

RABBIS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE



RESOURCES FOR “STAND UP SHABBAT”

On the one year anniversary of the shooting at Charleston’s
Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church

June 17-18, 2016



BACKGROUND

On June 17, 2015, nine church members who were studying the Bible together at Charleston's Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church were shot and killed by a man who had been welcomed into the group with open hearts and open arms. In stark comparison to the church members, the shooter was deranged by hatred, intent on sowing destruction and fear.

To commemorate the one-year anniversary of this unspeakable tragedy, Faith Communities around the country are participating in a STAND UP SABBATH to remember the nine lives lost and to renew our commitment to common sense gun safety laws. More information can be found here: <http://www.nchurches.org/gun-violence-prevention/>

Heartbreakingly, just days before the commemoration, another shooting has shocked the conscience of the nation. In what is now the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, 49 people were killed and 50 injured when another young man bent on a hateful act had easy access to guns. Armed with a handgun and AR-15, he entered turned the Pulse nightclub, where the LGBTQ community had gathered for dancing on Latin night, into a nightmare.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Please join Rabbis Against Gun Violence on June 17-18, 2016 for STAND UP SHABBAT on the anniversary of the Charleston shooting and remember the nine killed – as well as all others killed and injured by gun violence, including the 49 in Orlando just this past week. Honor them not only with remembrance, but also with a commitment to action.

If you are a service leader, consider incorporating a reading, poem or prayer into the service – perhaps before the Mi Sheberach. Before the Mourners' Kaddish, consider reciting the names of those who were killed. Add a sermon or discussion.

If you are not a service leader, consider reaching out to yours and encouraging them to incorporate a reading, poem or prayer into the service.

For all, consider bringing a reading, poem, prayer or discussion to your Shabbat table.

In this resource packet you will find a few poems and reflections that you can use, adapt or simply refer to as you compose your own sermon or reflection. Also included are some gun violence facts and the names of those killed in the Charleston and Orlando shootings.

Thank you for adding your voice to this critical effort and for helping educate and inspire others.

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Holy City

by Marjory Wentworth

“Only love can conquer hate.”

Reverend Clementa Pinckney

Let us gather and be
silent together like stones
glittering in sunlight

so bright it hurts our eyes
emptied of tears and searching
the sky for answers.

Let us be strangers
together as we gather
in circles wherever we meet,

to stand hand in hand and sing
hymns to the heavens and pray
for the fallen and speak their names:

Clementa, Cynthia, Tywanza,
Ethel, Sharonda, Daniel,
Myra, Susie and Depayne.

They are not alone. As bells
in the spires call across
the wounded Charleston sky,

we close our eyes and listen
to the same stillness ringing
in our hearts, holding onto

one another like brothers,
like sisters because we know
wherever there is love, there is God.

*The poet laureate of South Carolina, Marjory Wentworth wrote this poem
dedicated to those who lost their lives on June 17, 2015 at the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston*



We Will Not Be Weared: A Prayer to End Gun Violence

(c) Rabbi Menachem Creditor

Dear God,

91 and 32,000

91 killed by guns every day

32,000 every year

God, we have every reason to become numb,
to become used to this blasphemous trend,
to barely even register
that Your Images are being erased
by a fetishized weapon, our national idol.

91 and 32,000

God, we know we must act,
and we know that, in order to act,
we must feel the urgency - Your Urgency.
We must channel Your pain
at the deaths of Your children
and remind our lawmakers to choose life.

We've been too quiet,
mistaking status updates and reactionary
prayers
for true repentance for the worship of a
weapon.
Our nation has endured
the epidemic of Gun Violence
for far too long.

91 and 32,000

And so, God,
as we feel the beginnings of our own
weariness
after so mass shootings
we remember the wisdom of Your Prophet,
who taught that:

"...those who hope in God will renew their
strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

We pray to You for renewal
as we spread our protective wings over one
another again,
running to justice,
refusing weariness,
and choosing life.

