

# Holding Space for Gunfire Victims



*The Soul Box Project  
for Faith Communities*





***Mission: The Soul Box Project raises awareness of the U.S. gunfire epidemic by counting and honoring victims, offering healing participation to those seeking solace, and providing dramatic visual support for all initiatives working for a safer, more civil society.***

## Overview

- **The Soul Box Project is a national community art project** exhibiting thousands of handmade origami Boxes made by people across the country. Each Box represents one person killed or injured by gunfire in the U.S. Displays of thousands of Soul Boxes in public spaces illustrate the number of victims of gunfire violence, defense, accidents and suicides. These exhibits evoke an emotional response that compels actions and changes individual behaviors. In time, these changes will shift the U.S. gun culture around how, when, why and by whom guns are used.
- **The Project began in 2017 with the goal of collecting 200,000 Boxes from individuals and organizations across the country, to be exhibited on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.** The disruptions caused by the Corona virus necessitated postponement of our originally planned exhibition date by one full year, to October 2021.
- **Anybody can make a Soul Box.** The only materials needed are two sheets of 8 1/2-inch square paper – easily cut from a standard letter sheet. Every Soul Box holds space for one life torn apart by gunfire.
- **Folding Soul Boxes in the company of others can provide a safe environment for difficult conversations:** sharing experiences, remembering victims and responding to shooting tragedies.
- **Soul Boxes represent victims of gunfire violence, defense, accidents and suicides.** The act of folding – one small step in the healing process – offers solace to anyone experiencing grief or trauma from gunfire.
- Download more “How to” and support materials at [SoulBoxProject.org](http://SoulBoxProject.org)

## How Can You Participate?

When your faith community adopts Soul Boxes into your practice you are saying, “We will not forget. We will not give up.” Faith communities like yours have been among the most dedicated groups carrying this message to their communities.

- How will your Soul Boxes be made visible to your community? Will you host an exhibit or will you be participating in an event? Will you display or carry Soul Boxes--or both?
- Talk to someone on the Soul Box team for help deciding how many Soul Boxes you need. Think about your space and your time. Soul Box can help determine a meaningful number to represent deaths/injuries/suicides in your city or state. Will you make all the Boxes locally or take advantage of our Panel Loan Program to enhance the impact?
- Identify community partners to help reach your goal for Soul Boxes, materials, and funding.
- Set a schedule and begin to make and collect Soul Boxes.
- How will you present your Soul Boxes—in piles, strands, panels,...? Look at [“Past Highlights”](#) of exhibits and events on the Soul Box website for ideas.
- After your event is over, can you display some or all of your Boxes on view locally to keep the issue in people’s minds?

**Each faith community uses Soul Boxes in its own way:** Some set aside a specific day – for example, commemorating a past gunfire event or participating in a designated gun-sense sabbath – and offer materials and guidance to fold Soul Boxes together. Others introduce Soul Boxes as an ongoing social justice activity, with members folding at home or after services. Some host exhibits. Some carry Soul Boxes in bags or backpacks in marches and vigils. As you’ll see in this guide, there are many ways to utilize The Soul Box Project.



**No matter how you participate, you'll find folding Soul Boxes is a fresh way to take action.** It goes a step beyond writing to lawmakers, donating to causes, demonstrating – even thoughts and prayers. Folding a Soul Box is a way to add to the gun conversation without being confrontational. It can give a voice to people confined to their homes. The very act of folding can be meditative and healing.

**When people come together to fold Soul Boxes, it builds community.** When people work together for a cause, they get to know each other better. A gathering can be a designated time to bring people together from across your community. It can also be a monthly program for a youth group, a women's group, a craft group or a social justice group. There is no large outlay of money or planning. (See [How to Organize a Box-Making Gathering.](#))

*All that is needed are some tables, a few supplies and people.*

A Box-making gathering can also be a **place for people in your community to come together after a tragedy**, such as a mass shooting. It provides a safe space to voice fears, anguish and confusion while taking thoughtful action.

No matter what the gathering, once the folding begins, so do the stories. Some people focus on the gun conversation – people they've lost, experiences they've had, frustrations they feel. Other people concentrate on making protest art – ways to get their message across on a small origami Box. Some will fold Boxes for a specific person they know, to honor their memory.

One model that works well is to have a **Soul Box Project**

**“station”** – a table with supplies

and at least one person who can teach people to fold boxes – set up after worship. Many people (especially singles, newcomers and introverts) appreciate the activity and the opportunity to contribute. This can be scheduled every week or, as some congregations have done, monthly.



## How Will You Display Your Soul Boxes?

As your faith community begins to produce Soul Boxes, you may want to show what you've made in a local display. As the weeks go by, the display will grow. The display can be an organic tumble of Boxes in a corner – or a line that stretches around your place of worship, showing off each individual Box. What form it takes is up to you.

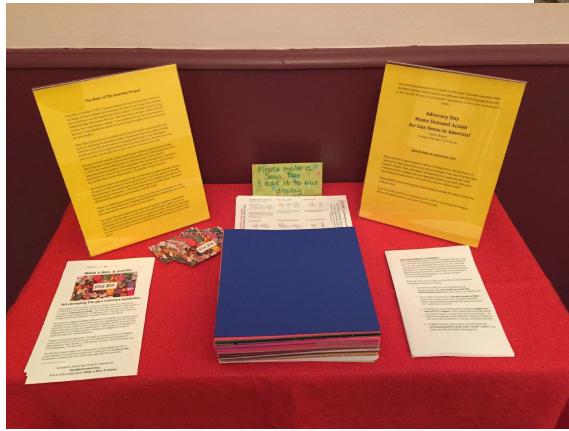
Soul Box displays are used to show visitors the number of people being killed or injured by gunfire. You can use the Soul Boxes you fold to represent a specific number. For example, the display to the right includes 733 Soul Boxes – the number of children under the age of 12 killed or injured in 2017.

