Challenging a Culture of Violence

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

MARCH 25, 2013
WASHINGTON, D.C.

GRACE ABOUNDS
Memorial to those lost at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT by an anonymous carver at Grace Church, Trumbull, Connecticut.
“...Since the day when twenty-eight people died in Newtown, more than 2300 people in the United States have been killed by guns. Far too many of the dead are poor, young people of color. They have been dying for years, too often unnoticed, on the streets of Chicago, Baltimore, New Orleans, Newark and scores of other cities and towns. We have not been galvanized as we should have been by the cries of their anguished families and friends. As we work to end gun violence now, we must repent of not having done it sooner...”

Letter from President Gay Jennings and Vice President Byron Rushing of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church | February 28, 2013

HOLY WEEK WITNESS
Challenging a Culture of Violence

We are taking this Holy Week Witness to our nation’s capital to say to our political leaders and to our country that we will no longer be silent while violence permeates our world, our society, our churches, our homes and ourselves.

Our faith calls us to be ministers of reconciliation, to give voice to the voiceless and to strive for justice in the name of our Lord. The horrific slaughter of children and adults in the Sandy Hook section of Newtown in our home state, and the day-to-day shootings and death of and by our children and young people in cities and towns across our nation, call us to prayer and action and to work for peace.

We want to thank the Rt. Rev. Mariann Budde and the Diocese of Washington for hosting us. We are deeply grateful to all those who have contributed to the writing and development of this Way of the Cross.

Our presence here today reflects our common commitment to transformational change and the proclamation of God’s hope to the world.

Faithfully,
The Bishops of Connecticut

Ian T. Douglas  James E. Curry  Laura J. Ahrens
**OPENING DEVOTIONS & RENEWAL OF BAPTISMSMAL VOWS**

**Welcome**

**Leader:** In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Lord, have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

**All:**

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
**People:** Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.

As we take the journey of the cross, we remember that we are buried with Christ by Baptism into his death and raised with him to newness of life. May our walk speak to our hope that we will challenge violence – in our world, in our society, in our churches, in our homes and in ourselves.

Assist us mercifully with your help, O Lord God of our salvation, that we may enter with joy upon the contemplation of those mighty acts, whereby you have given us life and immortality; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

As we prepare for this walk, let us renew the solemn promises and vows of Holy Baptism, by which we once renounced Satan and all his works, and promised to serve God faithfully in his holy catholic Church. May our new life in the Risen Christ reflect a world of peace and healing.

**Leader:** Do you reaffirm your renunciation of evil and renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?
**People:** I do.

**Leader:** Do you believe in God the Father?
**People:** I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

**Leader:** Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?
**People:** I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

**Leader:** Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?
**People:** I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

**Leader:** Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?
**People:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
**People:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
**People:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
**People:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
**People:** I will, with God’s help.

**Leader:** Let us go forth to walk in the Name of Christ.
First Station
JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH

Theme
We live in a culture of violence.

Hope
We open ourselves to the journey of the cross as a way of life and peace.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

Reading from Matthew
Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed...So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.”...and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (27:11-14, 24, 26b)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Written by the Rev. Kathie Adams-Shepherd, Rector of Trinity Church, Newtown, Connecticut.

Walter Brueggemann wrote a prayer entitled “Grieving Our Lost Children” in his book Prayers for a Privileged People. He wrote: “Another brutality, another school killing, another grief beyond telling...and loss...in Colorado, in Wisconsin, among the Amish in Virginia. Where next?” Sadly we know far too many answers to that question: Virginia Tech, the Sudan, Tucson, the Middle East, Aurora, Baltimore, Sandy Hook, Chicago and so many places across the U.S. and the world where every single day the precious lives of children, youth and adults are cut short by gun violence. A wise man, David Wheeler, the father of Benjamin Wheeler — a six-year-old shot to death with 25 other children and adults in his elementary school in December 2012 — spoke before the Connecticut Bipartisan Task Force on Violence and Public Safety just four weeks after his world turned upside down. With deep love for his son, David invoked Thomas Jefferson’s inalienable rights of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” from the Declaration of Independence. “I do not think the composition of that foundational phrase was an accident,” he said. “I do not think the order of those important words was haphazard or casual. The liberty of any person to own a military-style assault weapon and a high-capacity magazine and keep them in their home is second to the right of my son to his life.”

We are not innocent of the blood of others when we do not stand up against violence. Pilate was wrong when he said that he was innocent of Jesus’ blood - Pilate did nothing to stop the violence that took Jesus’ life, and so his hands were not clean, not at all. The gospel calls us to carry a cross of hope and peace, and to care deeply for every human life — the lives of people we know personally and the lives of those we may never meet. We are called not to wash our hands of the violence of this world but to raise our hands and our voices tirelessly in protest against it. We are called to claim every life as a life worthy of our efforts to ensure that every single one of God’s children is safe, whole, loved, and living a life of peace. We must see in every life the very life and breath of God.

Prayers
Leader: ("Grieving our lost children," by Walter Brueggemann)

We are reduced to weeping silence, even as we breed a violent culture, even as we kill the sons and daughters of our so-called ‘enemies,’ even as we fail to cherish and protect the forgotten of our common life.

