

# embrace Love and Peace



## **Isaiah 2:2-5- Sister Janis**

<sup>2</sup> In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.

<sup>3</sup> 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 out of Zion shall go forth instruction  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>4</sup> He shall judge between the nations  
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;  
they shall beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;  
neither shall they learn war any more.

<sup>5</sup> O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD!

***A Litany on the Tragedy of Gun Violence Written for the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 2010 by Rev. W. Mark Koenig of the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program,***

**Pastor Howard Fleming, First United Methodist Church**

43,675 people that we know of died from gun violence in 2022.

**And we grieve.**

An average of eighty people is killed by guns every day, including eight children.

**And our hearts break.**

79% of all homicides in the United States involve guns.

**And we mourn.**

An American child is twelve times more likely to die by a gun than children who live in all other twenty-five industrialized nations combined. Last year alone, 6,032 children age 17 and younger were hurt or killed by a gun.

**And we weep.**

The annual economic cost of gun violence in America is estimated to at least \$100 billion. Medical costs, decimated families, the court system, our jails and prisons, and security measures in airports, schools, and public buildings all contribute to this sum.

**And sorrow sweeps over us.**

Since John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, more Americans have died by gun fire within our own country than American servicemen and women who were killed in all our wars of the 20th century.

**And we pray.**

Suicides accounted for more than half of U.S. gun deaths

**And we lament.**

There are 393 million guns in the U.S. that is 120 guns for every 100 Americans

**We grieve for those are killed and those whose lives are forever changed;**

**We seek to comfort for those who have lost loved ones;**

**We pray for a change of heart for those who resort to violence.**

Faced with gun violence, may we educate; Organize; Advocate;

**And in all the ways we can, work for that day when Guns and weapons of destruction**

**Are transformed into instruments of healing.**

May it be so. Gun Violence Prevention

**May we so do.**

**The Greatest Love of All & Facts about violence in America and responsive music,**

Hate crimes in the US rose to the highest level in more than a decade last year, according to an FBI report.

Hate crimes have been increasing in the US almost every year since 2014.

A hate crime is defined as offences "motivated by bias toward race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity".

**I believe that children are our future;**

**Teach them well and let them lead the way.  
Show them all the beauty they possess inside.  
Give them a sense of pride, to make it easier;  
Let the children's laughter remind us how we use to be.**

**Everybody's searching for a hero;  
People need someone to look up to.  
I never found anyone who fulfilled my need.  
A lonely place to be, and so I learned to depend on me.**

The FBI's annual Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) report says there were 7,314 hate crimes last year, up from 7,120 the year before.

64.8% of victims of hate crimes were targeted based on their race. 15.6% were targeted because of their sexual orientation. 13.3% were targeted because of their religion. 4.6% were targeted because of their gender. And 1.7% of victims were targeted because they had a disability.

**I decided long ago never to walk in anyone's shadow.  
If I fail, if I succeed.  
At least I lived as I believe.  
No matter what they take from me,  
They can't take away my dignity.**

**Because the greatest love of all is happening to me.  
I found the greatest love of all inside of me.  
The greatest love of all is easy to achieve.  
Learning to love yourself is the greatest love of all.**

The data showed a nearly 7% rise in religion-based hate crime, with a 14% increase in crimes targeting Jews or Jewish institutions. It also found anti-Latino hate crime rose 8.7% from 485 in 2018 to 527 in 2019 to the highest total since 2010. Black people were targeted in hate crimes more than any other group in the US.

Half of all the hate crimes in the nation are committed by people between the ages of 15 and 24.[1]

At least 8 black people, 3 white people, 3 gay people, 3 Jewish people, and 1 Latino person become hate crime victims every day.[2]

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**And if by chance that special place that you've been dreaming of  
Lead you to a lonely place  
Find your strength in love**

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-54968498>

<https://www.dosomething.org/us/facts/11-facts-about-hate-crimes>

1. Tolerance for Teens." — National Crime Prevention Council.

<http://www.ncpc.org/topics/hate-crime/tolerance> (accessed July 23, 2014).

