

MC USA statement in response to Florida school shooting

2.16. 2018 Written By: Mennonite Church USA

As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.” —Proverbs 26:11

We find ourselves, again, in a place of sadness, anger and pain in the aftermath of a mass shooting. A teacher and 17 students were killed and more injured at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

Schools exist to nurture the gifts and talents of our children. They’ve become killing floors. As a nation, we are unwell.

We are right to look to Jesus in this time of tragedy for comfort, wisdom and healing. But we should not be surprised if Jesus asks us a question: “Do you want to get well?”

Columbine, Sandy Hook, Orlando, Las Vegas, Texas, countless other episodes of violence that fade quickly from our collective consciousness—these events shock us, bring us to tears, make us angry. They do everything except make us change.

As sick as we are as a nation, it doesn’t appear we want to get better. Violence is a disease that has infected every part of America. It’s in our history, it’s ever-present in our culture. We look to it as a protector and defender, the first and best way to address our problems. In America, the answer is often to be tougher, to hit harder.

We may talk about cures and policy changes that will bring an end to the suffering. These are ways to alleviate some of the worst symptoms. But the biggest obstacle to recovery is us. We do not want to get well.

Mennonites historically have resisted the call and lure of violence. But we are complicit in the tragedies that plague us, as are all Americans. When we allow these tragedies to become commonplace, when we allow systems and corporations to profit from producing and distributing the tools of death, when we accept as inevitable that no solution can be found—we are complicit.

We mourn today the loss of life and the terrible road of grief 18 families now have to walk. We mourn those who were injured and the trying recovery to physical, emotional and spiritual wholeness that awaits them.

And after we mourn, let us search our own hearts and inquire—do we want to get well?

—Ervin Stutzman, executive director, Mennonite Church USA

Church leaders express grief, call for action after Florida high school mass shooting

Bishops United to announce series of services of lamentation

By David Paulsen

Posted Feb 16, 2018

[Episcopal News Service] Episcopal bishops are arranging for services of lamentation at churches around the country in the wake of the shooting at a Florida high school that left 17 students and faculty members dead, and the bishops and other church leaders are calling for political action against gun violence to end “these lethal spasm of violence in our country.” “The heart of our nation has been broken yet again by another mass shooting at an American school,” Bishops United Against Gun Violence, a coalition of more than 70 Episcopal bishops, said in a statement released Feb. 16 following the Ash Wednesday massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

A former student, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, has been charged with 17 counts of murder after authorities say he opened fire with an AR-15 rifle in hallways and classrooms before ditching his gun and ammunition and blending in with students to escape. He was found and arrested on a city street later in the day.

Fourteen of the fatal victims were students. A football coach, athletic director and geography teacher also were killed.

Bishops United offered condolences to the families, singling out by name Carmen Schentrup, a 16-year-old student who was a youth group leader at St. Mary Magdalene Episcopal Church in Coral Springs.

The Coral Springs church posted news of Schentrup’s death Feb. 15 on Facebook.

“Please keep our entire church family in your prayers,” the Facebook post said while asking the public to respect the family’s privacy.

The Diocese of Southeast Florida, which includes Parkland and Coral Springs, released a statement Feb. 15 expressing grief at the “horrific massacre of innocents.”

“There are no words that can adequately give voice to the madness and the violence done to those gunned down, and to their families and friends so cruelly robbed of those they loved,” the statement says. “There are no words to describe the pain of loss and grief, of shock and horror, of outrage and anger, only the anguished cries that well up from the very depths of our being. There are no words to make sense of what makes no sense, and in the face of such senseless killing we are numbed and rendered speechless.”

Bishop Peter Eaton followed up Feb. 16 by saying Christians’ faith will help guide their response to this tragedy, and “we bring more than our prayers.”

“We bring our longings and convictions for a different future,” he said in his written statement on the shooting. “What happened at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School is not the world as it ought to be, or as it needs to be, and we who follow Jesus accept the responsibility for being partners with God to bridge that gap between what is and what could and ought to be.”