There is no joy among us as we empty our schoolhouses; there is no health among us as we move in fear and bottomless anxiety; there is little hope among us as we fall helpless before the gunshot and the shriek and the blood and the panic; we pray to you only because we do not know what else to do.

Loving God, we beseech you to move powerfully in our body politic. Move us toward peaceableness that does not want to hurt or kill; move us toward justice so that the troubled and the forgotten may know mercy; move us toward forgiveness, so that we may escape the trap of revenge.

Empower us to turn our weapons into acts of mercy, to turn our missiles into gestures of friendship, to turn our bombs into policies of reconciliation; and in this deep work of transformation, hear our sadness, our loss, our bitterness.

We dare to pray our needfulness to you because you were there on that gray Friday and watched your own Son murdered for ‘reasons of state.’

Good God, do Easter! Here and among these families, here and in all places of brutality.

Turn our Good Friday grief into your Easter joy. We pray in the Name of the one crucified and risen, who is our Lord and Savior. Amen.

All: Gracious and loving God, pour upon us wisdom, courage and compassionate energy to witness to your love. Open our mouths to speak and our lives to act in ways that affirm, build up, and rejoice in every one of your children. Give us a voice to call for just laws, for an end to hatred and violence, for ready access to mental health services, and for dialogue filled with respect and careful listening. Let us never wash our hands of any life lost and never cease to witness to your love until all are safe and living in peace. Strengthen us for the work of carrying your cross, and bless our efforts to convey your love and hope. In the Name of your Son, who gave his life for us in unfathomable love, Jesus the Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Theme
Help us to see and choose a new path embracing reconciliation, restoration and hope.

Hope
We choose to walk the path of reconciliation, restoration and hope.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from John
[The people cried out], ‘Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!’ Pilate asked them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but the emperor.’ Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha.  (19:15-17)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Written by the Rev. Molly James, Ph.D., Secretary of the Diocese of Connecticut.

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we acknowledge the sin in our lives; we seek forgiveness for things done and left undone. Today we walk in acknowledgement of the things done and left undone that have contributed to a culture of violence. We must acknowledge and repent of our sins, individually and collectively. We must acknowledge the reality of Good Friday, the reality of the crucifixion – the ways in which our actions and inactions have contributed to thousands who die violent deaths on our city streets and in our towns each year. We must acknowledge the times that we have joined the crowd and said “Crucify him!” And yet we are Christians, we know that sin and death never have the last word. We know that God’s love is stronger than any sin or force of evil in our world.

We believe that transformation and reconciliation are possible. Through the reality of the Resurrection in the blessed truth of that empty tomb on Easter morning, Jesus invites each of us to walk a new path. Today, he is inviting us to be evangelists and disciples, to show our society, to show the world, a new way of life. Our hope is in God. Our hope is in the Risen Christ. Our hope is in the conviction that nothing in this world is stronger than the love of God in Christ.

Having renewed our baptismal vows, we commit today to build a society that continues to affirm the dignity of every human being and that operates on a currency of love rather than fear. We commit to walking in the way of Christ, filled with the hope of the Resurrection, working to bring about restoration and reconciliation in our world.

Prayers
Leader: Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  (BCP p. 820)

All: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.  (BCP, pp. 832-3)

All: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.  (BCP, pp. 832-3)

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Theme
We acknowledge the constant, daily gun violence in our culture.

Hope
We will honestly recognize our responsibility to challenge gun violence in all its forms and in all places. We refuse to forget the victims of gun violence, and we will work for a future that respects the dignity of every human being.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Luke
Jesus said: “Today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem. ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!’” (13:33-34)
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Excerpt from written testimony to the Senate Judiciary Committee by Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, February 12, 2013.
The United States has witnessed far too many public shootings in recent months and years. Far too many lives have been cut short or maimed by both random and targeted acts of gun violence. The school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut horrified Americans and people around the world, yet since that day several times as many young people have died by gunshot. Each year, gun violence claims the lives of more than 3,000 children in the United States. The victims of each of these shootings are members of our families, religious congregations, and communities, and we continue to grieve for the living as well as the dead.
I commend the resolve of lawmakers who believe that the moment has arrived when our nation must come together to ask the difficult questions, and to discern what may be equally challenging answers, about how we can begin to break the cycles of violence that lead to massacres in suburban schools and routine death on the streets of our cities. It is abundantly clear to me, as I travel to communities across this country and engage in conversation with people from many walks of life, that Americans have begun to find the resolve to grapple with the complexities of violence in our culture.
This is no easy task. Just as the root causes of cyclical violence in our culture, and the ways in which that violence is expressed, are varied and complicated, so too are the solutions. We must resist the temptation to use the present moment of national angst as a pretext for pre-formed political agendas or simplistic responses that are better suited for sound bites than for meaningful, long-term change. We all share a responsibility to examine the many facets of cycles of violence in our society, and to discern equally comprehensive responses that will address the causes, means, and effects of violence.

Prayers
(From the Ash Wednesday Litany of Repentance, BCP p. 268)
Leader: Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
All: Accept our repentance, Lord.
Leader: For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,
All: Accept our repentance, Lord.
All: Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. [BCP p. 260]

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Fourth Station

JESUS MEETS HIS AFFLICTED MOTHER

Meditation
Written by the Rt. Rev. James Magness, Bishop for Federal Ministries.

