



June 13, 2016

A Pastoral Word Following the Murders in Orlando

Once again, and once too often, innocent people have been killed in wanton and senseless acts of violence.

This last weekend in Orlando saw the killings of a promising young singer after her concert and 49 beautiful young people at a nightclub.

Our hearts are broken as we try to make sense of these senseless killings. We grieve deeply with all the families and loved ones that they leave behind, and we pray consolation and healing for the good people of Orlando.

Orlando joins far too many U.S. communities in the experience of this horrific pain, including, in most recent memory, San Bernardino, Charleston and Sandy Hook. The temptation now will be to turn this into a debate on gun control. But, as we've seen before, such a debate will only degenerate into partisan bickering about constitutional law and individual rights. Meanwhile, forgotten are the "rights" of innocent victims, the children of God, called home far too early and for all the wrong reasons.

There can be no debate that too many innocent people are being killed, too many families and communities left in despair. Unless something different happens, yet more innocent people will be killed and yet more records set for the worst mass killings in history.

Although our hearts are weighed heavy with sorrow, let us find within each of ourselves the resolve to end this epidemic of violence. Let us no longer be willing to harbor hatred, intolerance and bigotry in our speech and habit. Let us call out aggressive or bullying behaviors that degrade and dehumanize others. And let us choose the "more excellent way" of love (1 Corinthians 12:31) that Christ offers as the salvation for our world.

Charles Buck, Conference Minister

Richard Kamanu, Associate Conference Minister

Sarah Jones, Associate Conference Minister

Kenneth Makuakane, Papa Makua and Associate Conference Minister