus] said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

Gumtree Grove Christian Church, a defense church, has a working relationship with local law enforcement. Gabe said:

> "We've had several training exercises [at Gumtree] when SWAT teams come in and they train… for a scenario of a shooter in a church, in a classroom setting, that type of thing. They will locate the shooter upstairs or a shooter in a classroom, and they'll come in with tactics to be able to take down the shooter, that thing…. So today, if we ever had to make a call, that team can show up, and they know our facility very well."

Larry from Laurel Lowland Church of Christ spoke of his prior church, where:

> "Instead of hiring security, they had their own security team. … And so they invited the police to come in and do training. I actually went to that, and we all came with our firearms and had instruction, and then we went to the shooting range. And we went through a training just like a police officer did where we draw our firearms."

Like Gabe, Larry's church leverages Laurel Lowland's relationships with local law enforcement to train the church security team, and Larry actively participates in firearms training. Like the Chris' Church of The Brethren, these Restorationist churches' relationships with law enforcement makes them feel safer.

Of the Restorationist pastors, only Larry mentioned a relationship with an academic institution. He is pursuing a Ph.D.

Wesleyan – Methodist

Mary from Magnolia Marsh didn't discuss collaboration on emergency plans with others in the community. She didn't mention broader efforts to promote community wellness, like food pantry work and other charity, but an online church description says church members "do community meals and outreach programs." Mary said she's uncomfortable with the defense orientation of not only local churches but also what she perceives of rural Appalachia:

> "I know that there are a few churches in the area down here [southwest Virginia] that have, though I mean, a while back anyway, I know that they did have people armed in entrances and watching and staff. I don't know. I'm just not I'm not comfortable with that. I think if we were in a different part, of the county or just of the state, we might think differently."

She praises law-enforcement-level training versus her perception of local church security training:

> "The problem for me is that the average person goes out and does skeet shooting, or they do target shooting or whatever, and they're all relaxed, and they're having a nice time, and everybody shooting targets and sitting around. But they have never had an active shooter coming at them when they go to shoot. And to me that's where people will get killed because they shoot wide. They shoot high. They shoot low. And I think the average good old boys and some of these churches that are doing that would kill a lot of innocent people because they're not used to. They've not ever been trained under high stress profile situations…. And so, I am real leery about someone saying, 'Oh, we'll all come protect you, but I have been target shooting a few times a year.'"

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

Like the Restorationists, Pete from Pawpaw Place Church of God said that he formed relationships with members who work in law enforcement to get advice on the security plan:

> "We had a deputy that came in and attended here for a while. And his first thought when he came in was we're sitting ducks in this place. And he thought that because he didn't see this door right here, this side door and he did not know that this side door was here. And in law enforcement, we've talked about it, and I made sure he was carrying. When he came, he's always carrying. So, we talked to some another minister friend of mine who has since become a deputy that attends another church in [a New River Valley area] community. He's come here, and he and I have talked. And he said you need to start identifying these people to be on your security first responder type team."

Baptist

Like the Restorationists, Steve's Spruce Spring church has relationships with communities through charity:

> "So, we do a big outreach every August to help serve the underserved families in the New River Valley. So, we typically help anywhere from 100 - 150 families with food, school supplies, haircuts, wall changes, that thing. We also partner with helping fund church plants, not only in Virginia, but other places in the United States. And then we're very involved overseas, well, so we support missionaries in [Asia] and we have mission work and support ministries in [Africa and Asia] as well."

Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist Church leverages a member's military and law enforcement experience. That member leads and trains Walnut Wash's security team. Steve from Spruce Spring Baptist Church told me how helpful visible police presence can be as a deterrent at large events:

> "With those events, there's just so much activity and so many people from outside of the church on our campus, and there's so much movement in and out from the inside to the outside, and so we've started having a police officer on site…and our own security in place as well. But I do think that's probably one of the most significant [safety factors] - police presence…for a lot of churches, maybe not big enough to handle their own security to at least have some visible presence there."

With respect to other communities, Warren from Walnut Wash talked about the academic-religious divide:

> "My father could not read or write. And I have family who still live in the Appalachia, who are still in the coal mines. And so, I have a deep affection for the people of Appalachia. I understand them because I'm one of them. And in our region, there was not a lot of emphasis, especially in Conservative Evangelical Baptist churches, there wasn't a lot of emphasis placed upon academia. And as matter of fact, a learned pastor or a pastor with a degree, was looked upon sometimes with suspicion."

Summary

RQ1(c) asks how the peace and defense church differ in their relationships with their communities with respect to the threat of a mass shooting. With the exception of Chris from Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren's former church, I did not gather evidence that the peace churches collaborate with law enforcement for emergency preparedness. Apple Area proposed collaborating with other peace churches and groups, but I didn't see it come to fruition. The Conservative Mennonites try to be separate from civil authorities. Instead, the Friends and Mennonites who mentioned the broader community spoke of charity work. They want to better society to bring peace and choose not to respond to violence with violence. Fred said Fir Forest used personal charity to bring people to their faith. The Friends collaborate on charity to enact their traditions.

The defense church interviewees who mentioned outside collaboration all said they work with or are informed by law enforcement regarding their security plan. The large defense churches hold events on their campuses. The defense churches believe evangelism is the best way to better society and promote broader peace, so their charity work in the community mediates the defense churches' efforts to evangelize.

Demographics

RQ1(d) asks how the peace and defense church differ demographically. My observations directly collected information on demographics. When I asked about a group's size in interviews, I realized that size might be used to identify them. So, to protect the groups' anonymity, I'll report only that they were all mostly white and that the Quakers tended to be older and have more LGBTQ members.

Theologies

RQ1(e) asks how the peace and defense church theologies differ with respect the threat of a mass shooting. I observed worship services and asked interviewees how their scriptural interpretation and spiritual beliefs influence their fear of and response to the threat of violence. I also asked how scripture and spirituality influence their security plans.

Quaker

My observations showed me that, like many liberal Quaker groups, the Apple Area Friends are a mix of Christian, deist, and non-theist people. They are unified not by a belief in G/god or Christ, but by Quaker history and tradition. They are staunchly dedicated to peace and consensus decision making. They think that peace needs to come from within from listening to the Inner Light and from discerning one's place in the world. They do not question their doctrine. They do question whether they as individuals follow it in spirit and action.

Quakers practice pacifism and nonresistance. Their pacifist approach is rooted in scripture, tradition, and practical thought. When I asked Beatrice from Boxwood Borough Friends what the scriptural foundation of Quakers' pacifism was, she replied:

> "So basically, I should know which verse this is, but love your neighbor as yourself[27]…. Basically, I think that's our policy…. It's basically who are we to judge? …Yeah, everybody is sacred… We do it not because we want them to do it to us that way [like the Golden Rule], but we do it out of love and faith that we are hopefully kind."

Bonnie brought up an example from Quaker pacifist tradition that supports the group's peace stance:

[27] "Love your neighbor as yourself" occurs in both the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. A prominent occurrence is Mark 12:30-31, where Jesus describes the most important commandments: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

> "I should tell you the history also. This is documented. We have a situation where the Indians were on the war path, and meeting for worship was occurring in a building. The Indians were at the door with their tomahawks and their paint on. [The Quakers] stayed in worship. Nobody moved. And the Indians came in, and their leaders said, wait, Manitou[28] is here. They got down and worshipped with them."

Amy from Apple Area Friends Meeting told me how applying pacifist techniques can diffuse violence in practical situations:

> "It takes two to fight, and if you refuse to fight, there will be no fight. I do think attitude matters. I do think your presence in the situation matters. It's based on the idea that there is that of God in everyone and that if we reach out to that part of that person, the part of them that is of God, that we will connect, and the situation will be changed…. So, I think that the general feeling of Quakers is that if you don't approach a violent situation with a lot of fear, then it will be changed. But if you refuse to fight, there will be no fight. There would be a change. I have faith that there's good out there and that sometimes unorthodox responses to violence are powerful."

That said, Amy struggles with a pacifist approach. She said:

> "I struggle with [pacifism] personally. I don't know what I would do if someone threatened my children, for example. I don't always know. That's a place that I would still be seeking. I think war is a terrible thing, for example, I think it is obviously a corrupt and hateful and destructive force in our world. But oh my God, when I hear of a country in which the regime is doing X, Y, or Z to its people, and I think somebody has got to stop them. We don't have time for long NGO inroads."

The Quakers I spoke with were unified in their theological peace stance. They supported it with scripture, belief in G/god, past examples, and practical application.

Brethren

The Churches of the Brethren had very different Pastors: Chris was more conservative and traditional than Dan. Both referred to the historic peace stance of the Church of the Brethren.

Chris from Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren talked about how his focus after a threat was practical, not spiritual, "We didn't really think at that time in a scriptural reference because we were responding initially to something that was happening in the moment." He used scripture from the Hebrew Bible to justify a security plan for former church:

> "God's house is holy. The Psalms in the Old Testament refer to God's house as holy. It is not to be blasphemed. And we can blaspheme by action. So, in my thinking, which might go against the church of the Brethren's more passive

[28] In Algonquin tradition, Manitou is a supernatural force that controls the natural world.

> stance, my thinking was we have every right to protect ourselves and this property because it's on loan to us from God."

But he admits he and his stance are not necessarily that of the larger Church of the Brethren:

> "[Our approach to the threat of violence] is situational, but you know the Lord said cast all your cares upon me. So, when you're looking to him for protection, you've got to believe he's going to protect you. Now, does that make you pacifist? In some people's eyes. But the Anabaptists and Pietist movement is passive in nature. That's the movement that the peace church come out of. And the Brethren is definitely peace. So, when I joined the [military], there were a lot of strange looks."

Dan from the more liberal Dogwood District Church of the Brethren is a deist:

> "God as a creator and maybe a designer of the universe…. I've meshed religion with science. So, I accept both and put them together. So, looking at the scientific creation stories of Big Bang, something I believe caused that to happen. And whatever that is is what I call God. I don't have a particular picture of who God really is or what God looks like. I think it's too big for me to really comprehend. I perceive things in the world that are just a little too miraculous for me to think were entirely due to accidental or creation."

He does not think his church is under threat because:

> "Despite us hearing a lot about [church shootings] in the news, I know that realistically it's unlikely. Other things we do every day are actually much riskier than the remote chances of a shooting."

My interview request prompted him to address the spiritual side of his non-vigilant approach to threats, and he said:

> "I think it would come back to the church's peace position of ourselves practicing non-violence and peacemaking, and the term they've used historically, non-resistance. Those deep historical and theological roots of protect yourself by fleeing but not necessarily by fighting."

The pastors from Churches of the Brethren I spoke with had different theological approaches influencing their response to the threat of violence. Chris, who went to a evangelical Christian seminary, says the Hebrew Bible and practicality support his security plan. He admits his approach is theologically different from the larger Church of the Brethren. Dan uses tradition, theology, and practicality to support his decision to not be vigilant for threats.

Mennonite

Both Ed from a liberal Mennonite group and Fred from a conservative Mennonite group cited scripture supporting their peace stances and their religious tradition of martyrdom. When I asked Ed what scripture influences his peace stance, he replied:

> “Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. Be as sheep among wolves. Turn the other cheek. Do good to those who persecute you. I mean, it’s rather pervasive really. Certainly, there’s plenty of blood in the Old Testament. There’s plenty of Paul drawing dividing lines and trying to cast people out of the community in the New Testament. We’re red-letter Christians. [We] follow what Jesus exactly told us [indicated by red text in certain Bible editions] and not what other people said about what Jesus told us. [The] only lens that is true to the Bible we think is the lens of Jesus.”

Ed said that his stance was influenced by Bible passages and his Biblical lens, the Gospels. He pointed out how one’s Biblical lens affects how Christians respond to threats. When I asked Fred the same thing, he added that he believes in the sovereignty of G/god:

> “The verse is about being nonresistant, about turning the other cheek, resisting not evil, and then a general understanding of the sovereignty of God, that the affairs of men are not left to chance.”

The Mennonite pastors addressed how they approached the fear of violence. Ed said,

> “It’s a terrible mix of emotions. The thought [of violence] is terrifying, just absolutely paralyzing that any of these people could just be slain. But at the same time, that fear rolls off when you think about what you’d have to become in order to secure yourself 100% against the world. Let’s start with cars, shall we? If we're worried about dying violently, there are so many threats to our lives. If we had to live in fearful response to each one of them, that was as dangerous as a church shooting or more dangerous, we would just live in cages.”

Fred again mentioned the sovereignty of G/god: “The world is a dangerous place, but we can't live in fear of that. Ultimately, we’re in the hands of God.”

They both accept the results of a peace stance. Ed explained:

> “We’re Mennonites. We’re used to dying for our peace stance. We’re used to telling each other stories about dying for peace. I think that in the community, there is a certain degree of willingness to die rather than to kill. Willingness to die, to prove Jesus right. We hold up [martyrs]. We have a book called the Martyrs Mirror that’s this huge, bigger than a Bible tome. That’s a traditional part of Mennonites services. We don't avoid talking about the potential costs of a peace stance….”

When Ed discussed Elm East’s security plan, he referred to martyrdom and mentioned prayer and the Kingdom of God:

> “People strongly reaffirmed their willingness to try to avoid that the shooter be killed if possible. Whether the best way to do that would be to try to grab him and hold him down with a mask people or try to run. We came down to saying it would depend so much on circumstance, that all you can do is pray that you have clarity in the moment of how to respond…. If people in our church were killed,

> that God would be their health and comfort and would ultimately be vindicated in the eyes of history. [We are] living as though there's no way to bring the kingdom to earth, except to live as though it's already here."

Ed believes the Kingdom of God is here and to live accordingly, without fear. Fred also discussed martyrdom. He said, "Most of our families would have Martyr's Mirrors in their home. That's a collection of stories from early in Anabaptist church life." He didn't mention vindication in the eyes of history, though. Instead, he said martyrdom could promote Mennonites' mission today. He gave an example from the Nickel Mines[29] (Walters, 2016) killings:

> "You think about like Amos Ebersol, the family that lost a daughter at Nickel Mines. They are aware that they have an ability to speak broadly about love and forgiveness and real Christianity in ways that [other] people cannot, who have not lost the child violence like that…. They wish they had their daughter; they wish it hadn't happened, but it did happen. Because it happened, they'd been able to reach countless people because of what they've experienced."

He referred to another Nickel Mines man whose daughter was in a vegetative state:

> "He commented that what happened to his daughter changed his life. It changed who he was. It enabled him to see the love and the strength in the church community. Although he doesn't wish that it happened, I'm paraphrasing him here, he recognizes that their family has received many blessings as a result of this happening."

Ed, the liberal Mennonite, is certain pacifism is the correct interpretation of the Bible. He said that peace was "rather pervasive really" in the Bible, and that "remaining unarmed in churches is a mainstream Christian tenet. How aberrant is it really to carry your sword in church?" Like the Friends, Ed chooses not to be vigilant. Like Dan from the Church of the Brethren, he talks about the low likelihood of violence occurring. Fred, the conservative Mennonite, said that the world was dangerous but also that we should not live in fear because G/god is sovereign. He thinks martyrs can promote the Christian faith.

Restorationist

I learned about Gumtree Grove's theology by observing worship. Like other Restorationist churches (Albanese, 2007), Gumtree Grove leaders model their church after the primitive church described in Acts. A sermon series, "Rooted," was about what to do after becoming Christian and on following the model of Acts. In the first sermon of the series, Gregory said that a church in Nairobi boiled down the primitive church in Acts to the basic activities of devotion, prayer, service and generosity, evangelism, and celebration. In a subsequent sermon, Gabe preached that Christians should be rooted in prayer, that prayer was nourishing, and that people needed to have a personal relationship with God.

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[29] In 2006 in Nickel Mines, PA, a shooter held Amish schoolgirls hostage. He shot 10 girls, killed half, and then shot himself.

The two leaders view the Hebrew Bible through a New Testament lens. For example, Gregory preached that the 10 Commandments were about loving God and one another. To me they read like a list of laws as part of a covenant with G/god. Gregory said that Deut 6:8 (HCSB) says to "Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead." Deut 6:8 could be interpreted as encouraging believers to internalize and pass on scripture. Gregory said Deut 6:8's message was similar to that in Matt 5:16 (ESV), to evangelize: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Restorationists, unlike most other Christian groups, believe Baptism is required to be saved. Gregory preached that people must repent and be baptized to receive the Holy Ghost. He quoted 1 Peter 3:21 (ESV), "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Most other Christian groups believe that verse is allegorical and that baptism is the outward sign of an inward change. (Kimborough, 2003).

Gumtree Grove is moderate in how the pastors preach about sin. Members condemn the sin, not the sinner. Gabe preaches that all are sinners and described how Jesus did not condemn the woman accused of adultery but was uncompromising in condemning her sin. Gabe said that some churches don't condemn sin enough and that others overly focus on condemnation and exclude sinners who they shouldn't. Gabe moved on to discuss Luke 7, where Jesus ate with sinners and didn't condemn them but that he wouldn't compromise his convictions for new cultural norms.

