



In Grief and Solidarity with Orlando

Jesus weeps at yet another attack of hatred and terror, on June 12 in Orlando, taking the lives of 49 victims in this horrific, murderous crime against the LGBTQ community. More than 50 were injured, lives changed forever, recovering for years to come. Loved ones, friends, relatives, beloved children of God all, made to be a target for celebrating their humanity and expression of life and love, from the hands of one who tried to link his heinous deeds to a religious tradition, Islam, that deplores such violence. The Church Council of Greater Seattle shares our love, care and concern for the LGBTQ community in Orlando, as well as LGBTQ communities throughout the United States, as an attack against one community is an attack against all of us and which must be denounced and condemned. Jesus weeps at this latest crime against humankind and blesses our grief, our cries of lamentation, our anger and the coming together of communities hurting in Orlando and all across the United States of America and beyond. "Comfort, comfort my people!" God announces once more.

The Church Council joins our deep sorrow with the faith communities, LGBTQ organizations and communities, civic leaders and all who uphold the right to life in abundance for all and who decry this act that used murder in an attempt to diminish, divide and dehumanize. We honor the lives of the men and women who perished, learn of their heritage with appreciation, and revere the stories of their lives. The God who brought forth life out of *adamah*, the earth, honored by the Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other traditions, declares once again that just as love brings people together in places like the nightclub in Orlando, so too love is stronger than death. In the end, the gifts of mercy on all who are suffering and solidarity from all who stand together in the face of this tragedy will prevail. If true religion can speak a word in the face of such senseless horrors, it is that love wins.

Churches particularly are called to an embodied faith that puts the lie to any and all who would negate one part of our humanity, one part of our human family, one portion of our beloved earth, in the name of an ideology rooted in fear, or even in the name of a truncated version of religion. We are charged by the Holy Spirit to humanize every situation, alleviate suffering and remove fear. These sacred duties strengthen the sinews that bind us all together as one people and use all of us to sow seeds to repair a hurting and broken world toward God's wholeness and integral liberation.

From a Christian perspective, Jesus is the principal organizer of the celebration that recognizes a place at the table for all, in dignity and justice, equity and full participation in our common destiny. There is no place for rampant gun violence, nor the weapons that so readily accomplish those results, in a society built on the common good and the dream of Beloved Community. Whether Christian or from a different faith tradition or as people of good will, we can respond in love to this tragedy by acting to limit access to guns where harm may occur, address forthrightly systems of oppression and policies that perpetuate them, and model the spirituality that motivates us to do justice and restores right relationships among all. We firmly believe that our diversity as people and as communities is given to us a gift and the unity that we enjoy builds on the myriad ways that the Creator lights the divine spark within, that generates the capacity to melt down all barriers and walls.

Let perpetual light shine upon the victims in Orlando and guide us all to be people of hope, peace and embracing justice.