

Dear God's Beloved of LBUMC,

In these difficult days following the Robb Elementary School shooting, I share with you these important words from our district superintendent:

A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children,
because they are no more.

Jeremiah 31:15

Dear Family in Christ,

As the sun rises today, countless families in Uvalde, Texas, are shattered as the beds of their children are empty. Instead of helping their precious ones get dressed for school, they are beginning to plan for their funerals. Families are devastated as two beloved wives and mothers didn't return home from their work as teachers. And family and friends of an 18-year-old child, who brought on this latest horror in our nations, are left with grief, guilt... shame.

And so, we pray, for we must. We pray for all those families whose grief cannot be comforted. We pray for all in that small farming community that will hold these families in their care. We pray for the teachers there and everywhere who will need to face their students today with assurance and care and comfort.

We pray for lawmakers across our land, prayers that they will be moved beyond political posturing to comprehensive actions that address the complex realities that feed our nation's addiction to violence, hate, and destruction.

And we pray for the church, for us who claim to follow the Prince of Peace, for we have failed. We have failed to care for our communities. We have failed to demand change. We have failed to move our prayers from our hearts to our lives. We have chosen weak resignation to the ways of the world, wringing our hands at how the world is. We have given up on God's Kin-dom dream, 'on earth as it is in heaven.' We pray that God will convict us, forgive us, and change us.

Prayers don't – can't - stop with our lips and hearts; prayers must also be lived in our daily choices through what we prioritize in the world we create. This is not the way the world is. It is the way we have allowed the world to become.

The United Methodist Church urges “congregations to advocate at the local and national level for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence.” If you are looking to find ways to address gun violence and create a climate of safety and compassion, there are resources in our church you can use. See <https://www.umcjustice.org/what-we-care-about/peace-with-justice/gun-violence-prevention> for concrete steps you and your congregation can engage in.

People should not be afraid to go to the grocery store. People should not be afraid to gather in their places of worship. Children and teachers should not be afraid to go to school. We can address those fears. We can make changes. We can prioritize God's Kin-dom where “no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days or an old person who does not live out a lifetime, for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth...” (Is 65:19-20a) We can pray in word and action because God's grace is sufficient for us every day.

DS Sandy

Rev. Sandra K. Olewine
South District Superintendent

Let us be in discernment and prayer as a people and as a congregation.

Prayerfully in peace,
Pastor Lynn