

National Cathedral Service Focuses on Victims of Gun Violence

The crowd hushed, the lights dimmed and the National Cathedral's bourdon bell chimed for three minutes—each minute to commemorate 10,000 of the 30,000 lives lost to gun violence in the U.S. last year.

The Thursday service marked nearly a year since a gunman took 26 lives at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. Americans from a spectrum of faiths prayed, sang and testified about a **gun violence** epidemic they said is poisoning the nation's soul.

"We gather today to remember and to honor," said the Rev. Mel Kawakami, senior minister of Newtown United Methodist Church, "to work toward a world where there are no more school shootings as there have been in 16 other communities since **Sandy Hook.**"

Carole King played and sang "In the Name of Love" on the grand piano before the pulpit, setting a somber but hopeful tone. Pianist Christopher Betts and violinist Sonya Hayes played John Lennon's "Imagine." Lennon was shot to death 33 years ago.

Survivors of shootings and parents and siblings of those who didn't survive said elected officials must be pushed to pass legislation to keep guns out of the hands of those who pose a threat to others.

New Yorker Dan Gross, now the head of the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence, testified that 16 years ago his brother, Matthew, was gravely injured by the gunman who began shooting on the observation deck of the Empire State Building, and his

brother's friend killed.

"To honor him, I've devoted the rest of my life to preventing the kind of tragedy that my family experienced that day," he said. "I will not be silent."

"We will not be silent," the crowd responded.

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