During World War II, Coventry Cathedral in Coventry, England received massive damage from aerial bombing that was used upon the country’s general population. When composer Benjamin Britten created his world famous War Requiem for the 1962 reedication of Coventry Cathedral, he used the war poems of Wilfred Owen. Owen, a World War I British Army officer, was killed in France just days before the signing of the Armistice in 1918. Both Britten and Owen wanted to emphasize the tragic destructiveness of the violence that is at the heart of what we call war. Owen was a devoted Christian who was in a mortal struggle between his faith and the war in which he participated. Listen to Owen’s words from the trenches of France in 1917, as he wrote about the soldier’s plight in “Anthem of Doomed Youth”:

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle
Can patter out our hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells...

Now, more than two thousand years after Simeon spoke to Mary the mother of Jesus, saying that her heart would be pierced with the sword of violence imposed upon her son, we know that the violence of armed conflict and war has claimed the lives of millions upon millions of people, combatant and non-combatant alike. Though cultures change, the mournful sighs of those who live on remain the same. The irony of the story of Christ is that as he went to the cross and defeated death, he absorbed and also defeated the worst violence that humans could visit upon him. As we celebrate Christ’s victory, we remember still persons who have died at the hands those who perpetrate war and its attendant violence.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them. (“For the Fallen” by Laurence Binyon)

As we remember the sacrifice of the fallen, we continue to heed to the contrary spiritual compass heading that our Lord calls us to embody: the new heaven and earth in which war is only a distant memory and peace has rolled down upon us. Amen.

Prayers

Leader: O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. [BCP, p. 815]

Lord God, no one is a stranger to you and no one is ever far from your loving care. In your kindness, watch over refugees and victims of war, those separated from their loved ones, young people who are lost, and those who have left home or who have run away from home. Bring them back safely to the place where they long to be and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and to all in need. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen. [CatholicOnline.com]

All: O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts. Amen. [New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 142]

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Theme
We acknowledge the violence in our culture and the ways we have forced others to carry the burden of the cross.

Hope
We will celebrate where we have been faithful, and we walk to heal and change the choices we have made that have led us to hurt others or to be hurt.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Luke
As they led Jesus away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. (23: 26)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Written by the Rt. Rev. Jeffery Rowthorn, Bishop of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, retired.

Simon of Cyrene was coming into the city when a Roman soldier tapped him on the shoulder with the blade of his sword. In that moment his life was changed. Now, instead of being about his own business, he was about God’s business. Though he could not have known it at the time, he was being called on at a moment’s notice to help Jesus carry the cross that would redeem the world.

In one of his hymns Brian Wren has written: “In every insult, rift and war where color, scorn or wealth divide, he suffers still, yet loves the more, and lives, though ever crucified.”

The saving cross still needs to be carried. At a moment’s notice Rosa Parks was called on to shoulder the cross of racism with Jesus in Montgomery, Alabama. At a moment’s notice Hiram Bingham from Salem, Connecticut was called on to shoulder the cross of anti-Semitism with Jesus in wartime France, rescuing 2,500 Jews in the months that followed. And now we are being called on to shoulder the cross of violence with Jesus here in the United States. When the call comes, take heart, for in the words of Brian Wren: “Christ is alive! His Spirit burns through this and every future age, till all creation lives and learns his joy, his justice, love, and praise.” (The Hymnal 1982, no. 182)

Prayers
Leader: Let us pray.
Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

All: O Judge of the nations, we remember before you the men and women of this country who in the day of decision shouldered the cross of Christ and witnessed against violence of every kind. Grant that in our day we may not rest until all our people share the benefits of freedom, justice and peace. This we ask in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.

Excerpt from a resolution passed February 27, 2013 by the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church

Resolved. That the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church, meeting in Linthicum Heights, Maryland on February 27, 2013 express profound sorrow at the epidemic of gun violence in our communities, and urge Episcopalians to work toward comprehensive social responses that seek to stem the cycles of violence that fuel gun crime; and be it further...

...Resolved. That the Executive Council urge our elected officials to enact a clear and effective statute making gun trafficking a federal crime and empower law enforcement officials to investigate and prosecute straw purchasers, gun traffickers, and their entire criminal networks; and be it further...

...Resolved. That the Executive Council urge Episcopalians to examine our own cultural attitudes toward violence through efforts in our own congregations and communities, to repent of our own roles in the glorification and trivialization of violence, and to commit ourselves to another way.
Theme
Our churches and our homes have not been immune to violence. We lament the ways we have excluded, isolated and harmed others.

Hope
We will seek to build incarnational, healthy caring relationships in our churches and in our homes.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Isaiah
Just as there were many who were astonished at him – so marred was his appearance, beyond human resemblance, and his form beyond that of mortals - so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

[52:14-15]
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

A reading from First Corinthians
For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we shall see face to face.  (13:12a)
Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation and Prayers
Written by the Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens, Bishop of Connecticut, adapted from the Reconciliation of a Penitent, Form Two, BCP 449-450.

NOTE: This meditation invites us to interact with our neighbors. When you are asked to turn to your neighbor, we invite you to hold a hand or a shoulder of one neighbor and to ask for prayer.

Leader and People:
Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness; in your great compassion blot out my offenses. Wash me through and through from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions only too well, and my sin is ever before me.
Turning to a neighbor: Pray for me, a sinner.