2. F.B.I. "Annual Report Released." FBI.

<http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2012/december/annual-hate-crimes-report-released/annual-hate-crimes-report-released> (accessed July 21, 2014)

***“Sam’s Story”- Pastor Alvin Hayes, St. Home Missionary Baptist Church***

It all started one day someone pushed me during lunch at the playground and as I turned around to see who it was, the individual said, "Go back to your country." The people around him laughed at that comment. I was confused for the rest of the day as to what he meant as I thought I was in my country. I would eventually forget about it thinking it was a random one-off event. I didn't realize at that point that it would be a daily event in my life for most of my primary and secondary education... I got called a terrorist which hurt me a lot. I didn't want to cry because then they would know it affected me, so I also would not show emotions.

My education was affected as I wouldn't go to school and claim I was sick...

All of what happened made me feel like everybody was against me; like they were all talking about me and that they all hated me.

### **I felt rejected and isolated and it messed with my self-confidence.**

Having fewer friends meant more isolation and feelings of helplessness which led me to have depression and suicidal thoughts, which is still affecting me, and it brought on my persisting social anxiety...I was told of this quote that helped me a lot which the great Martin Luther King said once – "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that". That quote always stopped me from using hate against hate and to always be happy and friendly.

I have always wanted to help people and this experience just intensifies that feeling further. So I have also been volunteering for multiple local and national groups which has been greatly beneficial in rebuilding my confidence which was tarnished by the bullies, gaining new skills and qualities and meeting new people...

I made good friends who helped me a lot with my mental health and I'm just glad I met them; they have been extremely helpful and supportive.

I'm now working and all is looking good. I've met a lot of new people and racism is now not a big problem as it was before. I am happy where I am now as I am learning new ways to cope with my depression and I have close friends with whom I can always talk to and meet...

As Nelson Mandela rightly said "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if

they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite".

<https://www.seemescotland.org/stigma-discrimination/personal-stories/personal-stories/sams-story/?fbclid=IwAR0ymfC39qoJYsu8a16Clg5hgwxOkLGLs1Z1wO3Yh2E932i8RZr4epmkrGo>

**Spoken Word- Rev. Wallace, Purpose of Love Ministry (3 Minutes)**

**Video Clip 4 Minutes**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_2g9HGM1Q4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_2g9HGM1Q4)

Denver Nonprofit Turns Guns Into Garden Tools



**A Reading from A Child Laughs, Pastor Lance, First Baptist Church**

G-d of holy wholeness,  
I long for your healing.  
For myself, my family,  
My community and nation.  
My people and so many others,  
This world of brokenness and pain.  
I see so much violence and suffering  
As unhealed wounds fester into hostility,  
Anger clung to for vindication  
Snarls and hardens into bitterness,  
Fear and pride and greed and envy  
Compete for first place  
Among the idols of our hearts,  
Warning us of scarcity,  
Triggering survival instincts,  
Drawing lines and boundaries  
That must not be crossed or else.  
I see this sickness no less in myself in my enemies.  
Retribution, arrogance, cynicism, prejudice,  
Shame, victimhood, apathy, despair...  
The world has battered and beaten me,

Taken those I treasured, taught me to hate,  
Taught me to become hard and small and self-contained.  
Yet when I turn to you,  
You do not shout or compete with these voices.  
You do not throw your force around  
To overwhelm the unconvinced.  
You make the sun to shine and the rain to fall  
On the just and unjust alike.  
And I do not understand.  
This is not the justice I long for.  
But the longer I look to you,  
Listen for you, sit with you,  
The more I hear your still small voice  
Whisper  
*Peace.*  
*Take Heart.*  
*In this world you will know suffering.*  
*But have courage.*  
*I have overcome the world.*  
*You are my own beloved child*  
*Precious in my sight.*  
***Healing, Whole and Holy G-d,***  
***You offer healing that we don't always understand,***  
***To reach the deep and broken places***  
***In ourselves and in the world.***  
***You call us to find wholeness***  
***Not only for ourselves but for all of creation***  
***In the practice of compassion, justice, peace and reconciliation.***  
***In Jesus Christ you have shown us what it means***  
***To embrace a holiness that is inclusive, not exclusive:***  
***To break down dividing walls***  
***And replace them with bridges of understanding.***  
***May we see our lives and our world as whole, and holy,***  
***Interdependent and mutually connected.***  
***May we become channels of your healing peace***  
***Through which you proclaim of your love***  
***And your desire for fullness of life that we have known in Jesus Christ.***

*We pray in his name, our Prince of Peace,  
Redeemer, Reconciler, and One who binds us into the family of G-d. Amen.*

**We are the World -Closing Song**