

Prayer and Action

In 2013, I wrote this prayer in response to the Boston Marathon bombing. One of my pastor friends was running in the race, so even though it was far away it felt very close to home. It breaks my heart to realize how often I've returned to this prayer in just a few years, including this year on Ash Wednesday after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida.

Yes, we need to pray. *The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.* (James 5:16) But we must not stop there. James 2:14-17 reminds us, *What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.*

It is time to pray and to act. To seek God's wisdom and God's empowerment to respond. To call on God for peace and to care for bodies before they are zipped into body bags. Prayer changes things and changes us. It calls us, leads us, and empowers us to join Jesus in his saving work. How are you responding in prayer and action?

– Lisa <><

*God our Refuge, calm our hearts when evil abounds
They run to lonesome places, screaming an alarm
Calm our hearts so we can find you above the fear*

*God our Strength, calm our hearts when evil abounds
They race to revenge, pounding with anger
Calm our hearts so we can hear you above the hammering*

*God our Help, calm our hearts when evil abounds
They rush to human strength, grasping for control
Calm our hearts so we can hold to your way, your truth, and your life*

*Calm our hearts so they may beat in unison with yours
So healing may flow over bodies and spirits broken by the chaos
So hope may fill families and communities devastated by violence
So compassion and peace and unity may rise up among all people*

*God our Strength, our Refuge, our Help
We entrust our lives to you
We step forward with you in your saving work Amen*



Lenten Prayer and Action Projects

On Sunday, 2/18, we wrote 120 letters of appreciation and encouragement to educators, half went to the faculty and staff of Phillippi Shores Elementary and half went to the faculty and staff of Riverview High School

On Sunday, 2/25, we signed posters of appreciation and encouragement to first responders at our two closest fire stations and the Sherriff's Department

On Sunday, 3/04, we'll sign posters of appreciation and encouragement to the staffs of Sarasota Memorial Hospital and Doctor's Hospital

On Sunday, 3/11, we'll write letters of encouragement to local mental health professionals and those struggling with mental illness. Write your letter during worship or bring your letter with you to worship.

On Sunday, 3/18 we'll take part in the **#5000Letters** campaign

#5000Letters is a campaign by United Methodists in the Florida Annual Conference to contact state and federal government officials, urging them to seek legislation that will curb gun violence in this country. Join us in following Bishop Ken Carter's call to speak for those whose voices have been silenced, for the sake of our children and their future. All persons are welcome to participate.

What should the letters say?

Rather than require uniform content in each letter, we are encouraging people to write in their own voice, out of their own experience and context. Be respectful. Sample letters may be found on the campaign website <https://5000letters.com/sample-letters>, but it is not required that you use them.

To whom should the letters be written?

Prepare letters to your state and congressional representatives. Bring your letter to worship or write it the morning of 3/18. Note on the envelope who the letter is for and we will mail them for you. A generous donor is paying for the postage.

What about the separation of church and state?

We are called as a church to be engaged in political issues, just as Jesus was unafraid to speak out on matters of injustice, and the prophets boldly confronted the social ills of their time. We can do so without being partisan. This is why #5000Letters is not about targeting, advancing, or endorsing any particular political party. Even though these letters may have political messaging, they should not be partisan in nature.

How can I learn more about the issue of gun violence, from a United Methodist perspective?

Go to the campaign website resource page <https://5000letters.com/resources/> There you'll find links to numerous pieces written from the Florida Conference and the denomination.

Will we have a discussion about gun violence prevention as a church family?

Yes! We believe we can have faithful, respectful discussion on complicated issues, and even differ in how to address them, and still remain committed to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

You, and anyone else who is interested, are invited to gather for an empathetic, solution-centered time of study, prayer, dialogue, and action. We're offering a daytime gathering and an evening gathering. Pick which one is best for you. Plan on two hours for each gathering: half to watch the documentary and half for discussion

Our gatherings will include viewing the **award winning documentary Armor of Light**. You can view the documentary on iTunes, Amazon, Netflix, or on their website <https://www.armoroflightfilm.com/>

Daytime Gatherings

Mondays, March 26 and April 2
2pm in Haley Hall

Evening Gatherings

Wednesdays, April 18 and 25
6pm dinner, 6:30pm program begins



Speak for those whose voices
have been silenced, for the sake
of our children and their future.

[5000Letters.com](https://5000letters.com)

