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Ritual of Lament and Promise 3/28/21 at Washington Park UCC, Denver, CO

While obviously this service is specific to a particular tragedy (in this case the mass shooting at a King Soopers grocery store in Boulder Colorado on March 22, 2021), it can serve as a possible template or frame for other such tragedies, either on a local or national/international level. This ritual was developed in a collaborative process by the Vigils and Rituals Team of [Washington Park UCC](#). The Litany of Lament and Promise is provided under the terms of the Creative Commons license (see the end of this document).

You may see [a video of this section of the church's livestreamed worship service](#) on 3/28/21 (Palm Sunday). Ten unique candles were present on the church's communion table for this ritual.

Intro and logistics

- How often have we lit candles in this place – Columbine remembrance, the evening of September 11, 2001, multiple transgender remembrance services held in this sanctuary, endangered species remembrance rituals, and just last week in memory of the victims of the Atlanta shooting. And now today, in memory of 10 precious lives lost in the mass shooting in Boulder.
- As we enter into this most holy season of our faith tradition, we do so lamenting our culture of violence, the easy access to guns, the pain and brokenness of our communities, of hate and despair. We sit with that pain. Our hearts break.
- How often have we lit candles in this place in grief, anger, fear, emptiness?
- And yet, how often have we stood together on Christmas Eve, and lit candles in this place and raised them high, to proclaim joy and hope in the night?
- So today, we gather to mourn 10 lives lost. Another mass shooting. But we also gather to proclaim, in defiance of the violence and hate that tries to define who we are – we gather to proclaim that we will not cease from loving, we will not cease from pursuing justice, we will not cease from lifting a candle high within this dark night. And we will do so together.
- So, this morning, we will honor the 10 precious lives lost. We will ring a bell, read their names together, the leaders will say a few words about each one, and we'll take a breath.

Reading of names

Read each of the 10 names, and give a few personal details.; a bell is rung one time before each name:

Denny Stong

- An employee at King Soopers
- He was into model airplanes and motorcycles
- “A kind soul with a funny sense of humor”

Neven Stanisic

- “A man of faith; good, shy, hard-working”
- Born in the US, of parents who fled the warfare in the former Yugoslavia
- A role model for neighborhood kids

Rikki Olds

- A front-end manager at the King Soopers
- A hard worker who loved her job; her laugh could reach the other end of the store as she clocked in.
- “She was a shining star”

Tralona Bartkowiak

- Owner, with her sister, of a clothing and accessories shop in downtown Boulder
- She was newly-engaged to be married
- She was passionate about music.

Suzanne Fountain

- A well-known community actress
- A financial counsellor in the health care industry, helping senior citizens enroll in Medicare
- A “very genuine person with tons of integrity.”

Teri Leiker

- Dedicated King Soopers employee
- Worked at the store for more than 30 years
- A “super fan” of the CU Boulder marching band

Eric Talley

- Boulder police officer
- Was the first on the scene of the shooting
- A father of seven.
- Loved his community

Kevin Mahoney

- Retired, he previously worked in hotel asset management and investments
- Like a dad to the entire neighborhood
- “He represents all things Love.”

Lynn Murray

- A retired photo director
- An amazing cook, and an artist
- She did gig work as an Instacart shopper

Jody Waters

- A businesswoman, she owned boutiques on the Pearl Street Mall.
- Long-time Boulder resident
- She had an eye for style and design, and a gentle spirit.

Take a deep breath

Silence

The bell is rung another 10 times

Litany of Lament and Promise

Leader:

What do we say when there are no words?

Where do we find a solid center when the world is going crazy around us?

People:

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord!

Leader:

Ten more names. Ten more vibrant human beings. Ten more shattered families and communities of friendship. Another mass shooting.

People:

Out of the depths, we cry to you, O Lord!

Leader:

We lament. We grieve for our nation, for whom violence seems to be a way of life, the “way things are, so whatcha gonna do?” God, we tremble on the brink of declaring that violence is the norm and that we need to learn to live with it.

People:

Out of the depths, we cry to you, O Lord!

And we cry “no more!”

And we mean it, God.

And we promise, God, to grieve with those who grieve, to work to heal your Creation,
to bring peace and accountability, love and justice.

Leader:

We tell a different story than what the world would tell us. It’s one of love that is stronger than hate, goodness that is stronger than evil. And hard work to see it done. Had you forgotten that? Yeah, so had I. That’s why we need each other – to remember. And to do the hard work together.

All:

Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord,
and in our cry is a song, a dance, a promise
to you and to each other:

We will witness and work to build a world of healing, love and justice

We will find a way to do this.

and we will do this together, in your beloved community.

Amen!

Song – Sung by the congregation

We used “Goodness Is Stronger Than Evil” (Desmond Tutu/John Bell; from Iona Community). Other very good songs are “I Choose Love” by Lindy Thompson/Mark Miller, or “I Believe” (words from an anonymous Jewish poet during WWII, music by Mark Miller, which was used at the beginning of the 4/4/21 worship service).



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