In my interviews, I asked Gregory and Gabe from Gumtree Grove Christian Church, Henry from Hickory Hill Church of Christ, and Larry from Laurel Lowland what theology or scripture supported their stance on the threat of a mass shooting. Gregory believes the Bible speaks of physical and spiritual threats to churches:

> "There are sheep in wolves clothing.[30] Again, that doesn't refer to somebody coming in in the first century with a knife to kill somebody. But to me, it just shows that there are, in the church world, religious world, some people who come in with agendas or just have something in mind that's not helpful but it's harmful."

Gabe and Gregory believe it's appropriate to protect their church community from harm:

> "So, I feel like we protect spiritually, but I think I justify it by saying, and not justified because I think it's arguable in today's times. I don't think most churches even argue this point. I also say it's justified to be able to say, I want to protect you from physical harm. That you feel safe when you come here with your kids like parents drop off their kids. Especially in today's time."

Gabe took a prayerful approach to preparing for violence:

[30] Matthew 7:15 (ESV): Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

> "I just prayed for God's guidance in putting the [security] plan together, and I prayed for the right people. And we still look for the right people. We are not looking for a John Rambo to come in with a head band and a rifle and all this stuff, like, 'Hey, I'm ready to serve on the safety team.' We want someone who is going to have a calm, cool head, something goes wrong and can diffuse the situation fast. That would be our main goal, but mostly just praying that God would provide the right people, and we've got our plan."

Henry isn't very worried about a shooting. He likened it to being struck by lightning, that it's a very remote possibility.[31] When I asked Henry about the spiritual and scriptural influences on his security plan, he said:

> "Yeah, you keep asking about the God thing. Christianity is not a pacifist religion. John the Baptizer was being asked by soldiers how to live their lives. John didn't say, 'Stop being a soldier.' He said, 'Be satisfied with your wages and don't use your authority to intimidate others. Jesus at one time told his disciples, 'When I sent you out in the past, you had no need for anything, but now you're getting ready to go out. After I'm gone, make sure you have the sword with you.' Christians are commanded to take care of their families. Christianity is a proponent of civil authority. Romans 13, 1-7, 1st Peter Chapter 2, verse 15 and on [say] we are to be submissive to the local authority as long as it is not directly contradicting the word of God. What Christianity forbids is not self-defense. It forbids taking the law into your own hands."

Like Henry, Larry believes scripture tells ministers to protect their flock from physical threats:

> "I think about scripture like the one that I mentioned in Acts 20:28 about the importance of the shepherds or the leaders of the church taking heed to the flock that they oversee. And when I've talked to elders, they seem to have a good understanding that that oversight and that caring for is not just spiritual, but it's also physical as much as humanly possible. Obviously, the leaders can't be with the church members 24-7 and can't put a bubble around their church members all the time and protect them. But when they're in the meeting house, as we often call it, they can provide some protection there. I think about 1 Peter 5:2 where it talks about taking the oversight of the flock. Again, that's talking about a spiritual oversight. But when you look at the Bible teaching, it would also seem to indicate that you can't leave out the other domains. I think about the fact that there's a physical domain, a psychological domain, a social domain, and a spiritual domain and when any of those four domains are out of balance, life satisfaction goes down. Well, in the same principle, elders, as much as humanly possible, try to tend to those domains among their members."

He also believes in civil authority and an understanding of the law:

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[31] When Henry said, "I'm not terribly concerned about being struck by lightning. Now watch, I'm going to get struck by lightning tomorrow, and it's going to be your fault, Caroline," I heard thunder boom outside my window. We laughed about it, but I was creeped out.

> "[We] submit ourselves under the authority of the law, Romans Chapter 13, as long as that law does not come in conflict with the will of God. And so that's why we didn't choose just to be… cowboys in the wild west, gunslingers in the church house. We don't have a problem with carrying firearms, but we want to do what's legal, what's right and what would protect the folks physically from harm, what would protect the church financially as well."

Larry believes his security plan needs to be readdressed with scripture and prayer in mind:

> "So as far as [the security plan] being regularly discussed, on a spiritual level, I would be embarrassed to say, not much. It's one of those things where you put it into the place. You talk about it. You pray about it. You put it into place, and then it becomes almost such as common of a part of the process of weekly church as church announcements."

Gumtree Grove's main goals are to increase commitment among members and evangelize in the community. Gregory preached against being lukewarm in Christianity and encouraged listeners to be true, committed followers of Jesus. He said that Jesus hates hypocrites, that we shouldn't hide our sin but instead address it. He said the Christians should be clean on the inside and to let that cleanliness flow into our actions to bring others to Christianity. Gabe preached that he wanted people to be righteous, like Jesus. Gabe quoted 2 Cor 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" Regarding evangelism, George, the youth minister, preached that Christian families must pass on the baton of faith to their children. In another sermon, Gregory warned listeners not to let the next generation forget about God. With respect to evangelizing to the larger community, Gregory preached that Christians should "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:16 ESV). He preached that Christians should help those around them and act as witnesses of their faith to open the door for others to meet Jesus.

The Restorationist pastors all believe the Bible tells them to protect their churches from threats of violence. They believe in obeying civil authority. Gabe and Larry believe prayer should be included in church security. Henry, from the traditional Church of Christ, focused on the practical.

Wesleyan – Methodist

Mary from the Methodist church does not believe she has a particular Biblical lens. She says she teaches from the New and Old Testaments. She is not afraid of the threat of violence and believes her "faith is set that I really trust God to protect me and not being stupid or not, that I'm not wise and cognizant of the world around me." She's more worried**:**

> "that if someone's kid come into our church to visit, that they wouldn't be welcomed because they didn't fit in immediately with everybody's mindset. That to me is more concerning than violence."

Regarding scriptural support for church defense, Mary said:

> "Jesus would not go into a synagogue armed trying to defend. And I'm not a pacifist entirely, either. I'm not. I'm kind of middle of the road on this stuff, but I believe that we need to teach to people that in order to be called followers of Jesus, then we need to act like it, and we need to respond. And we need to look out for our neighbors. It also means as churches that we need to be involved locally and in different efforts to combat homelessness, to combat food insecurity and mental health issues and all of this. That the churches, we can't sit back and wait for somebody else to do this. This is our calling in order to be a follower of Jesus."

Like the Quakers, she believes the route to greater peace is community involvement. Unlike the Quakers, she believes that violence is justified to defend "our neighbors." She extends her beliefs on protecting people from harm to her neighbors, not just those in her church. Her Biblical foundation for the approach is:

> "The Beatitudes. Mathew 5. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. And then loving our neighbor as ourself. And this I preach often that when Jesus talked about loving our neighbor as ourself, he didn't specify if they look like us, act like us, speak like us, eat the same food, dress like us, smell like us. Anything, it just said love your neighbor."

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

Pete from Pawpaw Place Church of God and Rob from Redbud Ridge Church of God share a theology based on the Holy Spirit taking an active, communicative role in their lives. For example, Pete converted to Christianity when G/god spoke directly to him:

> "God tells me, 'I want you into my kingdom.' No, I don't want you. I don't want any part. I know what I got to give up. I'm having fun in my life. 'No, I want you in my kingdom.' And I'm like no, no, no, no. And he keeps telling me he wants me. He says, 'You don't understand. If you don't come to me, the way that you're living, you probably won't live the rest of this year. You don't understand. This could be your last opportunity.' Because I think he knew that when I returned home, I would have dismissed it and would have walked away. And I said, 'OK. You make that preacher give an altar call, and I'll give my heart to you.' And no sooner than I told the Lord that he starts to make an altar call…and so I got saved."

Pete also believes G/god through the Holy Spirit ordered him to the ministry through tongues:

> "The evangelist that was preaching that we were meeting walked up to me. And being a Pentecostal, the Holy Spirit began to move. I started speaking in tongues. He… interpreted what the Holy Ghost was saying and said, 'I've not only called you to sing. And I don't need you to sing, and I don't need you to teach. I've called you to speak my word.'"

Rob of Redbud Ridge said, “God began to deal with me, and I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, and I was going to church,” and that later, “the Lord was dealing with me, to maybe one day be a pastor,” which he did.

Despite his belief that the Holy Ghost communicates directly with him, Pete is humble in his interpretation of the message: “I wouldn’t go as far to say as I know what’s the Devil and what’s not. I don’t have that... Insight?” He thinks people should guard against a mob mentality, “One has a voice, and another gets a voice, and then everybody is jumping on the bandwagon, and it could get out of hand.” To combat unruliness, Christians need to show love: “The first thing God calls us to do is to love God and to love people and through our actions reveal whether we’re loving God or we’re loving people.” He uses prayer to bring peace to the larger community: “The word of God tells us to pray for those who are in authority so that we can lead a quiet, peaceable life… even if that one that’s holding the office isn’t what you want.” Pete prays for politicians but not for his security team, which he views as purely practical.

When it comes to the response to threats, Nick from Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness church said that the world was at war, with liberals influenced by Satan on one side and Christians with God on their side. He said the COVID pandemic was the Devil’s tool to keep people from going to church. He told listeners to engage in spiritual warfare. Pete also spoke about spiritual warfare and how it plays out inside Christians and in our physical world:

> “I’ve taught on spiritual warfare. Not just from outside of the community to impact the church but even in individual lives of how the enemy is trying to cause us to fail, trip up, and it’s a spiritual warfare and the spiritual warfare that’s even going on in our nation. With a lot of the cultural issues that we’re seeing, it’s demonic spirits, I believe, that have been dispatched to cause division, lies, deception…. I talked to a gentleman at another church just a few weeks ago. Their pastor had to step down because of things that occurred in his own life and in spiritual warfare, and it got the best of him. And that gentleman said, ‘Yes, it is spiritual warfare, and we need to pray for leadership because if the enemy can cut the head off [the pastor] and stop that, he infects the whole body [the church].’ When you see a moral failure or anything in a pastor, it doesn’t only affect that local congregation. It affects all, because it breaks down that trust.”

Rob of Redbud Ridge doesn’t fear church violence now as much as before COVID. His approach to security is more practical than theological. When developing the security plan for Redbud Ridge, Rob said, “I think He just gave us wisdom, and He gave us opportunities to talk and to try together. We weren’t much praying. Our prayer would be that we never have to do these things.” Pete incorporated prayer as part of Pawpaw place’s security plan: “We did a little bit of [prayer and training]. Of course, we’d pray. I’d have meetings, and we’d even go through drills.” He said G/god “just gave us wisdom, and He gave us opportunities to talk and to, trying together. We weren’t much praying. Our prayer would be that we never have to do these things.”

Pete and Rob believe the Bible instructs them to protect their churches. Pete believes the Sermon on the Mount reference to “turn the other cheek” is allegorical, that “He [Jesus] was talking about revenge and said that here we’re talking about protecting your congregation.” Rob said:

> "One of my favorite verses in the Bible speaks where a man who neglects his family is worse than an infidel.[32] Part of taking care of a family is not just providing food and clothing and shelter and spiritual nourishment. It's also, I think, providing protection…. I don't think Jesus meant for us just to let them come in our home and do whatever or at church and do whatever."

Pete and Rob view the world as pulsing with physical and spiritual threats, which the Bible and Holy Ghost instruct us to protect ourselves and each other against. Pete and Rob approve of armed defense teams as well as spiritual warfare in the form of prayer for protection.

Baptist

I spoke with Steve from Spruce Springs Baptist Church and Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist Church. When talking about his fear of and preparation for the threat of violence, Steve said:

> "I don't fear death. I would say that when God decides that it's my time to come home, then I'm ready for that. I prefer it to be later than sooner, but I'm not fearful of death and that all goes back to my relationship with Christ and believing that he has forgiven me of my sins and have been made a child of God. And so, I'm not concerned about myself spiritually where I will end up. But at the same time, just thinking of my family, I do believe that I have a responsibility to protect my family and be a leader of my family spiritually and emotionally and practically."

Steve says that the Lord trusts him to protect the congregation and provided theological support:

> "But, as believers, as Christians, we're called to be good stewards of whatever resources the Lord has provided to us. And so that is a good steward of protecting the property, but more importantly, protecting the lives that God has given to us."

Steve says it's his duty as a Christian to protect his family and congregation. He argues that the Bible allows for violent self-defense of those you're responsible for:

> "Theologically, I think every life is sacred and valuable and each person is an image bearer of God. I recognize the significance of taking the life of one image bearer to save another, but there again, one that's a direct threat to my family, and so I'll do what I need to do to protect my family.
>
> "I would say that's probably the general attitude of the staff when it comes to protecting the church family as well. Recognize that there's multiple threats, whether it's active shooter or whether it's someone who's looking to abduct a child or whatever it may be. While we all value human life, we recognize that some people's lives are a threat to others, and so we need to protect those that have been put into our care."

[32] 1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV): But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

He also says threatening situations can be turned into opportunities to evangelize:

> "I think as Christians…Christ certainly teaches us to extend grace and forgiveness. And I think that's where the church can recognize that we have civil authorities that take care of the criminal side of things. But as the church we can in those moments still extend grace and still use it as an opportunity to reach somebody for Christ."

Warren says no offensive violence is warranted, particularly to spread Christianity. He cites both Old and New Testament passages to support the use of defensive violence:

> "When Christ was on trial, I think it was to Pilate, and he said, 'That my kingdom is not of this world. For if it was of this world, then my servants would fight.[33] But they're not. Violence is not the way to spread the Christian faith. Our defense team is defensive completely and absolutely in nature. I think that there is a precedence for that."

> "When Nehemiah was building a wall around Jerusalem…there were [physical] threats made [by] a group of folks who didn't want to see that wall built for economic reasons. Nehemiah instructed the men working on the wall to work with a trowel in one hand and a sword on the other[34]... not to get in a sword fight. But if you see the sword, then perhaps you won't attack. I think it was purely defensive."

> "Exodus Chapter 22, I think, is also a part of the Mosaic Law that if a man was killed as he was breaking into someone's house, if he was killed because the man was defending his property, then there were no charges to be made.[35] So, I think there is a principle there that makes it absolutely permissible to defend oneself and to defend one's property. That I think is pretty clear in the scriptures. But I do think that deadly force should be the absolute last resort."

Steve and Warren applied theology to their security plans differently. Steve says his security plan was designed with practical, not theological, considerations:

> "I haven't given a whole lot of prayerful consideration to it. It really was dictated more by practical application. What do I need to do to protect the congregation and everyone that the Lord's entrusted to us?"

In contrast, Warren's security plan includes practical and spiritual elements:

> "I would say that [the security plan] began as practical, but it migrated very quickly into the spiritual…. [The men on the security team] pray for the safety of

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[33] John 18:36 (KJV): Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

[34] Nehemiah 4:17 (KJV): They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon.

[35] Exodus 22:2 (KJV): If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.

> our congregation. If they are not within the congregation itself and if they're out on the perimeter, they are to be out there praying for the folks who are in that congregation."

Steve and Warren interpret the Bible the same way. They both think that G/god wants them to protect their congregations and that violence is warranted only for self-defense. Steve talked about lamenting the use of violence. The fact that Warren's security team prays might indicate he believes in spiritual warfare, like Pete and Rob from Pentecostal-Holiness churches.

Summary

The groups differ in their interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, the presence of the Kingdom of God, and the Holy Ghost.

Sermon on the Mount

The groups' traditions and Biblical lenses determined what in the Bible they render literal and what allegorical. For example, the peace and defense churches had wildly different interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, and those interpretations correlated with their peace or defense stance.

Of the peace churches, Quakers and Mennonites traditionally believe the Sermon on the Mount is a set of literal laws for our physical lives, such as not taking oaths, nonresistance to violence, and loving one's enemies.[36] Ed, the liberal Mennonite, acknowledges there is violence in the Bible, but he says he's a red-letter Christian and follows first the words and sayings of Jesus. To him the Bible is literal guidance on how to life. Liberal Quakers do not necessarily follow the Bible, so I can't speak to how they treat the Sermon on the Mount specifically. However, Quaker tradition is deeply rooted in their pacifist identity, which, like the Anabaptists, stems from the Sermon on the Mount.

Among the defense churches, Henry, from a Restorationist church, said, "Christianity is not a pacifist religion." He said the advice to "turn the other cheek" was allegorical and referred to not responding to insult. Warren didn't think the Sermon on the Mount was literal. He said "that there's tremendous applications of the Sermon on the Mount to… how we live and how we should strive to live," and that "the Sermon on the Mount is really focused the character, the inward man." Instead of the Sermon on the Mount, Warren looked to Nehemiah for literal advice for Christian defense.