Leader and People: Holy God, heavenly Father, you formed me from the dust in your image and likeness, and redeemed me from sin and death by the cross of your Son Jesus Christ. Through the water of baptism you clothed me with the shining garment of his righteousness, and established me among your children in your kingdom. But I have squandered the inheritance of your saints, and have wandered far in a land that is waste.
Turning to a neighbor: Pray for me, a sinner.

Leader and People: We lament the ways we exclude, isolate or harm others in our churches and in our homes. Open our eyes and our hearts to see and hear the cries of those whose pain and hurt we have played a role in creating. Help us to be ministers of healing and to offer hope and new life.

We commit ourselves to work in our congregations and communities to examine our own cultural attitudes toward violence. We repent of our own role in the glorification and trivialization of violence, and we commit ourselves to find another way (adapted from an Executive Council resolution, Feb. 2013).
Turning to a neighbor: Pray for me, a sinner.

Leader and People: We turn to you, O Lord, in sorrow and repentance. Receive us again into the arms of your mercy and restore us to the blessed company of your faithful people; through him in whom you have redeemed the world, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

Turn to neighbors and offer the sign of peace, saying: Abide in peace, and pray for me, a sinner.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.
Theme
We remember the burden Jesus carries for us and acknowledge we have not offered enough leadership to challenge prejudice and oppression.

Hope
We commit to claim our voices as Christian leaders following the way of our Lord.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Matthew
Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?’ (16:24-26)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Written by Barbara A. Campbell, Ph.D., Diocesan Poet of Connecticut.

Take up your cross, the cross by which we are marked in baptism, and follow me, Jesus said. There are dangers in leading, which is demonstrated by President Lincoln’s assassination and the assassinations of Presidents Garfield, McKinley and Kennedy. There is also courage in leading, as expressed by the child in Sandy Hook Elementary School who said during the shooting, “I know karate. It’s OK. I’ll lead us out.”

Leading is challenging because the culture in which one leads continually changes.

Leading is having the vision for new directions – sensing when freedoms need to expand, then understanding and preparing to deal with the consequences. Leadership is sensitivity that identifies when an event has to have a response. These events keep overwhelming us whether it be Newtown, or Hadiya Pendleton who marched here in the Inauguration and was killed in Chicago, or Malala Yousafzai shot in the head for advocating education for girls in Pakistan, or Matthew Shepard left to die on a fence in Wyoming. The journey can be long and hard.

We need to say, “Yes” to leadership. Accept God’s grace and truth, let our hearts be filled with God’s holy and life-giving Spirit, and follow, by loving others. Sometimes we need to say, “I know Christ. It’s Ok. I’ll lead.”

Leading is participation in history, which can give joy when the reins are shared and the journey continues. Consider a phrase taken from Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and see how it still leads us and encourages our leadership today.

“How then, thenceforth, and forever free”

The Civil War was on, States in rebellion against the United States.

In the midst of war the President proclaimed “all persons held as slaves... shall be then, thenceforth, and forever free.”

At the end of the War, other leadership took the issue, wrote it beyond Presidential War Powers, wrote it into the Constitution, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist within the United States.”

Leadership faced continuing challenges – These men are free and can they vote? Blacks are listed now by name in U. S. census, but Jim Crow laws are passed. Advances and steps backward in light of that hope “then, thenceforth, and forever free.”

The issues keep coming discrimination in public accommodation in employment in voting practices separate but equal has no place and today’s version of involuntary servitude, human trafficking.

Ford’s Theater
A few blocks north is Ford’s Theater, where, just after the end of the Civil War, on Good Friday evening in 1865, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated while watching a play. He died early the next morning in the house across the street from the theater. His death was part of the night of violence that endeavored to kill key members of his administration. Lincoln’s violent death is tragic, but his life and legacy serve as a profound example of courageous leadership that helped to free (albeit through war) the millions held in the bondage of slavery.
Seemingly still in the midst of war this time with human nature –
Do I share my rights or keep them to myself?
Do I help the weak or take advantage?
Do I stop the violence or enable it to continue?
What do I do with power?

Jesus tells me what to do with power. Take up my cross of baptism and follow where Jesus leads. Lose my life for Jesus’ sake and I will find my life, a life of leadership with Christ without involuntary servitude, through Christ in Christ then, thenceforth, and forever free.

Prayers
Leader: Gracious and loving God by whose cross we are redeemed, teach us to listen and reflect: on the silence of oppression as well as the screams, on the fear within prejudice as well as the denial, on the ways we continue to discriminate as well as the victories over discrimination. Then through the long journey, guide us to lead with You: in ways that are timely, in ways that are effective, in ways that are as lasting as Your love in Christ. Amen.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.

Theme
All violence affects many more people than the intended victims.

Hope
We commit ourselves to become advocates for the victims of violence. We will pray and work for healing and justice. And we pledge to strengthen efforts to reduce gun violence in our society.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Luke
A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.” Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us”; and to the hills, “Cover us.” For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?” [23:27-31]

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
An excerpt from the legislative testimony of Veronique Pozner, the mother of Noah Pozner, one of the victims of the shooting in Sandy Hook Elementary School. Mrs. Pozner also spoke at the March for Change in Hartford, Connecticut, February 14, 2013.

