



Bringing what matters back to the gospel for justice, liberation, and delight.

A service of lament for gun violence

Call to worship

When the world's deep wounds remind us how precious but fragile life is,

we remember that our lives depend on one another.

When we grieve. When we are afraid. When we no longer know what to feel. We remember, this is our sanctuary.

There is no depth of doubt or despair we can't bring to God and one another.

The Holy One is here, sharing in our longings, bearing witness to our lament.

Our God does not abandon us!

Opening Prayer

God, our strength, the world is full of so much wonderful and terrible, both. But these days hope is hard to find when we are constantly confronted by stories of gun violence, of loss of life, of toxic masculinity weaponized, of yet another seemingly safe space being terrorized. We are left wondering where to turn. You, O God, meet us in the middle of all of it - inviting us not to turn away from the sadness or allow ourselves to become numb to the injustices, but to dwell in the midst of it. Your presence gives us a space to pause, to break the cycle of violence and media and move on. In you, we are invited to be present to the pain of the world, to the parts of it we hold in our own bodies, and to honor the lives taken or touched by gun violence. Give to us the courage to remain soft in this hard world. Amen.

Communion Liturgy

The Beloved be with you.

And also with you.

Open your hearts to Love.

We open our hearts to you, O God.

Let us give thanks to the One who nourishes us - in mind, soul, and body.

Our gratitude abounds.

Gracious One, even as our hearts break, they do so in the care of your embrace. Since the beginning, you have been with us. Out of love, you created us, out of love you became like us, out of love, you sustain us still.

Therefore we give thanks to you - joining in the chorus of praise that transcends time - connecting us to generations past, present, and future:

Holy, holy, holy, One
God of justice and liberation
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Blessed is the One who comes
in your name.

You set the world in motion in a perfect harmony, but in our arrogance and fear we have turned to grasping at every opportunity for dominion and control we can muster. We have undone the balance of life depending on life in mutuality and traded it for a false sense of power and security. And yet, even still, your compassion has persisted throughout the ages.

In the face of violence, oppression, tyranny, and injustice, you choose to take on flesh, to not only experience it all with us, but to liberate us into new ways of living and loving.

In the person of Jesus Christ, we witnessed Love enfleshed. It was vulnerable. It was present. It was courageous. And it was unwilling to resign to believing things have to be this way.

Jesus - deeply tender towards those whose lives cried out for compassion and fiercely provoking those for whom salvation could only look like repentance, showed us how to live in a world where power is imbalanced and violence is common.

On the night of his betrayal, Christ gathered among friends at Table. Sharing in presence and meal, he took the bread, gave thanks to you, broke it, and shared it with his disciples saying, "take, eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Likewise after the meal was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, and told his disciples, "Take this and share it among yourselves. This is the cup of the new covenant."

In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ you have shown us that violence and death never have the last word. Life persists. Hope persists. Love persists.

In remembrance of this, your acts on our behalf and on behalf of all life, we give you thanks, rejoicing in the mystery of our faith that proclaims:

God with us - Christ was killed.

God with us - Christ was raised in new life.

God with us - Christ comes to us again and again.

Pour out your Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and cup. Through them, make us Christ's body alive in the world, beckoning forth your Kingdom through compassion and tenderness, lament and righteous anger. By your Spirit, make us One in the work for liberation, One in mutual interdependence, and One in commitment to Love until every tear is wiped away and all can feast at your Table. Amen.

Prayer after receiving

God, it is from you that we learned to hunger for justice. Make this taste of your Kingdom linger in our memory each time we lose sight of hope. Through your Table and in communion with one another and all the saints, you nourish us. We give you thanks for the ways you sustain us in the work of creating a world free from violence, free from toxic masculinity and white supremacy, free from the fear of entering a church or school or mosque or music festival or wherever we turn for refuge. May it be so.

Lament

God, how many times must we cry out, "how long?!" How many times will the cycles repeat themselves? Headline after headline, the news of lives lost to gun violence repeats itself. Heartbreak, reaction, effort, no change, heartbreak, reaction, effort, no change, heartbreak, reaction, effort, no change. Every life unique, but patterns all too much the same.

Hear our cries, God! Open your ears to our lament. Weep with us when we weep.

Listen! We are calling to you.

In the person of Jesus Christ, you walked a world where the powerful were not held accountable, the poor were made vulnerable, and violence was used as a tool of fear and control. Though there were no guns, the same spirits of destruction and fear hovered over life. You know, in your own bones, the grief we bear.

Over 53,000 incidents of gun violence have occurred so far in 2017.

For the more than 13,000 who have lost their lives,

our hearts are broken upon.

For the 633 children who have been killed or injured,
we confess we have not done enough to protect them.

For the almost 3000 teens who have been killed or injured,
bring your justice, O God!

For the 311 cases of shootings that have involved anywhere from three to nearly 500 individuals at a given moment,
there are no words for the depths of our despair!

For the spirit of fear that hovers over our coming and going - inviting us to wonder, "what about here, are we safe here? In our church? In our school? In our streets?"
Be our place of refuge, O God.

God, we wonder what it will take for meaningful change to occur.
Wherever there is inaction, put your people into motion.

Do not let the lives that have been taken be dishonored.
Bring forth justice from their graves, O God.

Let no heart be settled, no mind be at peace that has the ability to make a positive change but chooses inaction instead.

For all the harm that has been done, and for that which is still to come, may your Spirit provoke repentance.

We grieve, we ache, we long for change because we believe it should not be this way - we have a sense of something better.

Thy Kindom come.

A world without toxic masculinity.

Thy Kindom come.

A world without white supremacy.

Thy Kindom come.

A world that does not take refuge in violence.

Thy Kindom come.

A world where our sacred spaces are our shelter.

Thy Kindom come.

A world where access to guns is regulated.

Thy Kindom come.

A world where corporations do not profit while blood is spilt.

Thy Kindom come.

Your Kindom come, your will be done, O God of justice and compassion. Receive our cries, not of hopelessness or of resignation, but of truth. In all of its ache, of sharing in grief and anger and hard realities, the truth keeps us awake to what is so that we can work for what could be. Help us make it so.

Amen.

Benediction

Weeping with God is sacred work. The Divine is in no hurry to rush past loss of life or to normalize fear and violence. So go, knowing whenever your grief or anger or fear returns, God is there, with you. Go in the peace and courage of having named the truth of what is as we bear witness to what can be. Amen.