



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE
303 Mulberry Drive, Suite 100 • Mechanicsburg, PA 17050-3198
Phone (717) 766-7871 • Fax (717) 766-3210 • Email: bishoppark@susumc.org

Bishop Jeremiah J. Park

Christy Mackey
Executive Administrative Assistant
cmackey@susumc.org

Rev. Gregory C. Myers
Clergy Assistant
gmyers@susumc.org

Kristin Sample
Administrative Assistant
ksample@susumc.org

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*“Fear of death can no more stop us from our pressing here below.
For our Lord empowered us to triumph over every foe,
Alleluia! Alleluia! On to victory now we go.”*

*“Every day to us is Easter, with its resurrection song,
When in trouble move the faster to our God who rights the wrong,
Alleluia! Alleluia! See the power of heavenly throngs.”*
(“Easter People, Raise Your Voices” by William James)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Grace to you in Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace, Healer of our Brokenness, and Hope of the World.

The news was heart wrenching. Lamentably, it wasn't anything new. It took a matter of a few seconds; and when it was over, twenty-six innocent people were killed, including a 17 month-old-child. About a week before that it was New York City, and the victims were bikers and pedestrians enjoying a spring-like day. This time, it was Sunday morning at a Southern Baptist Church in a small town not unlike the towns in Pennsylvania. Once again, we were left distraught and heartbroken. If a church service isn't safe, then where are we safe from acts of terror or individual retributions? There are no right words to say to relieve the pain and the frustration from the families, friends, and communities of the innocent victims.

Not everything that happens in this world is the will of God. We know that too many things happen against the will of God. However, let's be assured that God is present in this tragedy. God weeps as we weep; and God comforts the brokenhearted. Through the saving actions of doctors and nursing personnel, the response of the emergency personnel, and the local faith community, God's gracious presence of love and care is there. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who are directly affected by these horrible acts of terror and those who care for them.

Jesus Christ is the Healer of our brokenness and Hope of the world. The Prince of Peace will sustain us. Ultimately good will triumph over evil. God will have the final word. We are to remain committed to working for healing, hope, and peace with justice. I pray that this is not yet another opportunity wasted and that we will

join together to find potential solutions that could help mitigate the harmful situations that seem to perpetuate everywhere without an ending in sight. There must be better gun control that would be rational and understandable to ensure safety for all.

Some of you may know that I once served on the staff of the Northeastern Jurisdiction Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry. Rev. Dr. William James was the Executive Director and I was privileged to be his associate. I find great comfort in his hymn, "Easter People, Raise Your voices": "When in trouble move the faster to our God who rights the wrong." Ultimately our hope is in our God who brings resurrected life out of death by making all things right as it is in heaven. God's people, keep the faith.

Grace and Peace,

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Jeremiah J. Park