May we sing louder than weapons
and merit to see You in each other's eyes,
sanctifying Your Name
by standing together
by rising up again,
this time rebuilding Your World
by saving each other.

Amen.



God Full of Mercy

Rabbi Ben Goldstein

Today I find myself thinking of the words of the great Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai z"l:

God-Full-of-Mercy, the prayer for the dead. If God was not full of mercy,
Mercy would have been in the world, not just in Him.

Too often we are awakened to news of violence and death. Too often we are left with bloodshed and murder. We wonder when it will end. We wonder what a man could be thinking to intentionally inflict so much hurt on people he doesn't even know. We wonder how a God who created the beauty of nature could allow evil and destruction to mar his beautiful canvas. The red streams created by nonsensical acts leave us wondering about God's benevolence or lack thereof.

What is there left for us to do when the news makes us want to cry and cover our ears to pain and suffering? What recourse do we have to battle the pessimism and bleakness that we feel when we see these stories? How do we keep the darkness at bay?

... We all find ways of reaching out to catch that light that will shine through the darkness that surrounds us. I don't know what helps other people face the depravity of life and Man. For me, all I can do is pray. I pray to a God whose attributes I do not know. I pray to a universe whose meaning is beyond me. I pray that all life has meaning. I pray that my life can serve a purpose. I pray that the lives of those who have been taken from us will live on. I pray that God exists and can hear my prayers.

God Full of Mercy:

Have mercy on those whose lives ended before their time. Comfort those whose sobs ring in our ears. Let them know that they are not alone.

God, guide us through this difficult time as we fumble our way through the darkness.

Help your children whose hope has been diminished. Show us that goodness and beauty can triumph. Bless us to bring light into this world. Bless us to do the work that needs to be done.

May we be blessed to do God's work and may God be blessed through the work of our hands.



A Prayer in Commemoration of the Charleston and Orlando Shootings

Adapted from A Prayer in the Aftermath of the Orlando Mass Shooting

Rabbi Joseph R. Black

Once again, violence and the carnage brought about by the deadly combination of hatred, intolerance and easy access to weapons of destruction have transformed mothers, fathers, lovers, spouses, relatives and friends into mourners.

Tonight, we are *all* mourners. The categories which once defined us – *who* we love, *how* we love; *where* we pray and *when* we pray; the language we speak and the music we sing have melted into the common parlance of our anger and our grief.

We are here tonight to show solidarity.

We are here tonight to proclaim the inherent goodness in all of your creation.

We are here because we *have* to be here – to see within each other's eyes the determination to stand up to hatred, bigotry and inhumanity.

Tonight we grieve – tomorrow we work to tear down the walls of intolerance that too many want to build.

Baruch Atah Adonai, she bara et ha-adam b'tzalmo. We praise You, Eternal – who has created all humanity in your image. AMEN

Inspiration From Our Sages and Texts

Whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world.

And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world.

(Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9, Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a)

Pray as if everything depended on God; act as if everything depended on you. (Gates of Prayer)

The opposite of good is not evil; it is indifference (Elie Wiesel)

Lo alecha hamlacha ligmor, v'lo atab ben chorin l'hivatel mimena. You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to abstain from it. (Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot 2:21)

Some are guilty, but all are responsible. (Abraham Joshua Heschel)

Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor (Lev 19:16)