Also Feb. 15, Washington National Cathedral Dean Randy Hollerith released a written prayer asking God to comfort those affected by the shooting spree while alluding to the political debates that typically are ignited by such killings.

“Forgive us, Lord, when our leaders fail to take action to protect the most vulnerable from the dangers of gun violence,” Hollerith says. “Forgive us, Lord, for the times when we lack the courage and political will to work together. Open our eyes and our hearts to work across our divisions to end the plague of gun violence.”

Those sentiments were echoed by Bishops United Against Gun Violence.

“We must reflect on and acknowledge our own complicity in the unjust systems that facilitate so many deaths, and, in accordance with the keeping of a holy Lent, repent and make reparations,” Bishops United’s statement says before calling for political engagement by Episcopalians.

The bishops specifically call for legislation banning the AR-15 and similar weapons, as well as high-capacity magazines and so-called “bump stocks,” the device used by the shooter who killed 58 people at an outdoor music concert in Las Vegas in October.

“We understand that mass shootings account for a small percentage of the victims of gun violence; that far more people are killed by handguns than by any kind of rifle; that poverty, misogyny and racism contribute mightily to the violence in our society and that soaring rates of suicide remain a great unaddressed social challenge,” Bishops United’s statement says.

“And yet, the problem of gun violence is complex, and we must sometimes address it in small pieces if it is not to overwhelm us. So, please, call your members of Congress and insist that your voice be heard above those of the National Rifle Association’s lobbyists.”

The group of bishops also plans to announce a schedule of services of lamentation, with details to be released on its Facebook page.

BISHOP CONFERENCE PRESIDENT REACTION TO SHOOTING AT FLORIDA HIGH SCHOOL

February 14, 2018

WASHINGTON—Following the tragic shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Daniel Cardinal DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, called for prayer and healing.

The full statement is as follows:

"We are deeply saddened by the shootings in Broward County, Florida, and by the needless and tragic loss of life. May the mercy of God comfort the grieving families and sustain the wounded in their healing. Catholics and many other Christians have begun the journey of Lent today. I encourage us to unite our prayers and sacrifices for the healing and consolation of all those who have been affected by violence in these last weeks and for a conversion of heart, that our communities and nation will be marked by peace. I pray also for unity in seeking to build toward a society with fewer tragedies caused by senseless gun violence. Our hope is in the Lord, as he promised after his resurrection, 'behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age' (Mt. 28:20)."

UMC bishops mourn victims of Florida school shootings

By PNW Conference

Feb 14, 2018

In the wake of the school shooting in Florida, the Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church has issued a statement of grief, mourning the victims of the shootings and called for prayers of repentance from the culture of death and cycle of violence.

The statement issued by Florida Area Resident Bishop Ken Carter, who is also the incoming president of the Council of Bishops, reads as follows:

“On this Ash Wednesday, our services announced the biblical imperative to “repent and believe the gospel.” In light of today’s shootings, we repent from our participation in a culture of death, we acknowledge the harm we do to others, and we claim the power of the cross that breaks the cycle of violence and retaliation. We also grieve with the communities of Parkland and Coral Springs, Florida, in the deaths of seventeen persons and the wounding of many others on the campus of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. A number of surrounding United Methodist Churches have students at this school, and our connection will support their healing ministry in the days ahead.”

Statement on Facebook by the International Pentecostal Holiness Church Superintendent Bishop Doug Beacham

February 14, 2018

The murders on Ash Wednesday of students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida remind us again of the culture of death that pervades so much of our world and our society.

The Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill (murder)" is only on our national radar screen when moral absolutes are taken to court to remove them from our national awareness.

[Kidshealth.org](http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tv-affects-child.html#) reports that by the time children are 18 years old, they have seen 200,000 violent acts on television (<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/tv-affects-child.html#>). Think of how that is multiplied through the multiplied forms of internet media. Many children and teens experience violence and abuse first hand in their homes and neighborhoods.