The above churches split evenly along peace/defense lines, with peace churches adhering to the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount due to religious belief of commitment to tradition. The defense churches believed the Sermon on the Mount was allegorical. The one exception was the Churches of the Brethren. I expected the Brethren, a historic peace church, would have a peace stance based on Jesus' example and teachings (Church of the Brethren, 2023), including the Sermon on the Mount. I was wrong. Dan, the pastor from a liberal Church of the Brethren, is pacifist but cites tradition, not the Sermon on the Mount, to support of his peace stance. Chris, the other pastor from a Church of the Brethren, has a defense stance.

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[36] Oaths: Matt 5:33-37; Nonresistance: Matt 5:38-42; Love one's enemies: Matt 5:43-48

The traditional pacifist beliefs of the original Brethren are not enforced, and Chris and Dan are given huge leeway in how they run their churches. The churches who divided along peace/defense lines and beliefs on the Sermon on the Mount all have stronger central, denominational influence on pastors.

Kingdom of God

Traditionally, Quakers and Mennonites believe the Kingdom of God is present now and that they should actively live it out and help establish it on earth by doing good in their communities. The Quakers I met tried to enact the Kingdom of God and better this world, even if they did so more based on tradition than theology. Fred, the conservative Mennonite, and those in his church separated those in the Godly Kingdom from the secular. Mary, the Methodist, like the peace churches, was dedicated to bettering her world through charity and enacting the Kingdom of God on earth.

The defense churches believe the Kingdom of God will return with Jesus' second coming. Warren, a Baptist pastor, doesn't "think that's the churches job to establish the kingdom of God. [Jesus] will bring that with Him." Gumtree Grove promotes charity and evangelism not to enact the Kingdom of God but because the world is broken and the solution is to focus on following God and bringing others to Him. Charity and community relationships are a means to that end. Nathan, the main preacher at Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church preached that the Kingdom of God was nigh and that Jesus' return was imminent. Nick, the guest preacher, said the COVID pandemic was foretold in Revelations and that we were on the cusp of a great spiritual war. Nick encouraged worshippers to engage in battle on combined spiritual, political, and social fronts. Chris from Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren took a defense stance, despite the Brethren's historic peace church roots. He said armed self-defense was warranted and Biblically supported but acknowledged his views differed from other Brethren. He did not mention the Sermon on the Mount nor the Kingdom of God. The defense churches all think the Kingdom of God is distant and that the world is dangerous. They differ in how distant they think the Second Coming is.

The Quakers, Mennonites, and Mary (the Methodist) all believe the Kingdom of God is here. Their theology is positive toward the world, and as expected, they take less vigilant stances. Fred, the conservative Mennonite, trusts in the sovereignty of God to do good. The defense churches, which believe the world is broken, were, as expected, more likely to be vigilant and have armed church defense.

Holy Spirit

The groups differ in their interpretation of the Holy Spirit, but those differences did not fall along peace-defense lines. Quakers and Wesleyans believe the Holy Spirit can communicate directly with and influence people. The Apple Area Friends work to nurture and discern the Inner Light and share messages with the group. They also try to connect with the Inner Light in those who might threaten them. Some Apple Area Friends don't believe in God or the Inner Light but follow Quaker traditions of pacifism and community engagement. Those at Nutmeg Notch call the Holy Spirit down into themselves during vibrant worship. The Gumtree Grove pastors told worshipers to be obedient to the teachings of scripture and did not mention the Holy Spirit while I observed, nor did the Baptist pastors.

Worldviews

RQ1(f) asks how peace and defense churches differ in worldview with respect to the threat of violence. For religious people, theology and worldview overlap, so this section includes information on worldviews but necessarily ties it to theologies. I subdivided my discussion on worldview. The following categories emerged from my notes and transcripts: moral nature of the world and the local region, whether world events are planned or random, and open mindedness.

Quaker

The Apple Area Friends' worldview directly affects community relationships, so I discuss both here. These Friends see the world as flawed and themselves as having an active, physical role in bettering it. For example, they condemned the antisemitic shootings at a synagogue in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA. They sent the Jewish community in Squirrel Hill a card and kosher food. One attender helped distribute free food. Another's full-time job was to help formerly incarcerated people and the homeless. She requested the meeting donate feminine hygiene products to indigent women, which the meeting did. Some attendees publicly promoted peace and rallied to protect the environment. For example, some protested an infrastructure project that could have polluted the environment.

Quakers don't necessarily agree on HOW to make the world a better place, other than they agree on the doctrine of the SPICES: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity Equality, and Sustainability. For instance, some attenders are vegetarian, believe veganism is crucial for sustainability, and can't grasp why others don't agree. Others view hunting as a sustainable human practice and eat meat.

Regarding the moral nature of the world, Amy is a secular humanist in that she doesn't tie good or evil to spiritual forces: "I love the miracle of people connecting and the good that comes of goodwill towards your fellow person." Amy believes war is evil but not necessarily a spiritual evil. She said, "I think war is a terrible thing, for example, I think it is obviously a corrupt and hateful and destructive force in our world." Similarly, Beatrice believes that tying religion and politics is unhealthy. Bonnie laments the polarization of today's world.

When discussing the New River Valley area, Beatrice said, "They are a racist, homophobic bunch of people." She feels threatened by local conservatives "only in the last 10 years or more. Because I think we talked in our Meeting about publishing our stance on gay marriage." She said Boxwood Borough used to leave the meetinghouse doors open, but now it locks them.

None of the Quakers I spoke with mentioned knowing or understanding G/god's plan for the world. Beatrice said:

> "I think of Sandy Hook, what people might say, 'Well, why didn't God protect those kids?' It's like, well, I don't know. I mean, I don't know why. I don't know the whys of some of these things."

Given their worldviews, the Quakers I spoke with had different levels of open mindedness. Amy, Beatrice, and Bonnie all mention the value of diversity of thought and identity within their Meetings. Amy said, "Other people in the [Meeting] are bringing positive things even if you don't agree with them and to listen." Amy loves the fact that Quakers are "seekers" who are

always trying to find new truths. The Boxwood Borough Friends seemed less open-minded. Bonnie wanted her Meeting to be welcome, but she outright rejected guns: “If you want to come into meeting, even if you have concealed carry permit, your gun’s not welcome.” Bonnie said her liberal Quakerism could not be reconciled with more conservative Christ-centered Quakerism that didn’t approve of homosexuality.

The Quakers believe the world is broken, which manifests as war and discrimination. They do not think they can know or influence G/god’s plan. To counter the brokenness in the world, they do charity work for peace and unity.

Brethren

The two pastors from Churches of the Brethren had two different worldviews. Chris, the conservative pastor, said polarization was divisive and that real threats existed in the world. Dan said the world was a mostly safe.

Chris leaves it in G/god’s hands to protect his church from violence. He doesn’t know what G/god’s plan is, though, so Chris has law enforcement as backup in the event of a shooting. Dan is a deist. To him, G/god is distant, benevolent, and doesn’t interfere with the workings of the world.

Regarding open mindedness, Chris seems content with his conservative beliefs, even though they aren’t traditional to the Church of the Brethren. He did not mention seeking more knowledge or different viewpoints. Dan said that to improve his small church, he’d like to bring in people with new perspectives. Valuing other viewpoints indicated open mindedness.

Mennonite

Fred, the conservative Mennonite, spoke about the moral failure of a member in his congregation who was disloyal to his wife. Fred had the disloyal man apologize to his wife and the whole congregation. Fred and others at Fir Forest separate themselves the ungodly secular world. Ed did not mention morality or separation from the secular. He did say that the world was dangerous.

Fred trusts the sovereignty of G/god and that “nothing that could happen to us … would be outside of God's permissive will.” He says conservative Mennonites and Amish understand that the world is dangerous and respond by trusting G/god and forgiving. He points out the positive that has come to the Amish community in the wake of murder and how it enabled church members to increase and spread their faith. Ed said G/god is “our ultimate indicator and guide and protector” but did not mention how tragedy could be positive.

Neither mentioned respecting other viewpoints, and both were certain their beliefs were correct. That view indicated a lack of open mindedness.

Restorationist

The pastors at Gumtree Grove are worried about that state of humanity. Gregory describes the state of moral decline in the world:

> "The world's been broken in our philosophy since Adam and Eve. And so, it's just now, it seems that there are bolder acts of violence. There are bolder acts of evil in the world that affect churches and affect communities. In modern society… some people, for whatever reason, will take a gun and go in and just start randomly shooting people they don't even know and will take the life of a person without even blinking. You see people for whatever reason going into a church building and opening fire. When I started the safety team seven years ago, we had a deputy investigator from the county attending church here. I asked, 'How come we don't see as much in the news about violence in the church.' He said, 'It happens so often, it's not really news.'"

Gregory also fears spiritual deception:

> "Folks who will come in may look good, but on the inside, they have plans that aren't good. [They] either sought disunity or [were] coming in and trying to lead people astray to a new doctrine."

Even though Gregory thinks the world is in moral decline, he does not think shooting will happen at Gumtree Grove. He refuses to wear a bullet-proof vest or carry a gun while he preaches. He says, "If you walk in and you see somebody with a bulletproof vest on and they've got a gun and a rifle, I don't know if I will go to church here."

Larry from Laurel Lowland also says society has become more hostile toward the church:

> "Society has become violent towards the church. Churches used to be a safe place, a sanctuary, and typically people had respect for the church building, but that's not the case anymore. And so, because society has changed, we've had to respond to that. And we need people to feel safe when they're worshiping here."

Larry said society's increasing hatred for the church is because:

> "When life gets cheapened, when the more we pull away from Christian standards, well, of course this is what's going to happen. If this country is not going to be Christian anymore and it's been running away from Christianity and trying to keep God out of every aspect of life, something's going to have to restraints."

Larry says he feels safe in his community, but the elders of his church are more vigilant. He says the security team "puts on that security hat on Sunday, and so it's almost this protective bear." He "finds it off putting to lock all the doors." He wishes the church were more welcoming. Henry said Christians should co-exist with civil authorities.

Henry from Hickory Hill said people were flawed and that the church was pure: "The church is perfect. Problem with the church is there's people in it." He also said science lies to the population to prevent people from being saved. When he learned about the origin of the universe, he thought:

> “It could have happened here, but there really is no science behind it. It’s more of a philosophy, and it wasn’t presented as a philosophy to me. I was bothered because I don't like being lied to.”

Learning about the deception of science made him want to “Deliver those drawn towards death and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter.” [37]

Regarding the sovereignty of G/god, Gregory believes that Christ has intentions for individual lives. The Restorationist pastors didn’t mention G/god’s plan for the world. Gregory did mention respect for other Christian groups. The Restorationists do not speak on topics not directly addressed in the Bible. That approach indicates a certain level of open mindedness and tolerance for different secular beliefs.

Wesleyan – Methodist

Mary said to love your neighbor and that G/god instructs Christians to love and help all. She also said society in general was in moral decline:

> “I think that it’s heartbreaking what’s going on at our borders and the way our justice system works. And how much news play [the missing white woman] got and then people of color get almost none. We’re quick to size people, quick to judge, quick to anger and very slow to cut anybody a break…. There’s not just the tragedy of the week. … As a country we decide who’s dispensable, who can be just thrown by the wayside. It’s just kills me.”

Mary said Christian groups overemphasize individuality and are in moral decline:

> “When you watch the news, it is very disheartening that we place so much emphasis on our individual rights. It’s my right to not get vaccinated. It is my right to carry a gun. It’s my right to tell you exactly how I feel. It’s my right to run you off the road if I’m angry with you. I think a lot of the Christian communities have lost sight of the fact that Jesus never said we had rights to anything, nor did he claim to have them for himself. He looked out for his neighbor.”

She said untrained security teams could be more of a threat than a mass shooter. Mary said it’s up to Christians, not polarized governments, to help the needy:

> “There's work to be done. There’s a lot of work to be done. … So, like the Haitians now, and I think it's faith communities that are going to have to lead the way of saying no, this isn’t right, if they would do that. But I think that the news is so polarizing right now that people just tune step out if it doesn’t play along there.”

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[37] Proverbs 24:11 (KJV)

Mary did not mention G/god's plan for the world or spiritual warfare. She was certain that her belief that Christians shouldn't be individualistic and instead look out for their neighbors. Her certainty could indicate closed-mindedness.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

Pentecostals do not separate theology from worldview because they believe worldly events reflect a greater spiritual war. Pete from the Pawpaw Place Church of God said the world was in moral and spiritual decline:

> "In individual lives the enemy is trying to cause us to fail, trip up, and it's a spiritual warfare and the spiritual warfare that's even going on in our nation. With a lot of the cultural issues that we're seeing, it's demonic spirits, I believe, that have been dispatched to cause division, lies, deception."

Pete said the government was increasingly against Christians:

> If the [Democrats] get in office, we're going to see freedoms being taken away, possibly. And so that's the only reason that we're supporting [Trump] because he's coming out saying that I'm going to support these things."

Pete said the moral decline was because people were turning away from G/god:

> "I think in the day and age and society that we're living in, there's not a fear of God. People don't care what they do. That the threat can be very imminent."

Regarding the sovereignty of G/god, Pete said that people could not do well on their own, that they needed G/god to live whole lives. Pentecostal-Holiness churches believe the Holy Spirit communicates with those who have been "baptized in the Spirit" in real time and tells us how to follow G/god's path. Pete said:

> "As Pentecostal believers, we certainly believe in prophecy and the Lord revealing things into your life that are occurring into your spirit and into your heart. And based upon those things, you can discern what's happening and going all through the gifts of the Spirit."

Pete and Nick both mentioned people could exercise free will, ignore the Holy Spirit, and make decisions against G/god. They believe discernment of the Holy Spirit's message is up to the individual. That view indicates open mindedness for a variety of G/god's plans. But they both also tie religion with politics, so they are more likely to be closed minded with respect to opposing political beliefs they think are unG/godly.

Baptist

Both Baptist pastors I spoke with, Steve and Warren, said the world was in cultural and moral decline. Steve said society was busier now: "People's lives are so busy nowadays trying to be strategic to give them opportunity to connect with other Christians, and it's challenging." He also said threats were increasing: "I think people are becoming more aware of the potential dangers

out there. I do think with the increase is making everybody acutely aware that [a security plan] needs to be in place." He thinks increasing threat is "a reality of the world today."

Warren said there was cultural decline among Christians:

> "Sad as it is… one of the groups that is most guilty, or where we see domestic violence, is among the evangelical Christians. That I think is probably one of our biggest threats is it is from within, not necessarily from out. I would attribute that to the breakdown of the family and the family unit."

He also said the church:

> "Does not enjoy the status that it once did. There is a general decline in our culture and in our society. I don't know that there's a vendetta against the church. I just think that the church had just become a target just like CVS and Walmart. We're out there, and we have resources that people want. And the church doesn't enjoy the immunity from this that it once did because of that cultural shift [from Christianity]."

Warren's response to cultural degradation is for "churches to work at being culturally relevant without losing the foundation of the gospel" and to "become more engaged with our community and with our culture."

Unlike the Mennonites who believe they are helping enact the Kingdom of God, Warren doesn't "think that's the churches job to establish the kingdom of God. He will bring that with Him." Warren believes we're in the "church age," an era of free will where people can ignore G/god. Steve and Warren were humble about serving G/god, but they were certain in their view that the world is in moral decline and that Christianity is the answer. That stance indicates closed mindedness.

Open Mindedness

Common ground influences whether groups can overcome polarization (Mason, 2018). So does open mindedness (Levy, Baab-Guerra, Batt, & Owczarek, 2019; Stenhouse, et al., 2018). Amy describes Quakers as "seekers" who are open mindedly trying to discern the truth. Even if Quakers lack common ground with groups, I expect they would listen to other viewpoints. Dan from the liberal Church of the Brethren said that to improve his small church, he'd like to bring in people with new perspectives. He appears to be open-minded, too. Fred, the conservative Mennonite, said congregation separate themselves from the secular and associate with like-minded groups. Academics and law enforcement should respect conservative Mennonite views. Ed, the liberal Mennonite, thinks the ability to reconcile with others is a virtue. He is a staunch believer in his peace stance. He called it "rather pervasive, really" in the Bible~~,~~ and said, "How abhorrent is it really to carry your sword in church?" He was aware of the theology of defending a church, but I think he would struggle to identify with it and those who hold it, like defense churches and law enforcement.

The Restorationists are more openminded than other Protestant groups because Restorationists believe they shouldn't speak where the Bible doesn't speak. Consequently, they are less inclined

to politicize Christianity or declare spiritual war. Henry from the acapella Church of Christ acknowledges that polarization can be used to create xenophobia and hate and that hate “is an easy emotion to stoke.” He believes Christian self-defense “all too often can break down into groups and look at the division of our country because of that.” Chris from the conservative Church of the Brethren seems content with his conservative beliefs, even though they aren’t traditional to the Church of the Brethren. He did not mention seeking more knowledge or different viewpoints. Warren from Walnut Wash told me that many in the area didn’t trust academe, a sign of closed mindedness.

Summary

RQ1(a) asks how peace and defense churches differ in worldview with respect to the threat of a mass shooting. The groups differ in their definition of evil and whether they think the world is in moral decline.