Noah was our 6-year-old force of nature. He will never get to see the new school in Monroe, he lies forever motionless in the earth. He will never get to attend middle school or high school, kiss a girl, attend college, pick a career path, fall in love, marry, have children or travel the world.

National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden
Inside the sculpture garden stands a work by Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz [b. 1930]. It is a group of thirty statues entitled Puellae [girls]. Abakanowicz’ work is frequently based on experiences of World War II and the decades following. Puellae depicts children who froze to death as they were transported in cattle cars during the Holocaust. In a place of beauty and serenity, alongside works that are whimsical, Puellae reminds us that the reality of violence permeates all facets of our lives.
Never will he feel the sunlight on his face, the companionship of a family who adores him, the taste of a good meal or to get to dig a hole all the way to China, as he strove to do every summer day at the beach.

Noah loved being alive, he took large hungry bites out of every day. His inquisitive mind was always seeking answers. Sometimes he was like a young philosopher. One day he asked me, ‘if God created the universe, then who created him?’

Another question he asked several times haunts me to this day. He used to ask, ‘If there are bad guys out there, why can’t they just wake up one day and decide to be good.’ I didn’t always have the answers that Noah was looking for.

My two youngest made it out of Sandy Hook Elementary School physically unscathed that day. Sophia, who’s in second grade, tells us that the number 14 will forever be unlucky for her, so much so that she hates the thought of turning that age some day. She also dislikes calendars as that is what she was working on when the – and I quote – ‘loud popping sounds that took Noah away started.’

Arielle, his twin, says that she wishes he was next to her, huddling in the small bathroom, where her class hid, instead of being out in the open at the mercy of the fury being unleashed on the children and adults across the hallway. She tells me she’s scared that she’ll forget what her twin Noah sounded and looked like. She said to me the other night, ‘Mommy, if I forget what it was like to play with Noah, does it mean he’ll forget me too? I don’t want that to happen. When I’m happy, I want him to know it,’ she told me.

And then she added, ‘also when I’m sad, or mad.’ I reassured her that as her twin, he would forever be linked to her, no matter what.

**Prayers**

*Adapted with permission from a “Litany for Sandy Hook,” written by the Rev. Rick Morley of St. Mark’s, Basking Ridge, New Jersey.*

Lord, we pray for all children and young adults who are victims of gun violence. We pray for their families, their parents, guardians, grandparents, siblings, and friends. And we pray for all who love them and who had beautiful dreams for their beautiful lives. Lord, in your mercy:

*Hear our prayer.*

We pray for the principal, teachers, and staff who were killed in Sandy Hook Elementary School and for Mary Marguerite Kohn, co-rector and Brenda Brewington, administrative assistant of St. Peter’s Church in Ellicott City, for Dale Regan, head of school at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville. For all who have been killed in workplace violence. We pray for those who mourn them including spouses and partners, children, and friends. Our hearts break as we imagine their dream-filled lives and all the good they sought to do. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

We pray for all the children and staff who were at Sandy Hook Elementary School that day and for everyone who has witnessed gun violence in our streets and workplaces. We pray for those who have seen horrific sights and have nowhere to turn. For those whose innocence has been robbed from them. For those who mourn deeply for those they knew so well. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

We pray for all the children and staff who were at Sandy Hook Elementary School on that day and for everyone who has witnessed gun violence in our streets and workplaces. We pray for those who have seen horrific sights and have nowhere to turn. For those whose innocence has been robbed from them. For those who mourn deeply for those they knew so well. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

We pray for police, school administrators, clergy, funeral directors, and all in our communities who support those who grieve. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

We pray for all victims of violence, for those who know violence all too well in their homes or in their communities. We ask for God’s healing balm upon those who bear the scars outwardly and inwardly. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

O loving Christ, you commanded us to love and to pray for our enemies; in your spirit, we pray for those who seek to do harm. We pray that their hearts be turned, and their minds and souls find healing. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

We pray for all who are called to keep us, and all God’s children, safe. We pray that they might have wisdom and strength to do the task that is set before them. Lord, in your mercy: *Hear our prayer.*

And, we pray for the day when evil takes its last gasp and the light of Christ finally, thoroughly, overcomes the malice which infects the hearts of men and women who do unspeakable wrong. *Amen.*

**All:** Gracious God, the comfort of all who sorrow, the strength of all who suffer: Let the cry of those in misery and need come to you, that they may find your mercy present with them in all their afflictions; and give us, we pray, the strength to serve them for the sake of him who suffered for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*Holy God,*

*Holy and Mighty,*

*Holy Immortal One,*

*Have mercy upon us.*
The Carousel
on the Mall was built in the 1940s and originally stood in Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Maryland, which was originally a “whites-only” park. After years of civil rights protests, the park was finally integrated. On August 28, 1963, the park was opened to everyone, and the carousel was the first ride of toddler Sharon Langley, daughter of the first African-American family to enter the park. The carousel was moved to the National Mall in 1975. This simple ride, emblematic of childhood joy and innocence, now stands as a testament to the fact that when people of faith speak out, it is possible to pull down barriers and to build bridges of reconciliation. Today this carousel is a monument of hope.

Theme
We remember the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown and all children who have been victims of violence.