The generations that have followed Baby Boomers have grown up knowing that millions of their generations have been sacrificed on the abortion altars of convenience. It's little wonder so many of them have such little regard for life.

The basic foundations for civil society, formulated as "thou shalt not steal, bear false witness, commit adultery, murder, covet," are not even part of our national discussion.

I am not naïve enough to think that awareness of moral absolutes is the only problem solver. But I am aware there is a profound loss of God-ordained knowledge that permeates every aspect of our society - sometimes including the church.

Christian parents, are we teaching our children and grandchildren the Ten Commandments? Do we teach them the Sermon on the Mount? Pastors, do we faithfully proclaim the clear moral teachings of the Bible? I'm not talking about legalism, self-righteousness, or justification by works. I'm simply thinking of the basic ability to know what is good, and what is evil.

My heart is broken, again, over the senseless murders that garner our attention for a few days. Most of us will move on. But again, there are families in Florida whose lives will never be the same.

May the Holy Spirit give us wisdom to live courageously, boldly, and humbly, as light, hope, and yes, knowledge, in this world.

Archdiocese Statement on Florida High School Shooting (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)

February 16, 2018

NEW YORK – The horrible mass shooting at *Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School* in Parkland Florida, on Feb. 14, has caused the tragic loss of life for 17 students and teachers, has caused direct pain and grief to the families and friends of the victims and has brought sadness, sorrow and anger to the whole country and the world.

As the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, we share the deep pain and mourning for the horrific death of 17 innocent human beings, and we stand by the countless others who are suffering as a result of this abominable act. Our fervent prayers and thoughts are with the victims, with their families and with their friends.

This absolutely unacceptable and totally unthinkable school massacre is yet another sad chapter in a long series of violent crimes perpetrated across our country against innocent victims, many times against children, many times against young students in our schools and college campuses. It seems that in no other country this is allowed.

As we find ourselves, once again, in need of offering words of comfort and solace, words of solidarity and hope to those who were directly affected, we seriously question whether we have done all we can to stop this epidemic disease. How many more victims, how many more school children, how many more teenagers and teachers should die before we act? Let us then work to restore the schools to be the sanctuaries that they, by nature, should be. Let us all work to restore trust and confidence within our children by establishing the appropriate security conditions and legal measures prohibiting any kind of any repetition of the massacre in Parkland, Florida.

We offer our wholehearted plea to our elected officials for immediate and effective action. Our plea is accompanied by the certainty that by the assistance of the God of mercy and wisdom positive results will be achieved in order to restore hope to our society and the world.

Salvation Army continues to support Parkland community

February 16, 2018

As hundreds of students, parents, and neighbors gathered to honor the 17 victims of the Parkland school shooting, The Salvation Army prayed with and comforted many of those in attendance.

The Salvation Army set up two mobile feeding units at the Parkland Recreation and Enrichment Center, adjacent to the amphitheater where the prayer vigil was held. There, they distributed over 300 meals, drinks, and snacks to vigil attendees, while offering prayer and counsel.

Local and state officials, including Florida Gov. Rick Scott, stopped by the feeding units to greet and thank Salvation Army personnel for their support and discuss coordination of resources as the community finds ways to heal from this tragedy.

“Emotional and spiritual care is an important part of our disaster response,” said Major Keath Biggers, Fort Lauderdale Area Commander. “To be able to provide some level of comfort to those mourning after such a tragic loss is a duty we do not take lightly.”

Immediately following the shooting on Feb. 14, Majors Keath and Candice Biggers reported to the Broward County’s Emergency Operations Center to help assess community needs and offer The Salvation Army’s assistance. Mobile feeding units from Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach were deployed to provide water, coffee, and emotional and spiritual care.

The Salvation Army continues to work with local officials and community partners to determine long-term services to the families affected by this tragedy.