Every interviewee I spoke with indicated that the world was a dangerous place. For Quakers, evil manifests as war and discrimination. Quakers cope with a dangerous world by deciding not to be vigilant. For the Brethren, evil manifests as physical, worldly threats. For the Mennonites I met, evil could be moral decay among themselves, G/god’s people. Fred, the conservative Mennonite said evil from the secular world was part of G/god’s plan and could ultimately lead to good.

All defense churches (including Mary’s Methodist church) also indicated the world was in moral decline. Mary cites individualism as a cause. Pete and Rob from the Church of God believe we’re in an end-times spiritual war that permeates all aspects of society. Both the Restorationist and Baptist interviewees said American society had become hostile and violent toward the church. Larry, the Restorationist, said hostility toward the church was because of a cultural move away from Christianity. Gregory, the Baptist, said acts of evil had become bolder. Warren, the Baptist, places some of the blame for hostility toward churches on Christians themselves, a threat from within. Gregory is also wary of divisiveness in the church.

All groups, except for some Quakers, believe G/god influences world events. The Mennonites trust G/god’s sovereignty in the world, even though the Mennonites know they can’t understand G/god’s plan. The world is more chaotic to the Brethren, Restorationists, Methodists, and Baptists. These groups acknowledge G/god has a plan, but the chaos of the world means no one can predict it. They think the Kingdom of God is more distant and that people should take a more active role in protecting themselves. The Pentecostal-Holiness groups think that G/god’s plan is being actualized in the secular world and that they have both a physical and spiritual role in enacting it.

There were open- and closed-minded interviewees in both peace and defense churches. I cannot conclude that either group tends to be more open-minded.

Summary of RQ1 Results

RQ1 asks how the (a) communication practices, (b) politics, (c) demographics, (d) community relationships, (e) theologies, and (f) worldviews of peace and defense churches differ with respect to the threat of mass shootings.

My observations and interviews shed light on this question. Frist, regarding decision making, the older and more traditional denominations used consensus-based decision making, and the newer denominations used leadership-led decision making. The peace churches were more likely to share their defense plans with members than the defense groups, except Walnut Wash Baptist church, which informed members of its defense plan so members could respond appropriately. For politics, my data are less informative because I didn't explicitly ask about it in interviews. That said, I found that peace- and defense-orientation did not uniformly reflect liberal and conservative politics. Demographics were equally problematic. Although I observed groups and asked about group size, reporting that information could identify my participants. That said, groups were all or mostly white. With respect to their relationships with their communities, most of the defense church collaborate with law enforcement officers, both active and retired, on their security plans. The peace churches do not. Peace and defense churches work to better their communities in different ways. Peace churches do charity work in their communities, and defense churches focus on evangelism with a charity component.

Theologically, the groups differ with respect to how they treat the Sermon on the Mount, how they perceive the Kingdom of God, and how they interact with the Holy Spirit. The peace churches take "turn the other cheek" from the Sermon on the Mount literally, but the defense churches believe it is allegorical. The peace churches and the Methodists interviewee think the Kingdom of God has arrived but has not yet reached fruition. The defense churches think the Kingdom of God will arrive with the Second Coming and that today's world is dangerous and ungodly. The Quakers, Methodists, and Pentecostal-Holiness interviewees believe they can interact with the Holy Spirit within them. The other groups did not mention the Holy Spirit.

All interviewees think the world is a dangerous place, but they conceptualized that danger differently. To the Brethren interviewees, evil manifests as worldly threats. To the Mennonites, evil is moral decay among themselves, G/god's people. Mennonites think G/god has a plan for them and the secular world, which might include violence for ultimately good purposes. Mary the Methodist cited individualism as a negative force. The Baptist and Restorationists believe we are in cultural decline because people have turned away from the church. The Pentecostal-Holiness groups said that we were in a holy war between G/god and evil and that the holy war had both physical and spiritual components.

Security Plans

RQ2(a) asks how peace and defense churches differ in their practical responses to the threat of mass shootings. Here I describe their security plans for their places of worship and their broader efforts to bring peace to the world.

Quakers

The Apple Area Friends Meeting and Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting do not have formal security plans. They both lock their doors when the building is not occupied. The Apple Area Friends discuss nonviolence training and emergency evacuation drills. The Apple Area Friends post signs on their property, but the signs don't fulfill legal requirements to prosecute trespassers, because the Apple Area Friends want their property to be welcoming. Amy said some at Apple Area would say prayer could stop an attacker. The Boxwood Borough Friends post an

emergency plan on the wall. They will not allow anyone to bring a gun into a meeting, even though that person could protect them from a mass shooter. Both groups try to create a greater peace in their communities by donating food, showing solidarity with LGBTQ communities, helping newly released citizens, and connecting with Black churches. Some pray for government leaders. Despite acknowledging that the world is dangerous, the Quakers refuse to be vigilant. They also refuse to compromise on their peace stance.

Brethren

Chris' former church was in a rural neighborhood, also in the New River Valley area. That church's defense plan was to have members who were deputies sit in the back of the church. The four deputies would arrange among themselves who would attend any given Sunday. They left the sanctuary doors open so Chris could see the foyer while he was preaching. If he saw a threat, he would signal to the deputies to shut the doors and confront the threat. The signal was problematic because Chris said, "Sometimes I would look at them, and I'd be saying something and not thinking about that, and I'd [give the signal] and they were like, they jump up and go." He also had his former church do fire drills and shared the security plan with about a quarter of the church members. Chris' current church, Cottonwood Creek, is near local law enforcement, so Cottonwood Creek doesn't have a security plan.

Dan's church decided that if someone came in Dogwood District church, church members would react peacefully. He said:

> "We don't think it would take us by surprise. If it did, I'm not sure there's much we could do other than duck and cover or hide as quickly as we can. There's plenty of exits from the building as well that are usually only a few feet away."

Mennonite

Ed's liberal Mennonite church has an evacuation plan. Members of the administrative council watch out during services for threats. In the event of an emergency, the council would give attendees instructions on how to hide or flee.

Fred's conservative Mennonite church does not have a formal security plan. Fred said that in the event of a threat:

> "I'm certain most or all of our men would attempt to stop him at the risk of their own lives, but no one would use violence. [They would use] Typically restraint… throw the person down. Shuffle them out of the room. No one is going to have a gun or go get a knife out of the kitchen."

Restorationist

Before COVID, I observed two men at Gumtree Grove who were almost certainly performing security. One was at the intersection of hallways and had a radio. The other was near the entrance to the worship area and had an earbud. Both were wearing clothing that could conceal

handguns. I didn't see cameras in the main hallway or worship area. After COVID, I didn't see radios or earbuds but would occasionally see a man hovering by one of the main doors.

In interviews, I learned that Gabe's security plan was to have one person watching the sanctuary and one or two others monitoring the grounds. Some team members were off-duty law enforcement and carried concealed handguns. The safety team was connected via radio to each other and the classroom teachers. The safety team served as greeters and did not wear identifying clothing.

Henry from Hickory Hill told me about the security at his former Restorationist church, which was not in the New River Valley. Henry took an active role in security:

> "We had police officers in the congregation, which was helpful. They concealed carried. I concealed carry. There were several members that concealed carried. That is one level of protection. The other level of protection was the doors were all locked except for one door, the main door that came into the foyer before you had to go into another door to get into the auditorium, and we had a guard setup there. There's a speaker there so he could hear the whole sermon. There's glass on the door so he can look into the assembly, but at the same time, he was positioned in a way. It's all glass doors for someone to walk up. You couldn't sneak up into that building. We had someone sitting there the whole time. When people would come out to go to the bathroom, he would be there and see them, and they go back and forth. ... [The guard] was [usually] one of the law enforcement officers, but there were times when it was me."

Henry's current church has a similar plan, but he went into less detail:

> "We have members who conceal carry. We don't have a specific security force that's in place, but we have people that conceal carry that know… about that job. One of the elders is in control of the lockdown of the building. That is the doors and the openings. He is always out in the foyer [like at my former church]. There's always one person out who can hear the lesson and everything through the speakers, but he's out, and the building is basically locked down during services."

Larry spoke about security plans at two defense churches, his former church in a southern city and his current, Laurel Lowland. At his old church Larry took a strategic approach that acknowledged the legal realities of having armed civilians in church:

> "Then we started thinking about … a legal standpoint. If somebody were to come in and we're in the South, a lot of us including myself, carry firearms, and if somebody were to come in and we were to shoot them to protect the congregation, what would be the legal ramifications of that? So, … we decided to bring in an attorney to have a long conversation with him about things we needed to be considering.
>
> "In addition to that, we went through the process of securing the building and putting [law enforcement] outside that would maintain security to maintain that

> outside perimeter. Then on the inside, we had people monitoring video, cameras. We decided that from a standpoint of armed people, it would not be our church members. So, we couldn't demand and keep people from carrying their own firearm. Most of the time, we wouldn't know that because you couldn't see them obviously. But at the same time, what we were urging our congregation to do in the event there was a crisis such as that, is that we would allow law enforcement officers to take care of that situation. That would be the best thing for us to do legally."

Larry's security plan reflects his theological approach to the threat of violence: "I think about First Peter 5 and Verse 2 where it talks about taking the oversight of the flock" and says that oversight includes physical security. But Larry also says, "We didn't choose just to be, for lack of better way of putting it, cowboys in the wild west, be gunslingers in the church house." The church hired law enforcement and told civilian members to let the professionals handle a mass shooting.

Before Larry got to Laurel Lowland, his current church had put a security plan into place. The doors were locked during worship. Latecomers were directed to the front door, where they were screened and allowed to enter. One lookout person watched video monitors, and a number of floaters were "scattered throughout the buildings. Some of them were in the auditorium. "It looks like we have a bunch of FBI agents running around here," Larry said. He thinks it's "incredibly distracting to see them walking up and down the hall… and to see that little thing over their ear."

Wesleyan – Methodist

Mary said that before COVID, when more church shootings occurred, Magnolia Marsh locked its doors. She has never addressed church security with Magnolia Marsh members but thinks some carry concealed guns.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

I did not observe security – neither human nor technological – at Nutmeg Notch. My only observation potentially related to security was that Rob's wife and son were in the rearmost pew, closest to the door.

Pawpaw Place Church of God has surveillance cameras. Someone watches the door. The doors are locked a few minutes into the service. Pete asked one member in law enforcement to carry a weapon when he comes to church and implied that some members were armed and prepared to defend the church. The church has not done fire drills or other preparation with members.

Baptist

Spruce Spring Baptist Church consulted with law enforcement professionals for help designing their security plan. Spruce Spring bought insurance that vetted its security plan and covers the fact that the church has an armed security team. Spruce Spring's security is in place during worship and when children are present. Spruce Spring's plan includes dozens of cameras throughout the building and grounds and a room where the cameras are monitored. When security is in place, someone monitors the cameras. An undisclosed number of people on the

security team are on the grounds and connected via radio to each other and the camera room. Only the highly visible front doors are open during worship. The security team is half civilian and half law enforcement or retired law enforcement. All team members wear ~~all are~~ plainclothes and earbuds, but only the law enforcement members are allowed to carry concealed weapons. Steve acknowledged that some civilian members likely also carried concealed weapons. The Sunday School rooms have curtains to cut off visibility and wedges to prevent entry. During large events, Spruce Spring hires uniformed law enforcement to provide security and a visible presence. Spruce Spring's security plan does not include a prayer or spiritual component.

Walnut Wash Baptist Church leaders consulted with an outside attorney for help designing its security plan to make sure "the congregation would be protected legally." Walnut Wash's security team wears arm bands. Warren said, "Our congregation know that our security team is in place." Church leadership told the congregation what to do in the event of violence. The congregation has not been drilled on how to respond, though. The security plan has layers so that any threats would be detected before they reach the congregation. The first layer is cameras that someone monitors. The second is a plan to "secure the folks within the building," and "then as a last resort, we do have men posted within the congregation during the worship service." The security team prays for those in the congregation while the team works. Children are registered for Sunday School, and only the parent is allowed to pick them up.

Summary of RQ2 Results

RQ2(a) asks how peace and defense churches differ in their practical responses to the threat of mass shootings. Here I describe their security plans for their places of worship and their broader efforts to bring peace to the world.

Table 12 lists which groups have some common security plan components. Peace churches are shaded. Unexpected results are boxed. With respect of the first part of RQ2, of the defense churches, six of eight have formal security plans. The two that don't are smaller. Of the peace churches, five of six do not have a defense plan. The sixth group, liberal Mennonites, have a plan to evacuate. Similarly, all defense church interviewees acknowledged that some members carry concealed handguns and that those members are prepared to defend the group. Of the peace churches, only the conservative Brethren rely on an armed member or security team to defend them. The conservative Brethren interviewee said that his beliefs are different from the church's peace teachings and that pastors have a lot of autonomy. The Quakers, Pentecostal-Holiness churches, and one Baptist group include prayer or reliance on the Holy Ghost for protection from threats. The conservative Mennonites trust that harm is part of G/god's plan. To create a greater social peace, the peace churches and Methodists do works of charity in their communities. The defense churches try to create a greater peace through evangelism.

Table 12.
Security Plan Components and Religious Groups

Group	Formal Security Team	Cameras and Radios	LEO*	Civilian Concealed Carry**	Community Outreach***
Apple Area Friends Meeting	No	No	No	No	Aid
Boxwood Borough Friends Meeting	No	No	No	No	Aid
Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren	No	No	Yes	Yes	-
Dogwood District Church of the Brethren	No	No	No	No	-
Elm East Liberal Mennonite Fellowship	No	No	No	No	-
Fir Forest Conservative Mennonite Fellowship	No	No	No	No	Aid & Evangelism
Gumtree Grove Christian Church	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Aid & Evangelism
Hickory Hill Church of Christ (Acapella)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Laurel Lowland Church of Christ	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-
Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church	No	No	No	Yes	Aid
Pawpaw Place Church of God	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Evangelism
Redbud Ridge Church of God	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Evangelism
Spruce Spring Baptist Church (SBC)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Aid & Evangelism
Walnut Wash Baptist Church (Independent)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Aid & Evangelism

*Includes if law enforcement were consulted in developing the plan, if law enforcement is on the security team, and if the church hires law enforcement.
**Includes plainclothes concealed carry as part of the security team and acknowledgement that members are probably carrying weapons.
***The group's plan to bring about peace in the greater community.

Chapter 16: Results - Differences in Security Plans

RQ2(b) asks how differences in security plans between groups stem from the findings in RQ1. RQ1 asks how the (a) communication practices, (b) politics, (c) demographics, (d) community relationships, (e) theologies, and (f) worldviews of peace and defense churches differ with respect to the threat of mass shootings. I answer RQ2 in order of the components of RQ1. For this analysis, I group the Magnolia Marsh United Methodist Church with the peace churches and the Cottonwood Creek Church of the Brethren with defense churches.

Communication Practices

All peace churches took a nonviolent response to the threat of violence. Most involved all members in developing the plan. In response to threats, the Apple Area Friends included all attendees when they developed a security plan. They communicated that plan with everyone in the congregation. The Boxwood Brough Friends had one member develop the safety plan and post it on the wall for all to see. The liberal Dogwood District Church of the Brethren reached consensus on an evacuation plan and shared it with all in the congregation. The conservative Mennonites never discussed a security plan internally. The Magnolia March Methodists are small and also reached consensus on their plan. The difference in security communication practices among peace churches depended on the size of the group. The smaller groups communicated with everyone in the congregation regarding security. The larger groups, the conservative and liberal Mennonites, did not. The Mennonites' not involving all in defense plan communication could be because Mennonites homogenously endorse pacifism and martyrdom; no debate is needed regarding defense plans.

None of the defense churches involved all members in developing the security plan. Instead, the defense churches consulted with law enforcement and legal advisors. Only Walnut Wash Baptist Church had visible security and told members about the church security plan.

The peace churches are more likely to believe in congregational involvement. The defense churches are leadership-led, which extends to their security team and plan. Only the security team would lead the groups' self-defense.

Politics

Among peace churches, tradition and theology had a greater influence on their security plans than politics. The Quaker groups, the liberal Brethren, and the liberal Mennonites are all politically liberal. The outlier was the conservative Mennonites, who are apolitical but who believe in traditional gender and sexual roles. Yet the Mennonites' adherence to peace and separation from the secular mean they still have a nonresistant security plan. All of my interviewees from defense churches had conservative stances and believed that culture was degrading. Like most conservatives, they believed in gun ownership and concealed carry of weapons in church for protection.

Demographics

The groups' members were all or mostly white, though I cannot speak to the correlation of race to the security plan. The size of the group correlated with how it developed and enacted the

group's security plans. In general, the peace churches were smaller and involved the congregation in security plan development and enactment. It was easier for a small church to reach consensus and train its members. In general, the defense churches were larger and didn't involve the congregations in the security plan. Including everyone in the security plan decision making would be chaotic. The exception was the conservative Mennonite church, which is medium-sized and governs itself using consensus. However, the conservative Mennonites were homogenously committed to congregational involvement and to peace, so consensus was assumed.

