



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
HARRISBURG AREA – SUSQUEHANNA CONFERENCE

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Dear Friends,

In the wake of the shootings in Texas, we pray for the parents, grandparents, guardians and loved ones who are left to mourn the loss of innocent children and teachers. We pray that in the midst of their unbelievable grief they feel the presence, love, and comfort of Jesus.

Even as we pray for others, we find ourselves wanting and needing to see, experience, and receive Jesus. We want to see Jesus and hear his word, so that we can know - amid shock and tragedy - our God is here!

We feel the loss – the loss of life, the loss of safety, the loss of security, the loss of the innocence of our children. In a matter of minutes an act of violence took life once again. We feel not only the loss, but lost. We want the violence to stop! We want to help our children; we desire for them to feel safe. We want our teachers, fulfilling God's call on their lives, to be safe, to be supported, to be valued. We want, we need to see, to hear Jesus!

Jesus agonized too! He wept, and his heart was broken. He knows the experience of loss and lost-ness as he hung on the cross. Out of that experience Christ can speak to us. Jesus knows about broken hearts. Jesus is here and speaks to every victim, to every broken heart, to those who are fearful, and to those who just don't know what to do.

Folks, in the midst of our shock, fear, anger, and lost-ness, we see and hear Jesus in people like you and me; and we know that God is here! God has searched us out. God is trying to find us, recover us, heal us, reconcile us, no matter what crisis or disaster strikes us.

God is breaking through this tragedy as God's Son, our Savior, makes himself known through us. People of faith, God is here, and God is searching us out so that our Savior may be seen and heard and made known through us. The God who shows love and destroys hate, the God who searches without end, the God who overcomes death with life, the God whose Son is working to bring peace through us, this God, my friends is the God who is with us! We are not alone! The families who lost loved ones are not alone!

There is no better time for us to allow the Pentecost Spirit to fill each of us once again! There is no better time to allow the Christ, the Prince of Peace, to be born anew in each of us! There is no better time to build relationships that work to bring witness to the value and love that God places on each person created in God's image, and thus work to confront and eliminate evil and violence of all kinds in this world.

As we allow Christ to be reborn in us, God's Spirit will fill us in ways that we can be the presence of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, to a world that desperately needs to see and hear Jesus! Our prayer is that all of us will intentionally search for and prepare for God's Pentecost Spirit to be born anew within us, so that together, we might be the Body of Christ that brings God's life, healing, hope, love, joy and peace to the world!

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Sandra L. Steiner Ball

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

One of our Conference Superintendents shared the following hymn with the Coordinating Cabinet.

A NEW HYMN (MAY 24) LAMENTING GUN VIOLENCE

God, Our Nation Feels the Loss
PILOT ("Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me")

God, our nation feels the loss
as our children pay the cost
for the violence we accept,
for the silence we have kept.
Rachel weeps for children gone;
God of love, this can't go on!
Jesus, Lord, we hear you say,
"Don't turn little ones away!"
May we build a kinder land
where our children understand:
Every child here matters more
than the guns we clamor for.
Holy Spirit, wind and flame,
send us out in Jesus' name.
May we shout and say, "Enough!"
May we build a world of love—
till the sounds of weapons cease,
till our young can grow in peace.

Tune: John Edgar Gould, 1871.

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Please share the hymn with pastors, musicians, worship planners and activists.

To go direct to her site on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CarolynWinfreyGillette>