Hope
We walk for all our children and a future without violence.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Isaiah
The Lord will tend the flock like a shepherd; embracing the lambs together and nursing them. [40:11 translation from the New Zealand Prayer Book]

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

A reading from John
Jesus said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said to him, ‘Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep.’ [21:17]

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation

On December 14th, as the news broke across the world, our hearts were broken. Children, gentle, playful, hopeful, children waiting for Christmas or Hanukah or winter adventures were killed in their elementary school. A story too painful to believe – and yet it is our reality. It is a searing truth that connects to countless stories of violence to children all over the world.

Jesus calls to his disciples saying, “Feed my sheep.” Three times Peter denied Jesus, and now Peter is given three opportunities to say, “I love you.” God forgives us for the times we have not spoken or acted to make our children – God’s children – safe. God calls us to say: “Yes, we love you,” by loving God’s children and by calling ceaselessly for an end to hatred and violence.

We ask for God’s help as we seek to make our schools places of learning and love, play and joy, growth and new life. When we learn of bullying or isolation, of labeling or judging, may we stand up with courage and say, “Love offers a better way.” Even before we see or learn of these things, may we strive to create a culture in which people so respect God in one another that they never think of harming another person, but only of affirming and lifting up the other in love.

As we remember the bravery of Dawn Hochsprung, Anne Marie Murphy, Rachel D’Avino, Mary Sherlach, Victoria Leigh Soto, and Lauren Rousseau, the true First Responders of the day, we learn anew what it means to love and care for the children of God. Their actions reflect the kind of love to which God calls us: to love so fully that we would offer our lives – ourselves – as shields against the death of another – especially a child.

Ben Wheeler, a six-year-old boy, died on December 14th at Sandy Hook Elementary School. At his funeral we learned of Ben’s love for lighthouses. Those who attended the service that day were given a lighthouse ornament as a reminder of Ben’s delight. It is also an image of the Light of Christ. May we seek to be lighthouses, vessels of Christ’s light. May we seek to bring Christ’s light to the world, revealing God’s love. Our hearts are broken, but our spirits are not.

Prayers
Leader: We remember the violence of December 14th in Sandy Hook, in Newtown, Connecticut.

We remember those who died at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We pray for Charlotte, Daniel, Olivia, Josephine, Ana, Dylan, Madeline, Catherine, Chase, Jesse, James, Grace, Emilie, Jack, Noah, Caroline, Jessica, Avielle, Benjamin, Allison, Mary, Victoria, Anne Marie, Lauren, Dawn and Rachel.

We remember Nancy and Adam and offer our prayers for healing. Into Christ’s loving care and compassion, into the arms of Christ’s infinite mercy, we commend these children of God.

I invite you to name either silently or aloud those on your heart who have been victims of violence.

All: We remember all those who have been victims of violence and we pray for peace.

Leader: Loving God, guide us as we nurture and care for our children. Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good. May we encourage them to reach out to others in love and peacefulness, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we remember the bravery of Dawn Hochsprung, Anne Marie Murphy, Rachel D’Avino, Mary Sherlach, Victoria Leigh Soto, and Lauren Rousseau, the true First Responders of the day, we learn anew what it means to love and care for the children of God. Their actions reflect the kind of love to which God calls us: to love so fully that we would offer our lives – ourselves - as shields against the death of another – especially a child.

We remember Nancy and Adam and offer our prayers for healing. Into Christ’s loving care and compassion, into the arms of Christ’s infinite mercy, we commend these children of God.

I invite you to name either silently or aloud those on your heart who have been victims of violence.

A long silence.

Leader: We remember all those who have been victims of violence and we pray for peace. Amen.

All: Loving God, be with us as we face the mystery of life and death. Strengthen the bonds of humanity as we bear our loss. May courage and confidence in your care and love guide our path; through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us.
Theme
We lament our participation in marginalizing others.

Hope
We seek to respect the dignity of every human being.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from John
When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, ‘Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it.’ This was to fulfill what the scripture says, ‘They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots.’ (19:23-24)

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation

In the Massachusetts State House in Boston there is an impressive stained glass window of the original seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. In the center of the window is an Algonquian Native American holding a bow in his right hand and an arrow pointed towards the ground in his left - ostensibly a sign of peace. From the native person’s mouth is a scroll with the words: “Come over and help us.”

“Come over and help us.” These words were not a benign plea for assistance, but rather a justification for the colonization of the Americas. They portray First Nations peoples as helpless, in need of assistance by the white settlers and missionaries from Europe. Stripped of their dignity and their cultures by European Americans seeking to steal and exploit their lands, Native Americans have known, and continue to know, the same death-dealing marginalization that Jesus experienced at the hands of the Roman colonizing forces.

The Episcopal Church has repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery that asserts dominion over non-Christian peoples and lands, and has affirmed the inherent sovereignty and fundamental human rights of all indigenous peoples. We are thus invited to look into our own hearts and challenge the racism and other forms of evil that alienate us from God and one another. Repenting of our complicity in the violence of colonization, we need to seek reconciliation with those who have been marginalized and stripped of their God-given dignity.

Prayers
Leader: Look with pity, O heavenly Father, upon the people in this land who live with injustice, terror, disease, and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us. Help us to eliminate our cruelty to these our neighbors. Strengthen those who spend their lives establishing equal protection of the law and equal opportunities for all. And grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP p. 826)

All: O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP p. 840)

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Eleventh Station

JESUS IS NAILED TO THE CROSS

Theme
We continue to be accountable for our role in perpetuating violence, the continued crucifixion of Christ. We acknowledge the violence within ourselves.