Community Relationships

Relationship with Academe
The Friends and liberal Mennonites were quick to agree to participate in this research. They welcomed me, an academic. Many at Apple Area Friends Meeting have graduate degrees, understand research, and have connections with academic institutions. Ed from Elm East, the liberal Mennonite fellowship, is highly educated. Chris and Dan from Churches of the Brethren are also educated and were happy speak with me.

Baptist and Restorationist groups declined to participate more than any other groups. During recruiting, Baptists and Restorations were more skeptical and vigilant. For example, a member of one Baptist group that declined to be observed confronted me, questioned my motivation, and expressed fear of being unfairly portrayed. A member of a Restorationist group declined to be observed for the same reasons but was not confrontational. One Baptist group declined to be interviewed because the group did not want to share information about its security. Warren told me that historically, Baptists and Pentecostal-Holiness believers in the New River Valley area had been suspicious of academics. Rob and Pete from the Churches of God were not highly educated. The Pentecostal-Holiness preachers were deeply committed to evangelism, though, which might be why they consented to be interviewed by an academic.

Relationship with Law Enforcement
The groups' relationships with local law enforcement correlated with the groups' security plans. Among the peace churches, the Apple Area Friends did not follow law enforcement advice on security. The Boxwood Borough Friends never sought it. The liberal Brethren, Methodists, and Mennonites didn't mention law enforcement, and the conservative Mennonites were not likely to make connections with secular institutions. All took an explicit peace stance except for the liberal Methodists, who chose not to be vigilant. Instead, Mary, the Methodist, assumed someone in her group carried a concealed gun. All the defense churches leveraged law enforcement in their security plans – either in development, training, and/or on their security teams.

Charity Work
The group's relationship with local communities varied. The Quakers and conservative Mennonites mentioned charity work, as did the liberal Methodist's website. The Quakers' and Mennonites' security plans included bettering the broader community through charity. The defense churches discussed mission work tied with charity.

Theologies

The peace churches, except for the liberal Methodists, hold to the peace testimony. They think the Sermon on the Mount is literal instruction for how to live in today's world. They try to enact the Kingdom of God on earth. Their security plans reflect that belief in nonviolence and bettering the larger community. Conversely, The defense churches think the Kingdom of God will come with Jesus' Second Coming and think the Sermon on the Mount is allegorical. Their defense plans, which include armed responders, reflect their belief that G/god does not instruct them to be peaceful.

The Quakers and Pentecostal-Holiness groups all think the Holy Spirit is active in their lives, but the Holy Ghost's influence on their security plans is different. One Quaker interviewee said that reaching out to the Inner Light in people would reduce their threat. Nick at Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church said spiritual war and physical war were intertwined. Other groups did not mention the Holy Spirit. Belief in the Holy Spirit correlated with whether a group's security plan had a prayer or spiritual component, which the Quakers and Pentecostal-Holiness groups had. Of the defense churches, only Walnut Wash Baptist church used prayer in its security plan.

Worldview

The peace churches have different worldviews. To Quakers, evil is war and discrimination, and they combat it with charity. Fred, the conservative Mennonite, spoke about addressing morality among his group and individual mission projects. Conservative Mennonites hold themselves separate from the secular world. Mary, the liberal Methodist, believes individualism is hurting our society and that acting like Jesus will solve that problem. Dan from the liberal Church of the Brethren believes G/god does not interfere in the daily lives of humans. The peace churches' stances and subsequent security plans are based more on tradition and theology than worldview.

All defense churches think the world is in moral decline, largely because of a cultural shift away from Christianity. In general, they fear violence is more imminent than the peace churches. Defense churches all prepare for violence with armed security. The Pentecostal-Holiness churches think the material and spiritual worlds are intertwined and, in addition to armed security, they engage in spiritual warfare.

Summary

RQ2 asks how the (a) peace and defense churches differ in their practical responses to the threat of mass shootings, and (b) how those differences stem from the findings in RQ1. RQ1 asks how the (a) communication practices, (b) politics, (c) demographics, (d) community relationships, (e) theologies, and (f) worldviews of peace and defense churches differ with respect to the threat of mass shootings. In this section, I will relate the RQ1 findings to security plans and answer RQ2(b). I first discuss the findings in the context of RQ1. Then I discuss and compare peace and defense churches in general.

Regarding RQ1(a), the peace churches I interacted with were more likely to work as a group to reach consensus about security than defense churches, which were all leadership led. The peace churches were almost all smaller than the defense churches, so consensus was more practical.

Creating a security plan takes time and decision making, which a leadership-led group can do more efficiently. Regarding RQ1(b) I do not have enough information about groups' politics to tie them to security plans. RQ1(c) addresses group demographics, but the groups were homogenous, so I couldn't use demographics other than group size, which I addressed above, to consider effect on security plans, either. The groups' relationships with the community (RQ1(d)) was related to their security plans. The defense churches I interacted with all involved or mentioned law enforcement as part of their security planning. The peace churches, except the conservative Brethren, did not.

The groups' theologies (RQ1e) also correlated with their security plans. The peace churches I interacted with (except the conservative Brethren) took literally the Sermon on the Mount's pacifist teachings and did not have armed security. These peace churches believed they should be pacifist to enact or help establish the Kingdom of God. The defense churches I researched viewed the Sermon on the Mount as allegorical and had armed security. These defense churches thought the Kingdom of God would arrive with the Second Coming (except Methodists who believe it has arrived but not reached fruition). Belief in an active, involved Holy Ghost correlated with a defense plan having a prayer or Inner Light component, but belief in the Holy Ghost did not correlate with peace or defense orientation.

For RQ1(f) on group worldview, all groups believe the world is dangerous, so that did not correlate with their security plans. Their belief in the root of the danger did differ, though, which affected their efforts to create a broader peace. The peace churches I researched variously believe worldly threats stem from cultural decay, violence, individualism, and Christians' moral decay. The Quakers and Mennonites do works of charity in their local communities to bring a broader peace. The defense churches were unified in their belief that people turning away from G/god and the church was causing a moral decline. So, they focused on evangelism as the way to create broader peace.

Peace vs. Defense Churches

The Apple Area and Boxwood Borough Friends Meetings have security plans based on resisting nonviolently, being welcoming, and doing greater good in the community. Their security plans are a result of theological and traditional commitment to peace. Theologically, Quakers believe the Inner Light exists in all people and that connecting with it peacefully can diffuse violence, as can refusing to fight. Quakers believe they can directly experience G/god and bring greater peace by living out their faith in this world. That belief underlies their commitment to using the Inner Light to diffuse violence and their charity work to promote peace (Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 2021). Amy from Apple Area specifically discussed reaching the Inner Light in others and how nonresistance was a viable, practical approach to the threat of violence. Boxwood Borough's community involvement revolves around liberal political topics – supporting the LGBTQ and Black communities. Boxwood Borough fears backlash from surrounding conservatives because of their liberal stance, but they do not reach out to those conservatives.

Dogwood District Church of the Brethren also has a peace-centered security plan. Dan didn't address theological reasons. Instead, Dogwood District's plan was based on the historical traditions of his church.

Like the Quakers and Brethren, the Mennonite groups both took peace stances because of their shared belief in the peace testimony. But their security plans differed. The liberal Mennonites at Elm East delegated emergency preparedness to their administrative council. The conservative Mennonites at Fir Forest did not discuss an emergency plan and assumed men in the group would physically overwhelm an attacker. The liberal Mennonites had leadership-driven decision making, so the leaders assumed responsibility. The conservative Mennonites had Amish roots and choose not to address secular issues such as the potential threat of violence. The conservative Mennonites also used congregational-based leadership.

The defense churches are far more similar to each other than the peace churches with respect to their communication, politics, demographics, community relationships, theology, worldview, and security plans.

The defense churches all had leadership design the security plan. That approach makes sense given they are larger groups. The defense churches are conservative and endorse gun ownership and concealed carry. They think the world is in moral decline and Christianity is the solution. They do mission work and charity, but the goal is more evangelism than bettering society materially and socially. To them, evangelism will result in peace. They all believe the Kingdom of God is not present and the Sermon on the Mount isn’t literal, so they can use violence to defend themselves. They all believe in armed security. They differ in how organized their security plans are. The larger groups have formal security plans with cameras and preparedness training. The smaller ones rely on members or law enforcement carrying concealed weapons.

This chapter has addressed my first two research questions. My third research question’s first part asks what common ground exists between peace churches, defense churches, academics, and emergency-preparedness professionals. The next chapter, Chapter 16: Results - Differences in Security Plans Ground, addresses that topic.

Chapter 17: Discussion

Common Ground

RQ3(a) asks what common ground exists between peace and defense church's perspectives on the threat of violence and (b) what common ground exists between religious groups, academics, and emergency preparedness experts. I used the Cambridge Academic Dictionary's definition of common ground: "Shared interests, beliefs, or opinions between two people or groups of people who disagree about most other subjects" (Cambridge University Press, 2008). To answer RQ3(a), I looked to the results of my observations and interviews described in the prior chapters. To address RQ3(b), I again used what I learned from my observations and interviews of Christian groups and the information I wrote in Chapter 8: Academic Views of Christians, Law Enforcement, and Violence, Chapter 9: Emergency Preparedness Views of Christians, Academics, and Violence, Chapter 10: The Demographics of Polarization, and Chapter 11: Prior Attempts to Bridge Divides.

Communication Practices

For the purpose of this research, communication practices describe how religious groups, academics, and law enforcement communicate among themselves and make decisions regarding the threat of violence. Two communicative practices emerged from the data: how a group communicated to design its security plan and whether or not leaders told members about the plan itself. Peace churches, defense churches, academics, and law enforcement have almost nothing in common with respect to these communication practices.

The peace churches I interacted with, except the conservative Brethren, make decisions, including decisions about security plans, by consensus. The defense churches I interacted with, except the small Methodist church, use leadership-led decision making. Academic institutions use leadership-led decision making informed by various councils and stakeholders, with ultimate decisions made by a governing board or leader (Gerber, 2015). Law enforcement agencies' decisions are governed by the law and politics, followed by the employee hierarchy (Flemming, 2010). The groups have little in common with how they communicate internally about security planning and response. Whether the churches I researched communicated their security plans with members did not depend on their peace or defense orientation. Some did communicate; some didn't. Academic institutions' security partners share basic security plan information and train members as they see fit (Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training, 2020). Law enforcement professionals, including those working at universities, do not share their security plans with others because that knowledge could be exploited by bad actors. Common ground in communication practices cannot be identified nor leveraged to create mutual understanding between religious groups, academics, and emergency-preparedness professionals.

Politics

Religious groups, academics, and law enforcement have different political ideologies according to my research in the introductory chapters. Mainline Christians, including all peace churches, are 58% liberal or moderate, and evangelical Christians, typically defense-oriented, are 40% liberal or moderate (Pew Research Center, 2021). Defense churches, typically Evangelical

Christian, are more likely to be Republicans (Pew Research Center, 2021), and in turn, Republicans are less likely to see the value in higher education (Salhortra, 2022) and academics. My observations and interviews with peace and defense churches confirmed that peace churches leaned more liberal and that defense churches leaned more conservative. In comparison, those with post-graduate degrees, including academics, are 54% liberal. A survey of 96 law enforcement officers found that 51% were conservative Republicans and 30% were liberal Democrats (Woods & Blackman, 2021).

Therefore, among the four groups, my review of the literature and research results indicate defense churches and law enforcement are more likely to share a political ideology, as do peace churches and academics.

Demographics

In this section I discuss the groups' demographics of education and religion. Political ideology could be included here, but because it was a separate element of my research questions, I wrote about it separately. That said, education, religion, and political ideology are intertwined, so this section ties back to politics.

Education

Academics and Christian groups in general have different demographics with respect to education, religion, and political ideology (discussed above). Regarding education, the vast majority of tenure-track professors have terminal degrees, typically a Ph.D., in their field (Wroblewski, 2020). In contrast, less than 15% of U.S. Christians have masters or doctorates (Pew Research Center, 2021). Among the groups I interacted with, the interviewees from peace churches all had secular graduate and/or undergraduate degrees. Five out of nine of interviewees from defense churches had completed secular undergraduate or graduate degrees, and the two Pentecostal-Holiness preachers hadn't completed either secular or religious undergraduate studies. U.S. police officers are, on average, less educated than both academics and Christians (Pew Research Center, 2018; Sokaru, 2023). Demographically speaking, Academics do not share a common educational background with either Christians or law enforcement.

Level of education and the tendency toward liberal ideology correlate. Those with post-graduate degrees (not necessarily academics) are 54% liberal, compared to those with high school diplomas or less. That group is only 26% liberal (Pew Research Center, 2018). Because academics as a whole are more educated than Christians and education correlates with liberalism, academics are as a whole more liberal than Christians, as stated in the section on politics.

Religion

Christians by nature are religious. In contrast, U.S. professors are less likely to be religious (Gross & Simmons, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2015). There will be more common ground between religious academics and Christians than irreligious academics and Christians. Military officers, the closest proxy I could find to law enforcement officers, are as likely to be religious as the general population and more likely to be religious than academics (Gross & Simmons, 2009; Kamarck, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015), so there is more common ground between the military and Christians than the military and academics.

Like the demographic of education, common ground in religiosity exists between Christians and the military, but not between the prior two groups and academics.

Community Relationships

In this section I discuss commonalities and differences of the Christian groups I studied in interacting with academic community members and the community at large.

Relating to Academe

I did not ask the Christian groups specifically how they felt about interacting with academe. I represented academe, so doing so would have been confrontational, and it would have been socially awkward for them to express skepticism. That said, some interviewees spontaneously mentioned higher education and their view of academe. One interviewee described how Christians in Appalachia have a historical mistrust of academics and lack of desire to interact with academics. From my point of view, I felt I connected better with interviewees who have had post-graduate education. Police views on academics are characterized by a lack of understanding and trust (Huey & Mitchell, 2018).

I learned from interviews and observations which Christian groups would be more or less likely to have common ground with academics. Among peace churches, the Quakers groups have both highly educated and working-class members. The members more exposed to academe are more likely to share common ground with academics because of their shared interest. Conservative Mennonite tradition is to isolate from the secular in general, including academe. Liberal Mennonite tradition is to engage more with the outside world, as evidenced by Ed's secular and religious education. Dan, the liberal Brethren pastor, works in technology and believes science is G/god's work. He has that in common with academics in science and engineering. Among the defense churches, Warren from Walnut Wash Baptist church told me that many in traditional Appalachian Baptist churches are skeptical of the highly educated, a hinderance to common ground. Henry, the Restorationist pastor, thinks science can deceive people and prevent them from embracing the word of G/god. So, Henry has little in common with academics in science. Mary from Magnolia March Methodist Church said education might lead to what she saw as destructive individualism and hinder common ground with academics:

> "Well, I think that I have found that over the years that the higher the degree of education, the harder the nut to crack, because a lot of folks that are highly educated or had been at their professions for a long time have a tendency to rely more on themselves. And that's the basic differences that we [Christians] don't rely on ourselves. We rely on God's imprint on our lives to make a difference in how we operate. It comes differently than being self-sustaining."

People have an affinity for similar people. Education can be a point of similarity or difference (Seidman, 2018). Academics will tend to have more affinity to religious people with higher education. Law-enforcement officers will tend to have more affinity to religious people with less educational attainment. There is no obvious common ground between all three groups, the religious, academics, and law-enforcement officers, regarding education, but there is common ground between academics and highly educated Christians.

Relating to the Community at Large
All of the Christian groups I interacted with try to combat the world's danger and moral decline but do so in different ways. Some pray. Some are involved in politics. Some perform charity, and some perform missions work. But they all work to better society. Academics try to better their world by creating new knowledge, whether or not it is immediately actionably. Law enforcement officers want information that is immediately applicable to catching and prosecuting criminals (Goode & Lumsden, 2016).

All three groups want to improve the world, a point of common understanding.

Theology

Christian groups have the common ground in that they all believe in a loving G/god (Froese & Bader, 2010), which can be a bridge between peace and defense churches. My observations and interviews found that peace and defense churches, except liberal Quakers who don't necessarily believe in G/god, accept that the world has spiritual forces, be it religion, the Holy Ghost, or spiritual warfare. Non-theist Quakers value the rights and views of those who are spiritual, because all Christian and non-religious messages are shared and accepted in Meeting for Worship. Religious groups' common understanding that metaphysical forces exist can also be used to promote mutual understanding.

Demographically, academics are less likely to be religious than the general population, so they are less likely to share common ground with religious groups than law enforcement officers, who are as religious as the general population (Gross & Simmons, 2009; Kamarck, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2015).

Worldview

Two aspects of worldview, epistemology and fear of violence, surfaced after I read about and observed my groups of interest.