Some Gun Violence Facts

- * Roughly 91 people are killed each day by guns. Of those, approximately 7 are children and teens. Approximately 33,000 people are killed each year by guns.
- * Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that between 2010 and 2014, there were an estimated 43,000 hate crimes committed in the United States that involved guns.
- * People on the terror watch lists legally purchased guns over 2,000 times over 11 years—because the FBI had no authority to block those sales.
- * Young black men, particularly those in impoverished, dense urban areas, are especially at risk of gun violence. Constituting just 6% of the US population, black men account for more than 50% of all gun homicides each year. Firearm homicide is the leading cause of death for black males ages 15–34.
- * Every 16 hours between 2006 and 2014, an American woman was fatally shot by a current or former romantic partner, totaling 544 deaths annually.
- * In 2015, on average, a toddler in America shot someone once a week. Between 2007 and 2011, an average of 62 children age 14 and under died each year in reported unintentional shootings. But strong evidence shows that the actual count is a shocking 61% higher.
- * Americans are 25 times more likely to be murdered with a gun than people in other developed countries.
- * Over the past 5 years, more Americans have been murdered with guns than with all other weapons combined
- * Suicides account for about 2/3 of all gun death in the U.S. People who live in homes with guns have three to five times the risk of dying by suicide compared to people who live in homes without guns. When a firearm is used in a suicide attempt, there's an 85 percent chance of it being successful, which makes it 42 times more effective than suicides by overdose or poisoning. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs about 22 veterans kill themselves each day and roughly 70% do so with a firearm. (If you can prolong the time between the often-impulsive decision to commit suicide and access to a gun, you can greatly decrease the chance of the attempt. And, of those people who attempt suicide and survive, only about 10 percent end up dying from suicide. So, preventing the attempted suicides – in this case by limiting access to guns by keeping them unloaded, locked, or out of the house – can save lives.)

Sources:

<http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Healing-Communities-in-Crisis-2.pdf>

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<http://www.thetrace.org/2015/12/gun-violence-stats-2015/>

http://everytownresearch.org/reports/innocents_lost/

<http://www.thetrace.org/2016/03/guns-suicide-risk-factor-harvard-study/>

<http://www.thetrace.org/2015/11/gun-suicides-mental-illness-statistics/>

Niraj Chokshi, “When Hate Crimes and Guns Mix: What Five Years of Federal Data Show,” <http://wapo.st/1sCj2za>.

“Senators Introduce Bill to Stop terrorists from Buying Firearms, Explosives,” February 24, 2015, available at <http://1.usa.gov/1zIBli>



Names of those killed in the Charleston shooting

Depayne Middleton-Doctor
Cynthia Hurd
Susie Jackson
Ethel Lance
Clementa Pinckney

Tywanza Sanders
Daniel Simmons
Sharonda Singleton
Myra Thompson

Names of those killed in Orlando shooting

Stanley Almodovar III, 23 years old
Amanda Alvear, 25 years old
Oscar A Aracena-Montero, 26 years old
Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, 33 years old
Antonio Davon Brown, 29 years old
Darryl Roman Burt II, 29 years old
Angel L. Candelario-Padro, 28 years old
Juan Chevez-Martinez, 25 years old
Luis Daniel Conde, 39 years old
Cory James Connell, 21 years old
Tevin Eugene Crosby, 25 years old
Deonka Deidra Drayton, 32 years old
Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, 31 years old
Leroy Valentin Fernandez, 25 years old
Mercedez Marisol Flores, 26 years old
Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz, 22 years old
Juan Ramon Guerrero, 22 years old
Paul Terrell Henry, 41 years old
Frank Hernandez, 27 years old
Miguel Angel Honorato, 30 years old
Javier Jorge-Reyes, 40 years old
Jason Benjamin Josaphat, 19 years old
Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, 30 years old
Anthony Luis Laureanodisla, 25 years old
Christopher Andrew Leinonen, 32 years old

Alejandro Barrios Martinez, 21 years old
Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, 49 years old
Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, 25 years old
Kimberly Morris, 37 years old
Akyra Monet Murray, 18 years old
Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, 20 years old
Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez, 25 years old
Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, 36 years old
Joel Rayon Paniagua, 32 years old
Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, 35 years old
Enrique L. Rios, Jr., 25 years old
Jean C. Nives Rodriguez, 27 years old
Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado, 35 yrs old
Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, 24 years old
Yilmery Rodriguez Solivan, 24 years old
Edward Sotomayor Jr., 34 years old
Shane Evan Tomlinson, 33 years old
Martin Benitez Torres, 33 years old
Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega, 24 years old
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, 37 years old
Luis S. Vielma, 22 years old
Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, 50 years old
Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, 37 years old
Jerald Arthur Wright, 31 years old