

Beloved Siblings in Christ,

Last Sunday as we gathered for worship, we mourned the loss of the 21 children and teachers of Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and held their family, friends, and community in prayer, knowing that their lives will be forever altered by this trauma. Tragically, we know that this event is not out of the ordinary - [mass shootings](#) and [school shootings](#) have reached an all-time high in our country, and have become an everyday reality for younger generations. As Christians, we know that **this is not the reality our God intends for us**, and we know that God weeps and mourns right alongside us in our pain and grief.

Yet, we cannot allow ourselves to become consumed by despair and hopelessness, nor can we become numb to and disconnect from the growing violence around us. As followers of Christ, **Jesus entrusted us with the task to be the presence of God in this world**. This means we must do more than pray and lament - we must allow ourselves to be **moved to action in order to create tangible change in this world** for future generations, as we work towards bringing about the peaceful, just reign of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

But what can we do? In the face of such enormously tragic events, this task to create change can feel insurmountable as individuals or even a small congregation. But, as Jesus promised us before he ascended, he has not left us alone in this. We are called and connected to one another in faith - not only in our local community, but across the state, country, and world.

**At the Oregon Synod Assembly, we passed the [Lift Every Voice Oregon resolution](#), which voices our support as a synod for IP 17 and 18 to be placed on the November 8th, 2022 General Election ballot.**

[Lift Every Voice Oregon](#) is an interfaith coalition of Muslims, Jews, Christians, Native American spiritual leaders, Hindus Buddhists, Sikhs, other people of faith and people of just good will in Oregon. They are working to reduce gun violence by advocating for strong, effective laws that will reduce gun violence in Oregon. [IP 17](#) would ban the sale of large capacity magazines over 10; would require a permit and training to purchase any gun; would require a complete background check before purchase, closing the Charleston loophole; and would address the registration of “ghost” guns. [IP 18](#) would ban

the manufacture and sale of semi-automatic assault style weapons which includes many handguns, while allowing current owners to keep those they own after registering for restricted use only.

This is one, tangible step we can take towards creating real change in our communities - a way to practice aligning our actions with our prayers. Lift Every Voice Oregon has a goal of gathering **140,000 signatures by July 8th, 2022**. If you have access to a printer, you can sign the petition from home by following the steps laid out here. Please note that **you cannot sign and submit this electronically** - the signature sheet must be printed, signed and dated in 2 places, and mailed in as a hard copy.

Since not everyone has access to a printer, Spirit of Grace will have a signing table set up every Sunday in June, so that anyone can stop by to read the full text or summary of IP 17 and 18, and be able to sign and mail their petition if they so choose. If anyone would like to also write a letter to any of our elected representatives, we will have names, addresses, and supplies for you to do so.

If you were not able to join us for worship on May 29th, I encourage you to take some time to at least **listen to the sermon I preached that morning** - it can be viewed on [Facebook](#), and the sermon begins at **20:20**. If you would like to discuss anything from my sermon, this message, or just want to know more about how we are called to embody our faith in times such as there, please reach out to me to set up a time to talk - I would be more than happy to do so.

I leave you with this prayer, and ask you to spend some time this week faithfully considering how and where God is calling you to respond to the brokenness and pain of our world.

*God of resurrection, we remember before you those who have died unjustly in mass shootings across the country. We hold in our hearts the victims and communities of Milwaukie, Buffalo, Palo Alto, Laguna Beach, and Chicago. Most recently, we remember the lives taken from us at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and the families who mourn their loss. We commend these innocent children and teachers to your eternal love.*

*Grant healing and wholeness to survivors who are wounded or traumatized, and restore all whose spirits are maimed by such violence. Watch over this community that will henceforth never be the same. That we may serve as your arms of care to those in distress, we pray that you make us instruments of your peace.*

*In the name of Jesus, in whose footsteps we strive to follow, we pray, Amen.*

In Peace,

Pastor Miranda Bermes-Goller