Epistemology
Epistemology is a philosophical concept regarding how humans gain knowledge. Many academics have a naturalistic and/or positivist epistemology and do not think supernatural beings or events, including religion, exist (Richardson, 2014). Those with naturalist worldviews think the best way to gain knowledge is the scientific method. Christian epistemologies necessarily include discernment of G/god's plan through scripture and the Holy Ghost. Law enforcement epistemologies involve finding evidence, specific knowledge with the specific purpose of contributing to convicting criminals. To the police, evidence takes on an almost sacred role in investigations (Canter, 2004). Religious groups, academics, and law enforcement do not share an epistemology, so epistemology cannot be leveraged as common ground.

Fear of Violence
University and K12 instructors are increasingly afraid of violence (Abrams, 2022; McMurtrie, 2015). Law-enforcement personnel take fear of violence to another level because they are trained to look for threats everywhere. To them, the world is a perennially dangerous place, and many end up being hyper vigilant (Gilmartin, 1986). Similarly, all but one of the religious groups I researched view the world as a dangerous, negative place. The Quakers spoke about church and

synagogue shootings, racism, and homophobia. Chris, the conservative pastor at a Church of the Brethren, said polarization was negative and real-world threats exist. Mennonite tradition is to separate from the secular world to better act out the Kingdom of God. Ed, the conservative Mennonite pastor, talked about violent events and how Mennonites and Amish responded. The Restorationist interviewees said the world was in moral decline, partly because people had turned away from the church. The Wesleyan and Baptist interviewees said the same thing, that the world was in moral decline. The one exception was Dan, the liberal part-time pastor at a Church of the Brethren and full-time engineer, who said the world was mostly safe.

Peace churches, defense churches, academics, and law enforcement personnel have common ground in that they are all afraid of violence.

Security Plan

Most Protestant churches have security plans. But whether Protestant churches have armed security depends on denomination. On average, evangelical and Pentecostal churches are far more likely to have armed defense than mainline Protestant churches (Earls, 2020a).

All the Christian groups I interacted with want to make sure their people are safe, evidenced by their security plans. The Quakers lock their doors, and Boxwood Borough also posts emergency information on the wall. The liberal Brethren have an evacuation plan, and the conservative Brethren have an armed defense plan. The liberal Mennonites have an evacuation plan, and the conservative Mennonites expect men from the congregation to shuffle out a threatening person. The Methodists have a defense plan. The Pentecostal-Holiness groups have physical and spiritual defense plans. The Restorationists and Baptists have armed defense plans. All the groups differ in enacting that safety, but the fact that they all have plans and expectations means they all value human life.

The groups differ in how they involve spiritual forces in their defense plans, but all groups' approaches have a Biblical foundation. The Quakers believe in leveraging an attacker's Inner Light (John 1:9) to diffuse violence. The Mennonites trust in G/god's plan (Rom 8:28) and embrace martyrdom (Matt 5:10). The Methodists love their neighbors (Mark 12:31) and perform charity (Heb 13:16) in the hope of bettering the community. The Pentecostal-Holiness and one Baptist group pray as part of the security plan (Psalm 32:7). The Gumtree Grove Restorationists prayed for guidance (James 1:5) when they developed the plan. Other Restorationist and Baptist groups believe that G/god through scripture instructs them to protect themselves (1 Tim 5:8) but enact that protection in a purely practical way. Christian groups share the common ground of sourcing wisdom from scripture. The verses I referred to are examples (see Table 13). Many others exist.

Table 13.
Biblical Support of Defense Plans

Bible Reference	Verse (ESV)
Psalm 32:7	You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
Matt 5:10	Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Mark 12:31	You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.
John 1:9	The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.
Rom 8:28	And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
1 Tim 5:8	But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
Heb 13:16	Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.
James 1:5	If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Academic institutions rely on university security teams to protect them from violence. In 2015, 92% of public colleges and universities had their own police officers (Anderson, 2015), so faculty members are not necessarily focused on vigilance. On the contrary, law enforcement personnel protect others. They live in a world of constant vigilance (Gilmartin, 1986). Police officers are trained to be vigilant because vigilance keeps them alive. They are not trained in Christian pacifism.

Peace churches and defense churches have security plans, but how they are implemented depends on each faith group’s theology. Academic institutions have security plans, too. Defense church and academic institutions security plans overwhelmingly rely on law enforcement. Common ground exists between religious groups and academics because both rely on law enforcement to protect them. Law enforcement has common ground with religious groups and academics because police officers are tasked with security.

Summary of Common Ground

My research, observations, and interviews found a few viewpoints or topics that were touched on by most or all of the four groups mentioned in RQ3: Peace churches, defense churches, academics, and emergency-preparedness professionals. Table 14 has a summary. Areas of common ground are boxed and shaded.

Table 14
Comparison of Viewpoints among Peace Churches, Defense Churches, Academe, and Emergency-Preparedness Professionals

Viewpoint or Topic	Peace Churches	Defense Churches	Academe	Emergency Preparedness
1. Communication: Decision making process	Consensus [i]	Mostly leadership led [i]	Leadership led [l]	Leadership led [l]
2. Communication: Share security plan	Mostly yes [i]	Mostly no [i]	No [l]	No [l]
3. Politics	More liberal [i,o,l]	More conservative [i,o,l]	More liberal [l]	More conservative [l]
4. Demographics: College degree percent	Mainline Protestant: 33% [i,l]	Evangelical Protestant: 21% [i,l]	100% [i]	Police: 9% [l]
5. Demographics: Religion	100% [l]	100% [l]	69% [l]	Military: 76% [l]
6. Community Relationships: Academe	Varies [i,l]	Varies [i,l]	n/a	Skeptical [l]
7. Community Relationships: Participate in research	More willing [i]	Less willing [i]	n/a	n/a
8. Community Relationships: We want to…	Improve the world [o,i,l]	Improve the world [o,i,l]	Improve the world [l,38]	Protect ourselves and others [l]
9. Community Relationships: We improve the world by…	Enacting the Kingdom of God [i,l]	Evangelism [o,i,l]	Creating knowledge [l]	Convicting criminals [l]
10. Theology	Loving G/god [l]	Loving G/god [l]	69% religious [l]	Military: 76% religious [l]
11. Worldview: Epistemology	G/god-based [o,i,l]	G/god-based [o,i,l]	Naturalistic [l]	Evidence-based [l]
12. Worldview: Fear of violence	Afraid	Afraid	Afraid	Afraid
13. Security Plan: We want to…	Keep safe [i]	Keep safe [i]	Stay safe [l]	Keep safe [l]
14. Security Plan: Vigilance	Choose to not be vigilant [o,i]	Choose to be vigilant [i]	Are less vigilant [l,39]	Are super-vigilant [l]
15. Security Plan: Based on…	Scripture [i]	Scripture & practice [i]	Practice & others intervening [l]	Practice [l]

[o] – based on observations | [i] – based on interviews | [l] – based on literature review

[38] (Chankseliana & McCowen, 2021)
[39] (U.K. Government, 2020)

Common ground between peace churches, defense churches, academics, and law enforcement personnel is scant: Belief in some metaphysical element to human existence (most academics), a desire to improve the world, fear of violence, and a desire to stay safe. All these areas of common ground are least-common-denominator. Belief in myth and/or religion is a cultural universal (Brown, 2000). U.S. school systems have taught me from a young age to try to improve the world. The natural human response to a threat is fear and desire to be safe.

My research did not find compelling, unique areas of common ground between peace churches, defense churches, academics, and emergency-preparedness professionals. It did, however, uncover surprising details regarding about how leaders in peace and defense churches conceive of the world. I will discuss these details in the next section. In the next chapter, I will leverage both the areas of common ground and details about peace and defense churches to design an educational program to reduce misunderstanding and promote collaboration.

Surprises and Nuances

Because I didn't find compelling common ground among peace churches, defense churches, academics, and law-enforcement professionals, I decided to identify specific points of tension between the groups. The areas of common ground and tension spots can inform an educational program to bring the groups together.

The different Christian groups I worked with did not fit into neat peace or defense categories along denominational lines. Mary, the Methodist, was more peace-oriented, and Henry from the Church of the Brethren was defense-oriented. The two Quaker groups were different from each other with respect to emergency preparedness, as were the Restorationist groups. The peace churches referenced the same verses and had different security plans. The defense churches referenced a different set of common verses and had different security plans. Security varied with respect to visibility, technology, use of guns, training, and legal issues. For example, restorationist Gregory would not carry a gun, but Restorationist Larry did. So, each group designed a security plan based on its individual perspectives and needs more than on scripture. The key takeaway is that academics and law enforcement cannot make accurate assumptions about a religious group's security preferences based on the group's denomination.

What's more, many interviewees were conflicted about their own peace and defense stances. For example, Quaker Amy said that pacifist approaches were effective because it took two people to have a fight. She also said she'd be tempted to use violence to protect her family. Amy considered any physical defense violence. Conservative Mennonite Fred said that in response to an attack, "No one would use violence. [They would use] typically restraint, throw the person down, shuffle them out of the room. No one is going to have a gun or go get a knife out of the kitchen." Fred didn't consider throwing someone down violence, but using weapons was. Liberal Mennonite Ed compared the threat of a shooting with driving, but the two were not similar. Chris from a Church of the Brethren described the conflict between trusting G/god to protect people and using violence to protect themselves. The Apple Area Friends and Restorationists Gregory and Larry struggled to find a balance between security and approachability. Gregory preached "love thy neighbor" and that people should have compassion for all, but he didn't preach pacifism. The Pentecostal-Holiness groups considered violence part of G/god's war with Satan. So, another key takeaway is that religious groups' response to the threat of violence might not be

consistent or make practical (or any) sense to others. The lack of consistency and practicality can create a disconnect with academics, whose focus is knowledge and sensemaking, and law enforcement, whose focus is on protecting the public.

A summary of key takeaways is:

1. Academics and law enforcement can't make accurate assumptions about religious groups based on denomination.
2. Religious groups' response to the threat of violence might not be internally consistent or make sense.

Chapter 18: Human-Centered Design

My last research question ends with: "how can common ground be leveraged to promote mutual respect and understanding." Promoting mutual respect and understanding is an educational objective, so I designed an educational program. Like any human-centered design, I used information I gathered about the human and situational contexts where the program would be used (Lyon, Brewer, & Arean, 2020), specifically the common ground among groups and the key takeaways I discovered about peace and defense churches. I also leveraged tried-and-true pedagogy (Astesano, 2019; Virginia Tech, 2023) and best practices for intercultural education (Georgetown University, 2023).

Scope and Effectiveness

I want the course to be effective and implementable. So, the course will be only for law-enforcement professionals because:

- Law enforcement personnel will be more motivated to go through the program because their job is preventing and stopping violence, including at churches, with whom they frequently collaborate. Academic's and religious peoples' profession isn't to protect the public.
- Law enforcement personnel are a small, identifiable, and reachable percent of the population. It would be easier to disseminate the program to police departments in the New River Valley than it would be to disseminate it to all area churches and higher educational institutions.
- Targeting law enforcement will be the most effective, because far fewer people would have to be educated to make a meaningful impact.
- Effective pedagogy is targeted to student experiences and perspectives. Law enforcement personnel have similar training regarding violence prevention. Religious people and academics have very dissimilar backgrounds and education.

The course cannot be effectively offered in a classroom because of logistical limitations on police officers and trainers. So, the materials will be offered online. There are no resources for grading assignments or giving students feedback, so training will be done asynchronously with automatically graded assessments.

Students

The targeted students are law-enforcement officers, who are less internally diverse than academics and religious persons. While I acknowledge that law enforcement officers aren't entirely homogenous, I will target the course to the typical police officer, as defined by my literature review. That typical officer is:

- Practical, results-driven, and trained to be constantly vigilant (Engel & Whalen, 2010; Gilmartin, 1986).
- Religious or exposed to religious coworkers (Gross & Simmons, 2009).
- Not necessarily highly educated (Sokaru, 2023).

Student Outcomes

The first part of educational design is identifying clear student outcomes. This course's outcomes stem from the research results listed in Table 14 and key takeaways from Chapter 17. The focus is on areas of misunderstanding and common ground and the best practices covered in the next section.

Knowledge Outcomes

After the course, students should know that:

1. Police culture is distinct (Best Practices 1 below).
2. Religious people see the world through a religious lens, which is not as easily defined as practical action and evidence (Table 14, #11).
3. Evangelical Christians are often defense oriented; peace churches make a conscious, Bible-based decision to not be vigilant; and Pentecostal-Holiness groups merge spiritual with physical warfare (Table 14, #14).
4. One can't make assumptions about a group based on its denomination alone (key takeaway #2).
5. Not all religious groups use hierarchal decision-making. Other decision-making methods take more time and can be frustrating to outsiders, especially those who are results-driven (Table 14, #1).
6. A group's preferred defense plan might not make practical sense (key takeaway #1).
7. All religious groups believe in a loving G/god, are afraid of violence, and want to stay safe (Table 14, #10, 12 & 13).

Skills Outcomes

After the course, students should be able to implement strategies to effectively develop safety/security plans with religious groups who:

1. Share the common goal of wanting to be safe.
2. Largely aren't as vigilant as law enforcement.
3. Don't base decisions on practicality alone.

Pedagogical Best Practices

Intercultural Training

The course is effectively intercultural training. Best practices for intercultural training include (Georgetown University, 2023):

1. Learning about one's own culture and the concept of naturalization.
2. Identifying differences in values and perceptions between one's own culture and that of others.
3. Observing how one reacts to other cultures.

General

Student motivation, engagement, and outcomes are fostered by (Astesano, 2019; Virginia Tech, 2023):

- Clear, attainable objectives that are transparent to students throughout the course
- Transparent and timely grading
- Clear structure and logical course progression
- Important and applicable content
- Information available in multiple modalities
- Frequent, low-stakes assessments
- Knowledgeable and credible instructor
- Topics of study related to prior student knowledge, goals, and local current events
- In-class activities applying the topics
- Applications outside the classroom, especially local applications
- Physical movement
- Social interaction
- Choices in lessons to empower students
- Mentors perceived as similar to students

The following best practices apply to an online, asynchronous course for police officers:

4. Clear, attainable objectives that are transparent to students throughout the course
5. Clear structure and logical course progression
6. Important and applicable content
7. Information available in multiple modalities
8. Frequent, low-stakes assessments
9. Knowledgeable and credible instructor
10. Instructor perceived as mentor similar to students
11. Topics of study related to prior student knowledge, goals, and local current events
12. Applications outside the classroom, especially local applications

Course Structure and Design

Simplified Course Objectives

The course should avoid the jargon in the knowledge outcomes (KO) and skills outcomes (SO) above because we cannot assume students will know it. Therefore, the simplified course objectives (CO) are below. Each CO is tied to one or more KO, SO, or best practice (BP).

Students will learn:

1. To identify police culture (KO 1, BP 1)
2. How religious groups see the world (KO 2)
3. About example Christian groups' views on violence (KO 3)
4. That denomination alone can't define a group (KO 4)
5. How different groups make decisions about safety (KO 5)

6. Challenges to making practical security plans (KO 6)
7. What police and religious groups have in common (KO 7)
8. How to effectively interact with different religious groups to create safety plans (SO 1-3)

The course structure is based on the above best practices. See Table 15.

Table 15
Course Design and Best Practices

Course Element	Best Practice
Online, asynchronous modality	Logistics of instructing police officers
Content designed to promote intercultural understanding	1. Learning about one's own culture and the concept of naturalization. 2. Identifying differences in values and perceptions between one's own culture and that of others. 3. Observing how one reacts to other cultures.
Course map/outline presented early	4. Clear, attainable objectives that are transparent to students throughout the course 5. Clear structure and logical course progression
Examples of church violence and successes and failures in church security	6. Important and applicable content
Video and written content; all speech has captions	7. Information available in multiple modalities
Many low-stakes quizzes	8. Frequent, low-stakes assessments
Police officer who runs a church security team as presenter	9. Knowledgeable and credible instructor 10. Mentor perceived as similar to students
References to local and/or current events	11. Topics of study related to prior student knowledge, goals, and local current events
Local applications with religious groups in the New River Valley.	12. Applications outside the classroom especially local applications

Course Outline

The course outline meshes the course objectives with best practices. I abbreviate these elements as follows:

- Course Objective (CO)
- Best Practice (BP)

I don't speak like a law-enforcement narrator would. To ensure students relate to the narrator, I had a retired Army NCO review the script for academic jargon.

Module 1: Course Overview

Goals 1

- Promote student interest in the topic, motivate students to learn, and present a respectable, relatable instructor (BP 6,9,10,11).
- Present the course outline (BP 4,5).