GunViolenceArchive.org includes databases that can help you find a representative number—or we can suggest some possible numbers as a goal for your area.

To reach their goal, other congregations have used a model called “We’ll Take the Sabbath,” committing to collecting 100 Soul Boxes every week for a specified period of time. Why 100? On average, 100 people are killed by gunfire every day in the U.S. By folding 100 Soul Boxes every week, your congregation says, “We will hold space for the 100 people who are shot on our Sabbath day.” Some churches call it, “We’ll Take Sunday.”



A Box-making station can be part of the installation, inviting people to fold a Box and add it to the display on-the-spot.

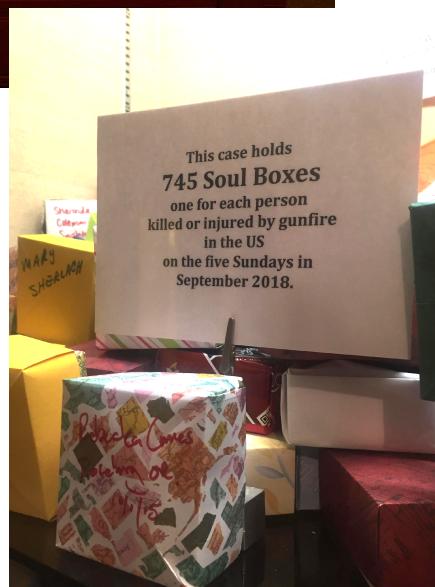


## Examples of Displays in Faith Communities

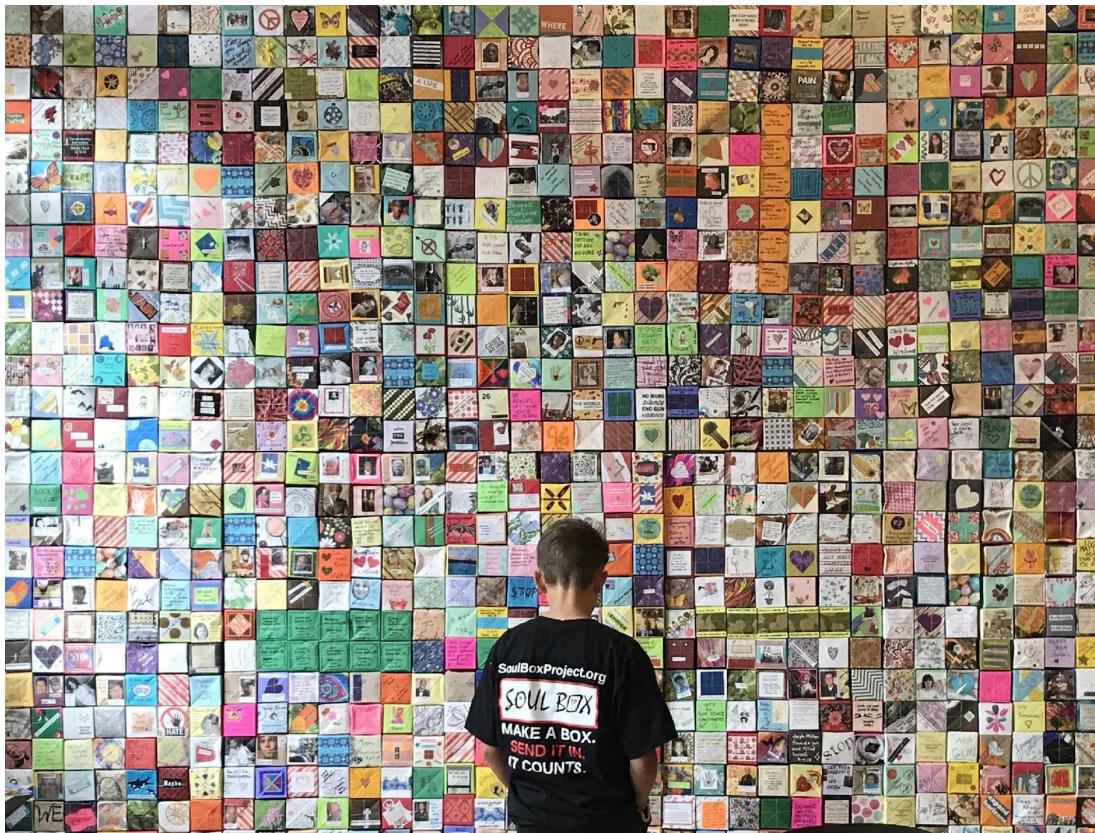
See more examples on the “Past Highlights” page at [SoulBoxProject.org](http://SoulBoxProject.org)



Soul Boxes provide a visual, visceral reminder of the number of lives torn apart by gunfire.



*Thank you for considering The Soul Box Project for your faith community's social justice program.*



Our website [SoulBoxProject.org](http://SoulBoxProject.org) has all sorts of additional information, including announcements of upcoming events, diagrams and videos showing how to fold a Soul Box, support materials for your march or display, and ways to donate to the Project.

If your faith community *does* participate, please contact us at [info@SoulBoxProject.org](mailto:info@SoulBoxProject.org) to let us know. Post to our social media accounts to keep us updated. We're active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, @soulboxproject #soulboxproject.

**Thank you!**

*The Soul Box Project envisions a society where all people living in the U.S. are empowered to choose responsible actions regarding gun use that reflect their values, priorities and beliefs so that we can live in safe communities, talk to resolve conflicts, have schools focus on learning, gather to worship in peace, and thrive in economies that foster trust and unity.*