

**When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you;  
even though you make many prayers, I will not listen;  
your hands are full of blood.**

**Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings  
from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good;  
seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.  
Isaiah 1:15-17**

We, as clergy and faith leaders, stand together again heartbroken and outraged. Once more we witness a mass shooting in our nation, and we hear the familiar refrain of a troubled loner with a difficult past and perhaps some degree of mental illness, but always with access to high-powered guns. And this refrain is always accompanied by a thick layer of thoughts and prayers for shooting after shooting, prayers which we affirm, as people of faith, are meaningless if they do not change us and our actions.

And so we raise our voices again today, to call once more for change and to make the moral claim that our dedication to guns and to violence is, in religious terms, idolatry. We appear to be willing to sacrifice even our own children to this warped ideology, wrapped in the second amendment as if it were Holy Scripture. We appear to be willing to make mental illness a scapegoat, but offer few resources to support research, treatment or the de-stigmatization of mental illness. Our elected officials appear to be willing to shake their heads and cry tragedy, but unwilling to resist lobbyists or election threats because they have sold their souls.

Every time we think enough is enough, it isn't. It is not lost on us that only a week after the shootings in Florida our own legislature was debating bills to remove restrictions here in our state. We must move from prayers to actions. It is clear that the issue is not we are unable to do more, it is that we are unwilling to do more. The right of our children to be as safe as possible in their own schools is a moral assertion that must outweigh the desire of some people to own any gun they wish, which is not a moral position at all. We speak this truth today to the powers that be – our idolatry of guns must stop and our policies must change. The people demand it. The nation demands it. And the God whose name you love to evoke when it suits you demands it.

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