Video 1

Visual	**Audio**	**Script with Captions**
Stock footage of the aftermaths of church shootings. Include recent shootings, e.g. the Jehovah's Witnesses shooting in Hamburg on 3/9/2023 and local shootings, e.g. the shooting in Charleston, SC**,** on 6/17/2015	Sad, dramatic music	Captions Only: Describing the video clip locations and dates. Narrator: Church shootings are a reality, and it's our job to respond to them. Our job may include helping churches and religious groups create safety plans about how to respond to the threat of an active shooter.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield background	None	Narrator: Even though most officers and deputies are religious, misunderstandings can impact your ability to effectively work with religious groups. This short course will help you adapt to the needs of different religious communities. I'm [name], and I [law enforcement job history]. I run the security team at [church name or general description] (BP 9,10)
Students will learn: 1. To identify police culture 2. How religious groups see the world 3. About example Christian groups' views on violence 4. That denomination alone can't define a group 5. How different groups make decisions about safety 6. The challenges to making practical security plans 7. What police and religious groups have in common 8. How to effectively interact with different religious groups to create safety plans	None	Narrator: Throughout this course, you will learn about differences between law enforcement officers and religious groups, about the diversity of religious groups and how that diversity applies to their safety plans, and commonalities between us all. When we're done, you should have the tools to help religious groups protect themselves from harm (BP 4).

Module 1: Course Overview Module 2: Police Culture Module 3: Example Religious Perspectives & Caveats Module 4: How Religious Groups Make Safety Plans Module 5: Common Ground Module 6: Application	None	Narrator: The course is a series of videos and short quizzes. There are 6 modules. The course is designed to take only 15 minutes, and you can stop anytime and come back where you left off (BP 5). So, let's get started.

Module 2: Police Culture

Goals 2

- Teach about police culture, how culture develops, and how one reacts to different cultures (BP 1,2,3; CO 1)

Video 2

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Stock footage of police training focused on vigilance; short clips of officers on the street giving advice about being vigilant; cut to visual only for narrator.	Compelling music	Captions Only: Speech in videos Narrator: All of us, myself included, are constantly on the lookout for threats. We are taught this in the academy, by our superiors, and by our experiences on the street.
Clips of police describing civilian viewpoints: "We're wolves protecting sheep," "We help those who can't help themselves," "Most people don't see the threats I do."	Compelling music	Captions Only: Speech in videos Narrator: It's true that vigilance is an aspect of our own culture that most other professions don't share.
Visual only for narrator of police watching over/guarding civilians, cuts to visuals of Thanksgiving and people driving on the left.	None	Narrator: We often take vigilance for granted, view it as normal, just like most Americans take driving on the right side of the road for granted. But both are cultural and not the same for different people (BP 1). Please complete the short activity to help you think about what you take for granted.

Activity: Module 2

This quiz has students click on cultural differences that Americans and law enforcement are likely to take for granted. When they click on an item, a description of how it's cultural appears.

What do you take for granted? Select all that apply.

	Item	Cultural Description *Description shows when item is clicked*
☐	Speaking English	Most, but not all, areas in the U.S. are predominately English speaking.
☐	Pet dogs	In many countries people think dogs are unclean or a source of food.
☐	Diseases are spread by bacteria and viruses	Some people think disease is caused by spirits.
☐	My Christianity	80% of Americans are religious. 63% of Americans are Christian.
☐	Working under a boss	Some groups collaborate to make decisions instead of having a leader make them.
☐	My firearm	In 19 countries, police officers don't carry guns.
☐	The world is dangerous	Some people think the world is safe. Most people go about their lives as if the world is safe.
☐	Threats could be anywhere	Most people don't view the world in terms of threats and safety and are still safe.

Module 3: Example Religious Perspectives & Caveats

Goals 3

Teach about example Christian groups' views on violence (CO3) and the caveat that denomination alone can't define a group (CO4).

(BP 1,2,3)

Video 3

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Montage of different groups worshipping: Catholic, Acapella Christian Church, Quaker, Baptist, Pentecostal-Holiness	Matches the audio from the clip	Narrator: There are a lot more Christian denominations out there than you might realize, with a ton of perspectives on violence and how to respond to it. What's more, an individual church or person's perspectives don't necessarily align with the teachings of their denomination.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	Narrator: I'm a [narrator's religion], and a lot of us believe [narrator's perspective on violence]. But I'm also a cop, so I can't necessarily say why I see violence the way I do. It's probably a mixture of both my religion and training. Members of my church defense team remain vigilant while serving, and we all wear identifiable clothing. To us, threats are "bad guys" out to do us physical harm, no matter the method.

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
		Not all religious groups and their safety teams have the same perspective, though.
Video of Quaker worship, followed by video of a Quaker describing the peace testimony.	Matches audio and speech from clip	Captions Only: Speech in videos Narrator: For example, Quakers are a peace church. They think that the best way to diffuse violence is to not react or partake, even in self-defense. They take “love your neighbor as yourself” from the Bible very seriously and would not harm an attacker.
Video of Quakers working with law enforcement	None	Narrator: Working with peace churches is challenging for people like us. We are trained to use all of our tools to protect ourselves and those in our care. It would seem to us that they have a death wish.
Cut to narrator with law enforcement shield and Quaker symbols behind him.	None	Narrator: Peace churches have a couple of decent points, though. It does take two to fight, and de-escalation is a good way to prevent violence. And, like everyone else, members of peace churches want to be safe. When advising their safety plans, we must work within their constraints if we can be any help, which we can. We can help them design alarm systems and evacuation plans, for example. Pressing a violent-defense agenda will alienate them.
Video of Pentecostal-Holiness worship Cut to narrator with law enforcement shield and a Pentecostal symbol behind him	Matches clip	Narrator: There are a lot of Pentecostal churches in the New River Valley. A good number of you probably go to them. So, those that do probably learned about spiritual warfare.
Cut to tasteful image of cosmic battle Cut to narrator with law enforcement shield and a Pentecostal symbol behind him		Narrator: To many Pentecostals, spiritual warfare means that violence has a spiritual component and may reflect a battle between good and evil, God and Satan. Whether or not you think the same, you should consider asking a Pentecostal church, for example, how it would incorporate prayer in its defense plan.

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Video of church ushers welcoming people in on a Sunday morning Video of a church security team closing and locking the door Cut to narrator law enforcement shield and various protestant symbols behind him	None	Narrator: Some churches recognize there is a threat of violence but don't want recognizable security. They think it might deter worshippers, regardless of the church's denomination. So, for example, we should be sure to ask what safety plan will work in that church instead of assuming what works based on its denomination.
Cut to narrator law enforcement shield and various Christian symbols behind him	None	For the next activity, act as if you were consulting with a church on developing a safety plan.

Activity: Module 3

You are speaking with leaders of different religious groups. Match the leader's statement with what you think is the best response.

Church Leader Statement	Appropriate Response *Correct answer displays after they choose*
I don't want uniformed security. It scares people away.	OK. Let's figure out how to make your security team fade into the background.
Distractor	Uniformed security can be a good deterrent. You should reconsider.
If some bad actor comes in here and starts shooting, I want him taken out ASAP, but I don't want to risk a crossfire and shootout.	If you have armed security, team members need to be very well trained to neutralize threats quickly and accurately.
We don't want the attacker to be harmed in any way.	I understand. Let's see how we can plan a lockdown. Or an evacuation plan with an alarm?
Distractor	To stop attackers, you have to risk harming them.
God is sovereign in all things. We recognize we might get hurt because we're nonviolent, but if so, it's part of God's plan.	I'm not sure I understand your approach. What do you think you can do to stay safe and still be true to your nonviolence?
Distractor	It's God's plan to keep you safe, but you must do some of the work yourselves.
If a shooting happens, God will protect us because He's on our side. We will pray for protection.	Prayer is important. Are there any other security components you'd like to implement? Like a watchperson or evacuation route?
Distractor	I've never seen a miracle happen. Let's focus on the practical.

Module 4: How Religious Groups Make Safety Plans & Challenges to Collaboration

Goals 4

Teach about how different groups make safety plans (CO 5) and challenges to making practical security plans (CO 6)

Video 4

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Images of legal codes, police procedures, checklists, etc.	None	Narrator: As law enforcement officers we are surrounded by regulations. Most regulations and procedures make sense because they keep us safe and help us do our jobs. Even when we don't particularly agree with a regulation, we generally understand the need for it, and we adhere to it.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	Narrator: Religious people by nature view the world from a religious perspective. For example, whether you're religious or not, the concept of "faith" isn't a logical thought. It's a religious belief. Similarly, religious groups' requirements for their security plans might not make sense to us. We might not agree with the plan. The plan might contradict itself, or the plan might not be as practical as the group thinks. In these cases, we just have to offer our advice and in the end do what we can to help the church stay safe and be OK with ambiguity.

Module 5: Common Ground

Goals 5

- Teach the things that religious groups and police have in common (CO 7)

Video 5

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Video of people arguing	None	Narrator: Even though religious groups are different in what they want for security—and many of them don't see security the same way we do—we all share some important wants.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	For example, no one wants to be a victim of violence to be safe—even people who are pacifists. Plus, almost everyone in a religious group and most police believe in God. If you can't see eye to eye with a church leader, remind the both of you about these areas of common ground to try to get the conversation back on track.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	In the next activity, identify common views among all religious groups and police.

Activity 5
Does the statement reflect common ground between different churches and law enforcement? Check true or false and see if your answer is correct.

Statement	**True or False** *Correct answer displays after they choose*
Church shooters need to be stopped by any means possible.	False
It’s better to diffuse a situation than resort to violence.	True
Making a safety plan that follows the Bible is the most important.	False
People need to be constantly aware of possible threats.	False
People don’t want to get shot.	True
We need to pray to help deter or stop attackers.	False
I believe in God or a greater power.	True
Guns aren’t bad. It’s the people who use them wrong who are bad.	False
Violence is Satan’s way of stopping us from coming to church.	False

Module 6: Recap and Application

Goals 6
Teach strategies for working with groups that (CO 8):

- Share the common goal of wanting to be safe
- Mostly aren’t as vigilant as law enforcement
- Don’t always make practical decisions

Video 6

Visual	Audio	Script with Captions
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	Narrator: To wrap up this short course, I want to share some more strategies with you about how to collaborate with religious groups to prepare for the event of a mass shooting.
Recap: • All want to be safe. • Religious people see the world through their religion's lens. • Different religious groups have different approaches to the threat of violence, even if they share a denomination. • A religious group's approach to the threat of violence might not make practical sense.	None	Narrator: I covered that we all share the common ground of wanting to be safe. We police differ from religious people because religious people see the world through a religious lens. We tend to be more practical. What's more, religious groups have different approaches to the threat of violence, even those in the same denomination. To make things even more challenging, a group's approach to the threat of violence might not even make sense.
Strategies for working with religious groups: • Don't make assumptions about what a group wants for security. Listen instead. • Respect a group's decision, even if it doesn't make sense. Do what you can to design a security plan that's in accordance with the church's beliefs. • If you struggle to relate to a group, remind all that you all want to stay safe. • If you're religious, share that with the group to create common ground. • Don't be afraid to include spiritual elements in the security plan, for example prayer for guidance and protection.	None	Narrator: How do we help? I covered some techniques already. I'll go over them together here. First, be sure not to make assumptions about what a group wants, even if you're familiar with the denomination. Many pastors and leaders have the autonomy to decide on security because the denomination doesn't speak to it, or because they don't have denominational leadership. If you don't agree with a group's security plan, or it makes no practical sense to you, don't freak out. Do what you can do help the church make a plan that follows its beliefs. Having a plan in place, any plan, is better than nothing. If you're not relating to a group, remember and remind everyone about your common ground, particularly if you share a religion. You're working with religious groups – so don't be afraid to include religion in the defense plan.
Narrator with law-enforcement shield and different denominational symbols in the background	None	Narrator: Thank you for taking this short course. I hope it makes you more effective cops and keeps our churches and other religious people safer!

Chapter 19: Conclusion

This research sought to connect three different groups (academe, churches, and law enforcement) with the goal of keeping churches safe from a mass shooter. I conducted observations at three churches and interviews at 14 churches. The common ground I found between all groups was fear of violence, desire to be safe, and a general belief in metaphysical forces. Other key takeaways were that outsiders could not make accurate assumptions about religious groups based on denomination and that a religious groups' response to the threat of violence might not be internally consistent or make sense to outsiders.

To make sure the human-centered design stemming from my research results was effective and applicable, I limited the target audience to police officers because they were the easiest to identify and contact and because their job was to counter violence. The course for law enforcement officers' learning objectives stemmed directly from the research results and instructional design best practices. I made sure the course was not written in academic jargon.

Conducting this research taught me that, despite my grand plan to unite these disparate groups, I needed a specific program for a specific, motivated audience for that program to be effective.

I was disappointed to have to reduce the rich qualitative data I collected into the specific pieces that informed my practical design. I learned about how some Christian groups think and operate, and that information can be used in the future for other design goals, for example humanizing religious groups to those academics who feel negatively toward religion or finding ways to make connections to those evangelical Christians who have historically mistrusted academics.

Future Plans

I created a course outline for training police to better collaborate with religious groups on defending against a mass shooter. Next steps would be to investigate grants or other funding that would enable me to create the course itself or hire someone else to do so.

I didn't adequately observe Pentecostal-Holiness groups, the largest growing Christian tradition in the world. Future work could include ethnographic observations at the Church of God (Cleveland, TN) churches because members have the least education of any religious group in the U.S. and would likely be the most disconnected with academe.

Because I observed only churches, I couldn't draw rich conclusions regarding academics and law enforcement officers. Future research would include observations and interviews with those groups, so that I could understand firsthand how they feel about the others and potentially design other courses to increase mutual understanding.

I learned how the history of Christianity in the U.S. is uniquely American. I learned why the U.S. has such a broad range of religious worldviews and beliefs. I think others should similarly broaden their perspectives. This project also taught me ethnographic research methods, particularly to be patient, withhold judgment, and view qualitative data holistically. I teach undergraduate students who know little or nothing about the New River Valley. I wish they could learn the same lessons I did, that Christianity cannot be reduced to denomination, and that to learn, you should participate. So, I would love to create a course on contemporary Christianity

with an ethnographic component. Students would learn about the unique and complex history of Christianity in the U.S. and tie that historical knowledge to local Christian groups whom they observe. Such a course would fit within two of Virginia Tech's general education ("Pathways") requirements: Reasoning in the Social Sciences and Critical Thinking in the Humanities. The course would be unique because the Department of Religion and Culture at Virginia Tech infrequently offers a course on contemporary Christianity, and that course does not have an ethnographic component. Plus, the same department offers a course on ethnographic field methods, but it's online and focused on other cultures, not people in the New River Valley. Merging contemporary Christianity with a course that requires fieldwork would give students a chance to get involved in the community, understand their American peers, and learn firsthand how to do ethnographic research.

Chapter 20: Epilogue

It's important for ethnographers to discuss their expectations and experiences. I do so here to show my work was thoughtful, complete, and reflective. For some groups I had intellectual expectations about their denominations in light of my readings. For other groups, I had strong social and emotional expectations because of my experiences and/or what I heard from others. I discuss the expectations I had for each group and how and why the group did or didn't meet them.

Quakers

Intellectual Expectations

In light of my preliminary readings, I expected the Apple Area and Boxwood Borough to be mostly white, practice silent worship, engage in liberal politics, engage with the community, embrace a peace doctrine, respond to threats peacefully, and not have an armed defense plan in the event of a mass shooting. My observations and interviews met my expectations with one exception. Bonnie told me Boxwood Borough Friends wouldn't let her voice be heard with respect to emergency preparedness.

Emotional Expectations

My emotional expectation for the Apple Area Friends Meeting was that it would be like the Quakers I knew in childhood: warm, supportive, and safe. Quaker camp was one of the only places I fit in; I was "cool" even! At first Apple Area met my expectations. When I suggested wording for signage, Alyza told me, "You speak good Quaker" and "Welcome home." I got extra attention because I was new and comparatively young. Worship messages were of peace and support. Yet I realized members were more human than the idyllic Quakers of my childhood. Anton routinely fell asleep during Meetings for Worship. Alyza would bump him awake or the other worshipers would ignore his snores. During worship, participants fidgeted, fumbled with words, and laughed. Even though they wholeheartedly followed Quaker ways, they had a hard time agreeing on simple things.

After about six months, Apple Area members no longer singled me out to greet. Adam became increasingly snarky in Meetings for Business, and Alicia increasingly negative. The two had personal reasons to be depressed; both their spouses were frail. What surprised me was the other members and attenders. Avery and Abby cackled along with Adam's quips. Amber all but rolled her eyes at Alicia's complaints. Once, a young, vibrant couple attended Apple Area's Meeting for Worship. They drank from straws, against Quaker tradition. So, older attendees created official advice to not drink in meeting. I never saw the young couple again. Then COVID hit. Amelia, the woman who repeatedly suggested the church serve the larger community to prevent violence, died alone. I used to spend extra time with her because I felt she was ignored. Ashley took over for Anton as Clerk and treated me with condescension. Apple Area Friends Meeting focused on memorializing their deceased and almost-deceased members. Discussions about outreach evolved into circular chats about newspaper advertising and plans to educate new attenders.

