

Let's Pause and Honor the Texas Shooting Victims

Mass shootings and terrorist attacks have become so common that we tend to just stop for a moment, listen to the grim statistics and then go on with our business. Some of us don't even stop to hear the news anymore.

We are baffled. We are numb. And we feel powerless to stop the madness.

America is in a state of shock. We haven't had time to recover from the news of the October 1 Las Vegas massacre, which left 58 people dead after gambler Stephen Paddock rained death on a crowd at a music festival. Then an equally disturbed man, Sayfullo Saipov, used a pickup truck on Oct. 31 to mow over pedestrians and cyclists in New York City. That attack left eight dead.

By the time I heard of the mass shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas, last Sunday, November 5, I thought I was trapped in a recurring nightmare. It was the deadliest shooting in a house of worship in U.S. history, even eclipsing the horrific 2015 Charleston massacre—in which a white supremacist killed nine African-American worshipers at a Bible study.

And now this. Another deranged man, Devin Kelley, walked into a Baptist church in a tiny Texas town and randomly shot at everybody in the building. Like a modern version of the Grim Reaper, the killer was dressed in black and was wearing a skull mask. He killed 26 people, half of them children.

I didn't know any of the victims, but they were part of my spiritual family. Below are the names of those who have been identified. I simply ask that you pray for the families of the victims. And pray for First Baptist Church of Sutherland

Springs, a congregation that has been forever changed by this demonic onslaught.

Eight members of the Holcombe family: Bryan, Karla, Danny, Noah (who was only 1 year old), Crystal (who was eight months pregnant), Emily, Megan and Greg. Crystal's unborn baby also died. Bryan Holcombe was associate pastor of the church. Survivors say he was stepping to the platform to pray when the gunman began shooting from outside. Crystal, a homeschooling mom, had recently sponsored a bake sale to help victims of Hurricane Harvey.

Dennis and Sara Johnson: This couple, ages 77 and 68, had recently celebrated their 44th wedding anniversary. Sara had worked in the church nursery for more than 30 years.

Haley Krueger, 16: This vivacious teen had dreamed of becoming a neonatal nurse. She had been at the church early that morning fixing breakfast for other members.

Robert and Shani Corrigan: Robert was retired from the Air Force, and the couple is survived by two sons who are on active military duty.

Lula White, 71: Because she was related to the gunman, authorities suspect she may have been the reason the gunman directed his rage at the congregation. She supposedly had received threatening texts from Kelley. But her friends told *USA Today* she was a "God-loving person" who also loved her church.

Scott and Karen Marshal: This couple was visiting First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs for the first time on that fateful Sunday. They had moved to Texas from Pittsburgh and were looking for a church home.

Richard and Teresa Rodriguez: This retired railroad worker and his wife faithfully attended First Baptist Church every week.

Tara McNulty: This young woman was a bartender at a local restaurant near Seguin, Texas. Her two young children, now motherless, were wounded in the massacre.

Joann Ward and her two daughters, Brook, 5, and Emily, 7: This single mom's stepson, five-year-old Ryland, survived the shooting even though he sustained five bullet wounds. He is currently in stable condition at a hospital in San Antonio.

Annabelle Pomeroy, 14: She was the adopted daughter of Pastor Frank Pomeroy and his wife, Sherri. Family members said Annabelle begged to sit on the front row of the church every Sunday to hear her Daddy's sermons. Her mother told reporters: "As senseless as this tragedy was, our sweet Belle would not have been able to deal with losing so much family yesterday."

There are 10 other victims who were injured in the shooting who are now in critical condition at local hospitals. Kelley, the assailant, died of a gunshot wound after two local men pursued him in a car.

I can't imagine what it must be like for Pastor Frank Pomeroy, or his wife, Sherri. They happened to be out of town last Sunday. Then they learned that half their church had been killed, including their daughter. And now Frank will be conducting funerals for weeks—and struggling to find words to console a grieving community.

Our grief is heavy and the pain is intense in moments like this. But I find comfort by reading the very last chapters of the Bible—where we learn that the darkness and gloom of this life will be overcome by Jesus in the life to come. Revelation 21:4 says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death. Neither shall there be any more sorrow nor crying nor pain, for the former things have passed away."