

Pastoral Prayer

June 13, 2021

Holy One,

Five years ago, we were still in shock from the news that a man had killed 49 people in an Orlando, Florida, nightclub, that he'd wounded 53 more, that the people he'd killed and injured had been attacked because they were gay or lesbian. We have had similar shocks over the intervening years, grieving more deaths and injuries by violence, including fourteen more wounded in Austin, Texas, this past week. We confess that the human cultures of the world, O God, are quick to choose "us" and "them," based on the strangest things: gender, skin color, place of birth, parentage, who looks attractive, who one loves. We confess as well that we go beyond irrelevant condemnation. We go to violence. And we are good at violence.

Make us better, O God, at peace.

Make us better, O God, at caring for one another in these days of pandemic. Guide the hearts and minds of people to choose for the welfare of their neighbors as well as themselves. If it takes a miracle to make your people care for your people, then bring that miracle. As you do, bring your gifts of strength and healing to the parts of the world badly afflicted by COVID-19, still reeling from high levels of infection and death: from the Czech Republic to Peru, from Maldives to Andorra. Comfort the grieving, O God, as the United States anticipates its 600,000th death in the coming days.

We pray for the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ, gathering via the Internet for the 199th 'Aha Pae'aina this week. Two hundred years after the arrival of Christianity in these islands, we still struggle to grow faithfully in your sight, O God. We have confused blessing with power, righteousness with authority, goodness with triumph. May we grow in new ways, better ways, blessed ways in the years ahead.

Bless us in our neediness with the things that give life. Bless us in our illness with the strength that builds health. Bless us in our confusion with insight. Bless us in our sorrow with your comforting presence.

Guide us in this congregation as we contemplate our growth as individuals. Guide us in this congregation as we contemplate our growth as a church of Jesus Christ. Guide us in this congregation as we contemplate the growth of your realm.

We ask these things in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray, saying...

Amen.