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***Prayer for Victims of Violence***

**Let us prayer together:** Loving God, you are the author and sustainer of our lives. You know the anguish of the sorrowful, you are attentive to the prayers of the brokenhearted. Hear your people who cry out to you in their need; strengthen their hope in your lasting goodness.

We pray today for those who have died because of violence, of terrorism. Draw them to yourself; let your face shine upon them. May they be greeted with choirs of angels and experience your eternal peace and joy.

Be near to all those who have been touched by violence: those who have been hurt, lost their loved ones or lost their sense of security. Be for them a steady comfort and safe resting place.

Soften the hearts and steady of the minds of those who would do violence to others. May hate be replaced with love, violence with peace and darkness with your light.  **Amen**

**Leader:** Gracious God, inspire us with the gift of Shalom, the gift of wholeness and the promise of your presence.  Give us wisdom to seek nonviolence as an answer to the violence of our lives and world.  Give us courage to seek wholeness in a fractured and divided world, to find reconciliation rather than revenge, to abandon the instruments of violence and death and entrust our lives, our homes, our ministries and our families to you.  May your presence fill us and others with the thirst for unity, wholeness, and the desire to see all people valued as created in your image and likeness.  May we, and others, receive your Shalom that we be faithful instruments of your love and peace in our world today.  **Amen.**

**Pause:** *Let us reflect upon those we remember are/were victims of gun violence.*

**Litany of Remembrance:**

**Leader:**  Let us remember all who have been harmed by violence.  We acknowledge the strength to those who survived and of those still struggling to heal.  For their sake and for ours, we commit ourselves to building each other up and to healing – together.

**Response:** Let us remember the families and loved ones of those who have died from gun violence.  We acknowledge their pain and their deep grief.  They too, are part of our community and need our love and help towards healing.

**Leader:**  Let us remember the perpetrators, and the families of those who commit violence.  We acknowledge that their lives, too, are devastated and their hopes dashed.  For their sake and for ours, we remember that pain goes in many directions from each act of violence.

**Response:**  We will stand up to violence.  We stand together expressing our unity, our connection to each other and to the divine; our hope for healing and for transformation.  Let the Spirit of our Creator move through us.  Help us to transform and heal our communities.  And let us begin by transforming ourselves.

**Scripture Reading:**Isaiah 2:1-5

The word which Isaiah, son of Amos, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem:  It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountains of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations, shall flow to it and many peoples shall come and say:  “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob that he may teach us His ways and that we may walk in His paths.”  For from Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nations shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war and more.
*The Word of the Lord.*

**All:**  Thanks be to God.

**Call to Worship:**

**Leader:**  Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the path of the Most High.

**All:**  That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

**Leader:**  Nation shall not lift up sword again nations.  Neither shall they learn war any more.

**All:**  We mourn the loss of all of our brothers and sisters killed by guns in our own country and throughout the world.

**Leader:**  We are a nation at war with ourselves, a people who have forgotten who we are.

**All:**  We gather today to remember that we are each a child of God.  We gather to claim our belonging to each other and our commitment to living the way of God’s peace.

**Leader:**  Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, that we may walk the path of the Most High.

**All:**  That we may beat our swords into ploughshares, and our spears into pruning hooks.

**Leader:**  Neighbor shall not life up gun against neighbor.  Neither shall they learn violence any more.

**All:**  And none shall be afraid for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

**Leader:**  O guiding Shepherd and Refuge from the ragging storm, we seek the comfort and consolation of your warm embrace and sheltering care from the violence that swarms around and within us.  Everywhere we turn we’re told that vengeance and war are the cure for the wrongs waged against us.  We are a culture prone and addicted to violence and in need of a disciplined recourse of withdrawal from this dangerous drug.

**All:**  Lord, help us and rescue us.

**Leader:** Rescue us from ourselves; our self-absorbed anxieties that overwhelm us with destructive behavior and suicidal tendencies.  Release us from a fear and hatred of others that garner our need for guns as a means of protection and insulation from them.
Breathe in us your Spirit that radiates life and hope; that enables us to interact positively with others and live as emissaries of your peace.
**All:**  Enable us to take delight in you, O Lord, for you are the desire of our hearts.

**Leader:**  Nurture our children in your ways; feed them abundantly by your wisdom and truth.  Reorient their desires from violent video games; suppress their greed for gangster rap; harness their hunger to humiliate and degrade others because of their gender, race or sexual orientation; and free their minds, mouths and bodies of derogatory terms and foul gestures, for these also are destructive weapons.
**All:**  Lord, help and rescue us.

**Leader:**  Grant us, O God, the will to turn all weapons of individual or mass destruction into tools of global sustainability and medical advancement.  Inspire in us the courage to rid our streets of gang warfare and stray bullets; to rid our homes of domestic violence and accidental shootings; to rid our neighborhoods of police brutality and our highways of racial profiling; to rid our bodies and environment of toxic abuse and our world of international conflict.  Grant every individual a faith in you that affirms your likeness in all humanity and creation, and that never again uses religion as a sword severing anyone from an ultimate sense of worth and dignity.  Enable us again, O God, to worship you with an ever burning faith that melts the metal of all vengeance, weaponry and war.  Make us instruments of your justice, compassion and peace that your real may come, and Your Will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**All:** **:**  Enable us to take delight in you, O Lord, for You are the desire of our hearts.  Blessed are You who come in the name of the Lord.

**Leader:** Let us be at peace with our bodies and our minds.  Let us return to ourselves and become wholly ourselves.  Let us be aware of the source of being, common to us all and to all living things.  Evoking the presence of the Great Compassion, let us fill our hearts with our own compassion – towards ourselves and towards all living beings.  Let us pray that we ourselves cease to be the cause of suffering to each other.  With humility, with the awareness of the existence of life, and the sufferings that are going on around us, let us practice the establishment of peace in our hearts and on earth.

***Closing* Prayer:**

**All:** O Holy God, make us a receiving people.  Let us walk with your feet.  Let us touch with your hands.  Let your voice speak in and through us.  Let your wisdom be transformed into right action within us.  Let us carry forth your Spirit into the world.  Let us be at one with You, O God.  And may each who feels as one with You know also that we are one with every other, until all creation is unified in the light of love.  May we go in peace and in the light of God’s love.  Amen.

  *Adapted from a prayer Sr. Karen Hartman, sfp*