I love their philosophy of peace and consensus, but I learned Quaker Meetings are like any other groups of people. Friction exists. But with Quakers' mild, respectful manners, the friction is harder to see. Apple Area is a small, fiercely traditional, and aging group. Those factors make outreach challenging. I hope that in 10 years the Apple Area Friends Meeting is still there.

Brethren

I expected the Churches of the Brethren to reflect their Anabaptist and Pietist roots – to connect personally with G/god, enact Christianity in the world, to practice nonresistance to violence (Zuck, 2002), and to obey Christian teaching (Church of the Brethren, 2021). Cottonwood Creek and Dogwood District Churches of the Brethren did not meet those expectations. As I learned from Chris, pastors have a great deal of leeway in how they run their individual churches. Theologically, Chris is a conservative Christian who believes in violent, armed self-defense and political Christianity (the view "that the country that we're living in right now…. was founded clearly on Christian principles"). He believes the world is a dangerous place and that G/god protects his church. Dan is a deist and does not follow Christian teaching nor discuss connecting with G/god. He does not believe G/god has a hand in worldly events. He does not think a mass shooting is likely and would react peacefully by running. Neither spoke of charity work or enacting Christianity in the world.

Mennonites

The Mennonites surprised me in a few ways. I didn't know that liberal Mennonites use leadership-led decision making. I thought they would use congregational decision making. I didn't know conservative Mennonites typically have Amish roots or that they did individual mission work. What most surprised me, though, was their lack of humility. Ed, the liberal Mennonite said the peace message in the Bible "is pervasive, really" and was certain in that attestation. Fred the conservative Mennonite repeatedly spoke of a national leadership position he held and of the personal connections with respected speakers in the community and families whose loved ones were martyred in recent violent events.

Restorationist

Intellectual Expectations

I expected to witness Restorationist theology: trying to recreate the primitive church in Acts, believing Baptism is required for salvation, viewing the Bible through the lens of the New Testament, and evangelism. Restorationists met those expectations. Gumtree Grove is large, white, and mixed age with male leadership. Those leaders view the world through a lens of evangelism and believe the best way to improve society is to bring more people to Jesus. To do that, they preach that Christians should be pure, honest with themselves, and dedicated to that mission. Restorationists avoided politics.

Emotional Expectations

I was told that Gumtree Grove Christian Church preaches strongly against homosexuality and that the church excluded women from leadership positions, so I expected it to be conservative and vigilant. A former coworker of mine attends there, and she is a bright, warm, and giving

woman, so I also expected the church to be welcoming. My observations and interviews taught me that the group's views are far more nuanced than "Republican" and "anti-gay."

Gabe taught about sexual sin but not homosexuality. I asked him after a worship service if the church softened its stance on homosexuality, and he stressed to me it didn't. I wasn't there long enough to know if that claim was true. Gumtree Grove is a warm, welcoming place. Gregory and Gabe remembered me. I'm pretty sure Gavin laughed at me, though, because I'm bad at remembering appointments and once showed up there during the wrong week. I loved singing. I sang at my childhood Baptist church and forgot how much I enjoy it.

The Gumtree Grove leaders were humbler than I expected and less vigilant. Gregory refused to wear a bullet-proof vest or have visible security. He wanted to be sure his church was welcoming. Staff meetings began with discussions of the prior sermon and what could be improved. Gregory in one sermon said he wondered if he had faith like the Christians in Afghanistan. He said he found them inspiring. He sometimes wondered if it was selfish of him to travel on mission trips, too, because of the expense. Church members seemed like genuinely good people.

Like Gregory, Larry showed surprising humility. When he talked about his security plan, he said:

> "As I talk about some of the things that I dislike about the safety team … we're in process, and we're still trying to figure things out as churches and as society, I think. ... This is part of our objective as Christians, to continue to do better with our process."

His humility reminded me of Amy from Apple Area Friends Meeting, who said she was still seeking answers regarding pacifism and how she would respond if her children were threatened.

Gregory disappointed me twice, which I believe was because he was never educated in multiculturalism. Once was when his being apolitical caused him to miss an opportunity to make connections between polarized groups. He preached about reaching out to people who were struggling emotionally, physically, and spiritually. He missed the chance to ask church members to reach out to people they disagree with or those from another cultural background. He again showed he lacked a multicultural perspective when he said that he was able to walk in Africans' shoes because he spent an afternoon making manure compost. He didn't realize that locals probably saw him as someone who could leave whenever he wanted, not have to cook with wood fire, and not have to watch his children die of preventable diseases.

Wesleyan – Methodist

I expected Magnolia March United Methodist Church, a small country church, to be very conservative, despite having a female pastor. Instead, Mary was liberal. She made disdainful comments about the conservativism in the region and among other religious groups. I wondered why she even lived in Appalachia.

Wesleyan – Pentecostal-Holiness

Intellectual Expectations

I came to Nutmeg Notch Pentecostal-Holiness Church with fewer expectations than I had for Apple Area or Gumtree Grove. I expected vibrant worship from a Pentecostal-Holiness group but didn't know how it would manifest. It ended up being less vibrant than I expected and not like the Methodist camp meetings described in my readings—where people shook and collapsed (Finke & Stark, 2014). At Nutmeg Notch, some spoke in tongues, but only one person danced at the front of the pulpit. The tongues sounded like mock Hebrew. I expected lively, contemporary music, but Nutmeg Notch sang traditional hymns. I expected the Pentecostal-Holiness groups to take a typical conservative Christian stance, not to openly discuss spiritual warfare and political Christianity. After speaking with other Pentecostal-Holiness pastors and believers, I realized that sermons vary wildly in both message and participation. My experience could have been an outlier.

Emotional Expectations

I was scared to attend a Pentecostal-Holiness church. When I lived in Boston, a friend told me that a movie about a Pentecostal children's camp was the scariest horror movie he had seen. My mother taught me that Pentecostals were crazy. My childhood Southern Baptist Church taught that speaking in tongues ended with the Book of Acts. While I was at Nutmeg Notch, I was horrified. I was glad I was wearing a mask, so others wouldn't see my shock when Nick said he wished liberals would shut up and when he pretended to dodge attacks from the Devil. I was sad that Nick preached views that weren't informed or nuanced and that he derided people who didn't come to church or who came but didn't worship vibrantly.

Later, after I spoke with Rob from Redbud Ridge, I realized that many Pentecostal-Holiness preachers were humbler than Nick seemed. Rob said running his church was like driving a bus: People come on for a ride. Some get off, and more get on. Pete admitted that he didn't have the ability to discern spiritual warfare and that discerning the Holy Spirit's message could be challenging. For my personal development, I should probably go back to a Pentecostal-Holiness church to see if is different from Nick's sermon. I think doing so would help me better empathize with Pentecostal-Holiness believers.

Baptist

Intellectual Expectations

I expected Baptist and Reformist churches to be equally defense oriented. That expectation wasn't true. Hickory Hill and Laurel Lowland were conservative and had armed defense plans, but Gumtree Grove was more moderate. It had a defense plan but not visible security or people embedded in the worship area. The Baptist churches, Spruce Spring and Walnut Wash, had even more vigilant defense plans. I didn't expect Baptist interviewees to talk about spiritual warfare, but Warren said his security team prayed while working.

Emotional Expectations

I was baptized at a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Church. I had a troubled family, so the church was the center of my social world in my junior high and high school years. Thirty years ago, church shootings were not common. We felt safe, even though my church boyfriend at the time's van was stolen from in front of the rectory. There was disunity among church leadership, but as kids, we weren't concerned with it. We went there to have fun.

Because I was baptized at an SBC church, I expected getting consent to observe worship and Sunday school would be easy. I was very wrong. None of the Baptist churches I contacted agreed to be observed. At one church, a member confronted me and accused me of having a negative agenda.

Summary

This project taught me to be humble in my expectations. It taught me denomination alone couldn't predict how individual churches and pastors would act. I learned how attractive it is to be part of a faith group—to enjoy the community, sense of unity, and certainty of salvation. I also learned that caricatures of politicized Christianity, like Nick, exist in real life. I saw hate unify and motivate Christians. I learned that my experiences as a child were, of course, naïve. I'm grateful for my adult eyes.

I'm also grateful for the opportunity to do this research, the Human-Centered Design and iPh.D. programs at Virginia Tech, Steve Harrison who started me down this path, and most of all for my chair, Douglas Cannon. His steadfast support, flexibility, and ability to keep me focused on the scope of the project was invaluable. I can count on one hand people who've had such a positive impact on my life. Enjoy your retirement, Doug! I'll miss you.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board Forms

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants

in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: Peace and Defense Church Reactions to the Threat of Violence

Investigators: Caroline Amie Connell, connellca@vt.edu, 540-449-3274 (student researcher); Douglas F. Cannon, dfcannon@vt.edu, 540-231-2331 (dissertation committee chair)

Recruitment Materials for: Parts A (ethnographic observations) and B (semi-structured interviews).

The following recruitment message will be emailed to church leadership per their online contact form:

I'm researching how churches react theologically, socially, and practically to the threat of violence, and I wanted to see if [church name] might be a good fit. I would attend for a year, go to a [bible study group name], and observe business meetings, particularly the ones relevant to your defense team. I'd also interview a few leaders and members. Both personal and church info would be kept confidential!

The goal is to create better understanding among Christian groups, emergency preparedness professionals, and academics so they can better collaborate to keep communities safe. I think [church name] would be a great church to observe, because you [details specific to church].

If you'd like to meet and chat about the project details, including formal consent to participate, let me know!

Caroline Connell
connellc@vt.eduZ
540-449-3274

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Informed Consent for Participants

in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Research Information

Title of Project: IRB-20-072. Peace and Defense Church Reactions to the Threat of Violence: Part: B. Semi-Structured Interviews

Investigators: Caroline Amie Connell, connellca@vt.edu, 540-449-3274 (student researcher); Douglas F. Cannon, dfcannon@vt.edu, 540-231-2331 (dissertation committee chair)

Key Information

The following is a short summary of this study to help you decide if you want to participate. We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a leader, member, or attender of a religious group. Participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time. Your name and religious group will be kept confidential.

What should I know about being in a research study?

Someone will explain this research study to you. You can choose whether or not to take part, or agree to take part and later change your mind. Your decision will not be held against you. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

What should I know about this research study?

This research's goal is to better understand how Christian groups in the U.S. approach the threat of a mass shooting. The research will result in a PhD dissertation, and potential academic and community publications that keep church and individual names confidential.

More detailed information is below.

I. Purpose of this Research Project

This research's goal is to better understand how Christian groups in the U.S. approach the threat of a mass shooting practically, socially, and theologically, so that they, their communities, and emergency preparedness personnel can better collaborate to keep all safe. Up to 40 people will be interviewed. The research will result in a PhD dissertation, and potential academic and community publications.

II. Procedures

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will participate in an audio-recorded interview of up to one hour.

III. Risks

This research poses no more risk than you would encounter in everyday life.

IV. Benefits

Benefits to others include a better understanding of religious groups such as yours. No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The researcher will collect your name, which will be stored in a secure location. Religious group and participant names will be anonymized. Actual names will not appear in any publications. Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information and that, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from the subject. At no time will researchers release identifying participant information to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

Know that if a researcher has reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, or that a person poses a threat of harm to others or him/herself, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human research participants.

VI. Compensation

You will not be compensated for participating in this research.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free to not answer any questions at any time for any reason. There may be circumstances where the researcher determines you should not continue as a participant, in which case they will inform you. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board at irb@vt.edu or (540) 231-3732.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

____ Date__________

Participant signature

____

Participant printed name

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Guide

IRB-20-072 Interview Guide v1.0

Peace and Defense Church Reactions to the Threat of Violence

Semi-structured, open-ended ethnographic interviews will be conducted as part of this research. Below is the interview guide.

- What is your religious history?
  - How did you come to be a religious person?
  - Describe your historical and current relationship with God.
- What is your history with your church?
  - Can you tell me the story of how you ended up attending your church?
- What do you like and dislike about your church?
  - Can you give me examples?
- How are decisions made in your church?
  - What religious beliefs influence your church's decision making? What scripture influences these beliefs?
  - How do you participate in your church's decision making?
- Are you worried about a mass shooting or other violence at your church?
  - What has caused that worry?
  - How imminent do you think the threat of violence at your church might be?
  - How do you deal with this worry? How does God help you cope? What scripture drives your approach to the threat of violence?
  - What are the viewpoints of your church peers regarding the threat of a mass shooting?
  - How have your and your peers' viewpoints evolved?
- Do you know of any times where your church was under threat?
  - Can you describe what happened? How you reacted? And how it affected your church?
- Are you familiar with your church's defense plan?
  - What's the religious foundation for your church's defense plan? What scripture supports that foundation?
  - What was God's role in its design process?
  - How was the plan designed? How did the design evolve over time?
  - What are the material, communal, and spiritual foundations of your defense plan?
- Please let me know anything else you'd like to share about:
  - Your faith
  - Your church and church peers
  - Violence in the world and in your community

Appendix C: Qualitative Data Codes

1) Church Security
   a) Security Example
   b) Security Plan – Practical
   c) Security Plan – Religious/Spiritual
2) About Group Theology
   a) Bible reference
   b) Spiritual warfare
   c) Pacifism
   d) Martyrdom
3) About Self
   a) Personal Religious History
4) About Group
   a) History
   b) Size
   c) Communication/Outreach
   d) Decision Making
   e) Like about group
   f) Improve in group
5) Group Views of...
   a) Politics
   b) Social Issues
   c) Violence and Defense Against Violence
6) Group-Community Relationships
7) Opening/Closing Statements

Appendix D: Interviewee Descriptors

The following descriptive information for the interviewees was collected:

- Sex
- Age
- Title
- Group Role
- Security Role
- Childhood Religion
- Religious Education
- Secular Education
- Continuing Education
- Home Region
- Group ID
- Group Size
- Denomination
- Sub-Denomination
- Worldview
- Expected Security Stance
- Actual Security Stance

Appendix E: Quaker Response to Crime

Because I witnessed Apple Area grapple with the aftermath of a crime near their place of worship, my observations of them were more informative than those of Gumtree Grove. The crime occurred as Apple Area was responding to the synagogue shootings at Squirrel Hill.

During my second month of observations, law enforcement notified Apple Area that a drug sale occurred near the worship area. Law enforcement suggested adding security cameras, parking lot lighting, and no-trespassing signs to the property. At the next Meeting for Business, The Apple Area Friends decided to delegate the security discussion to their Building and Grounds and Ministry and Oversight Committees. The Peace and Social Concerns Committee reported having discussed the threat of crime on the property. One attendee reported that other religious groups in the community were consulting with law-enforcement to prepare for the threat of an active shooter. The committee decided that the threat of an active shooter was remote but that preparing for emergencies in general warrants discussion. The committee discussed non-violent training before delegating the discussion to the Ministry and Oversight Committee. The next month, the Building and Grounds Committee reported that local law enforcement encouraged the church to floodlight the area and manicure the grounds so they looked occupied, put up No Trespassing signs, and put a gate on the access road. The church rejected manicuring the grounds because of its commitment to a native environment. The Building and Grounds Committee recommended

putting up signs and a gate. Apple Area Friends decided they needed to call a special Meeting to discuss security.

During the special meeting, the group reiterated local law enforcement's recommendation of parring the entrance and putting up signs and lighting. I mentioned that a gate might turn people away and that instead we should make it clear what the property does offer. I said the best outcome would be folks coming into Meeting. Others suggested informational signage be posted that said the church was a place of worship. Many approved of welcoming instead of warning signs. I suggested signage that points to the fact that the grounds are a place of worship and to use them respectfully. A long-time Quaker said that Quaker tradition should be considered and that the Meeting reach out to the community irrespective of the risk of harm. The sense of the Meeting was to keep the grounds inviting, well-lit, and safe – but not gated.

The Apple Area Friends approached the threat with open communication and decision making among the whole group. The crime created a "buzz," and leaders scheduled a special meeting where no information was withheld from the larger group. Quakers follow consensus decision making and believe everyone should contribute, so their communicative approach regarding threats reflected Quaker tradition and theology.

I was happy to have talked them off the cliff, so to speak, from gating off their property. I felt wise and powerful, more Quaker than the Quakers. I was elated when someone told me I "speak good Quaker" and "welcome home." Months later, no significant changes to the property, lighting, or signage had been made. Years later and after COVID, Apple Area focuses on supporting online Meetings, caring for elderly members and those who died, and preserving the memory of deceased members. Outreach went from contacting local peace-oriented groups to circular discussions about newspaper advertising. The Meeting once attracted a young, vibrant couple who loved Apple Area. But they drank from straws during Meeting for Worship. Older attendees created a bylaw-type ordinance against drinking in Meeting. I never saw the young couple again. What was once a place to reconnect with childhood joy, acceptance, and good works became to me a hypocritical, dyeing husk of a community.