Hope
We pledge to make no peace with oppression, seeking to be prophetic in our witness and opening ourselves to God and one another.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Mark
With Jesus they also crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it again in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!” In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. [15:27-32]

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation
Written by the Rt. Rev. Jeffery Rowthorn, Bishop of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe, retired.

Sin is that characteristic human behavior we have no difficulty recognizing, especially in other people! The same is true of violence. We can point to it all around us: here in Washington where Congress is bedeviled by rancor and hostility, or at home in the vitriolic letters in our local papers and the anger expressed on radio talk shows. We identify the violence by pointing away from ourselves, but is that the whole story?

“Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee? Alas, my treason, Jesus, hath undone thee.

‘Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee: I crucified thee.” [The Hymnal 1982, no. 158]

The hard truth to accept about ourselves is that all too often we contribute to the violence in our society. The violence done to the environment so that we can have gasoline for our cars. The violence done to innocent victims, young and old, who pay the price for our having guns readily available. The violence done to the poor, to the unemployed, to the sick and to college students because low taxes and a high military budget are the order of the day, whatever the cost to others. If things are truly to change, let it begin with me. May God’s amazing grace revealed in the cross enable me to face up to the violence within me that I hold on to and to renounce the violence around me from which I benefit.

Prayers
Leader: Let us pray.

Silence for reflection.

All: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, “Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you.” Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly City, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP, p. 395)

Leader: The peace of the Lord be always with you.
All: And also with you.

Leader: At peace with God, our neighbors and ourselves let us greet one another.

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
**Theme**
Standing at the cross of Christ, we confess the violence that we have carried out against the earth.

**Hope**
We pray for the strength and courage to amend our lives.

**Leader:** We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.

**All:** Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

**A reading from Mark**
When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?’ which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘Listen, he is calling for Elijah.’ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.’ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’ (15:33-39)

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

**All:** Thanks be to God.

**Meditation**
Written by the Rev. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Ph.D., Priest Associate, Grace Church, Amherst, Massachusetts.

“Why have you forsaken me?” We hear Jesus’ cry in the din of melting glaciers as they tumble into the ocean, in the crash of ancient forests as they are felled, and in the blast of mountaintops as they are blown open for the extraction of coal. “Why have you forsaken me?” We hear Jesus’ cry in the bellow of elephants running from poachers and searching for water in lands scorched dry by global warming; in the diminishing roars and bleats and chirps worldwide as species go extinct, one by one; and in the silence of dying coral reefs as they bleach white in acidic seas. At the foot of the cross, we hear the despairing cry of all God’s creatures whose bodies and habitat are destroyed by human violence, neglect, or greed. The web of life as it has evolved for millennia is unraveling before our eyes. We hear the groaning of Creation, for the earth itself is being crucified.

At the cross of Christ, we stand before God in our terror, grief, and guilt. All we have to do to leave a ruined world to our children and our children’s children is to keep doing what we are doing today: to keep burning fossil fuels at present rates, to keep pouring toxic waste into the water and ground and sky, to keep devouring the natural resources of the world more quickly than they can be replenished.

We stand here with penitent hearts, asking God for forgiveness, for the grace to amend our lives, and for the courage and wisdom to learn to live lightly, thoughtfully, and with restraint on this earth, upon which all life depends.

**Prayers**
[From the Ash Wednesday Litany of Repentance, BCP p. 268]

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**Silence for reflection.**

**Leader:** For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,

**All:** Accept our repentance, Lord.

**All:** O heavenly Creator, who has filled the world with beauty, open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 814)

**Holy God,**
**Holy and Mighty,**
**Holy Immortal One,**
**Have mercy upon us.**
Theme
Jesus has died. Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.

Hope
Realizing the depth of Jesus’ love for the world and the cost of his sacrifice, we will seek to become instruments of peace and agents of God’s mission of healing and reconciliation.

Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
All: Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

A reading from Philippians
Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. [2:5-8]

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
All: Thanks be to God.

Meditation

On the evening of Good Friday every year, the Anglican Church in Maputo, Mozambique gathers for the Burial of Christ. A black casket is carried to the front of the church and laid before the altar. Pallbearers lift the lid from the casket and put it aside. The bishop calls the congregation into solemn prayer. Jesus has died. He truly is dead. And this service is to be his funeral.

Two by two the members of the congregation are invited forward with these words: Come and see the one who has died and will rise from the dead. Acolytes stand near the casket to hand flowers to each person who comes forward. Everyone knows these flowers are to decorate his grave. Jesus is truly dead.

Two by two the congregants make their way to the casket to look on the one who has died and who will rise from the dead. A thousand people come forward accompanied by the singing of a cappella choirs. Two by two people stop at the casket, bow, and look upon the one who has died and who will rise from the dead. Finally it is my turn to come to the casket, flower in hand. It is a holy moment. I bow and look into casket. And there, in a mirror, I see my own face. I am the one who has died and will rise from the dead.

St. Paul wrote to the Romans: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” [Romans 6:3-4]

Prayers
Leader: Let us pray for all nations and peoples of the earth, and for those in authority among them;
For Barack, the President of the United States
For the Congress and the Supreme Court
For the Members and Representatives of the United Nations
For all who serve the common good
That by God’s help they may seek justice and truth, and live in peace and concord.
Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth; that in tranquility your dominion may increase, until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. [BCP p. 278]

A prayer attributed to St. Francis [said in unison]
Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen. [BCP p. 833]

Holy God,
Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One,
Have mercy upon us.
Leader: We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.
People: Because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world.
Leader:

Gracious God,
You have heard our cries for your life-giving
and healing Spirit to come upon us.
We offer our prayers of repentance,
and our desire for forgiveness
As we offer ourselves to your hope
and your reconciling Word.

Jesus, you spoke with passion,
You acted without fear, and we remember.
Help us when we have to speak out,
to speak the truth and to speak without malice.
Help us to speak out against violence in all its forms,
and to be a living witness to your love.
Purify our hearts and grant us zeal in your service,
that we may be pastors and prophets for peace,
through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

{New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 600, modified}

Blessing:
May Holy God make you a prophet for justice;
May Holy God make you a pastor of loving kindness;
And as you walk humbly with your God, may the blessing of God
Almighty, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit,
be among you, and remain with you always. Amen.

Dismissal:
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Footnotes
1 First Station: Walter Brueggemann, “Grieving Our Lost Children,” in Prayers for a
Privileged People (Abingdon Press, 2008), pp. 61-62
3 Fifth Station: http://houseofdeputies.org/executive-council-resolution-on-responses-
to-gun-violence.html
4 [Episcopal Church Office of Public Affairs] The Episcopal Church House of Bishops,
meeting in retreat in Kanuga Conference Center, Hendersonville, North Carolina,
offers A Word to the Church.

References
All scripture passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.
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cmpc-grants.org].
THE WAY OF THE CROSS

1 First Station
St. John’s Episcopal Church, Lafayette Park (across from the Church)

2 Second Station
The White House

3 Third Station
Freedom Plaza

4 Fourth Station
War Memorials

5 Fifth Station
Museum of American History

6 Sixth Station
The Mall

7 Seventh Station
Ford’s Theater

8 Eighth Station
National Gallery of Art
Sculpture Garden

9 Ninth Station
The Carousel

10 Tenth Station
National Museum of the American Indian

11 Eleventh Station
Capitol Reflecting Pool

12 Twelfth Station
U.S. Botanic Garden

13/14 Thirteenth/Fourteenth Station
U.S. Capitol Building

S Speakers ı Library of Congress
6th Floor/Montpelier Room, Madison Building
Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

Your House of Bishops has gathered in retreat from March 8-12 at Kanuga Conference Center in Hendersonville, NC. The theme for our days together has been “Godly Leadership in the Midst of Loss.” We have heard moving reflections on loss in the wake of: the shootings in Newtown, Hurricane Sandy, the ongoing struggles in Haiti, historical trauma experienced by Native Americans in South Dakota, and physical illness. Being together in conversation, prayer and common worship, we have shared the reality of new life in the resurrected Jesus who has overcome death and redeems our losses.

Our time together has brought us to a new place of recognition with respect to how violence infects, and affects, our lives. We have considered how the reality of violence in our world, our society, our churches, our homes, and ourselves alienate us from God and each other. And we repent that we have too often neglected to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation. In this Lenten season we pray: “Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty.” (From the Litany of Penance for Ash Wednesday, BCP p. 268)

We particularly grieve those killed by senseless gun violence in the many contexts from which we come. We lament and have cried over the widely reported mass shootings in this country, recalling tragedies like Aurora, Oak Creek and Newtown. We are outraged by the too often unseen and unacknowledged daily massacre of our young people in cities such as Chicago, Newark, Baltimore, Port-au-Prince, and Tegucigalpa. This carnage must stop.

As bishops of The Episcopal Church we embody a wide variety of experiences and perspectives with respect to firearms. Many among us are hunters and sport-shooters, former members of the military and law-enforcement officers. We respect and honor that we are not of one mind regarding matters related to gun legislation. Yet we are convinced that there needs to be a new conversation in the United States that challenges gun violence. Because of the wide variety of contexts in which we live and our commitment to reasoned and respectful discourse that holds together significant differences in creative tension, we believe that The Episcopal Church can and must lead in this effort. In fact many in this Church are already doing so, for which we thank God.

At our ordinations as bishops we pledged to “boldly proclaim and interpret the Gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience” of those we are called to serve. (BCP p. 518) We call all Episcopalians to pray and work for the end of gun violence. We commit ourselves to lead a new conversation in our nations as to the appropriate use and legislation of firearms. And we further commit ourselves to specific actions to this end.

Praying and working together we can be instruments of God’s restoring and reconciling love for the whole world. Glory to God whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. (Ephesians 3:20)
"The gospel calls us to carry a cross of hope and peace, and to care deeply for every human life – the lives of people we know personally and the lives of those we may never meet. We are called not to wash our hands of the violence of this world but to raise our hands and our voices tirelessly in protest against it. We are called to claim every life as a life worthy of our efforts to ensure that every single one of God’s children is safe, whole, loved, and living a life of peace. We must see in every life the very life and breath of God."

The Rev. Kathie Adams-Shepherd,
Rector, Trinity Episcopal Church, Newtown, Connecticut
Excerpt from meditation for the First Station, Way of the Cross,
Holy Week Witness, March 25, 2013