

February 15, 2023
 Uniquely American Deaths
 What does the Lord Require?
 Micah 6:8
 The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

Come Holy Spirit...

Good Evening.

Have you seen their pictures? Arielle's, Brian's and Alexandria's: such freshness, such hope. I see similar faces going in and out of Ima's Noodles on Cass and Warren, or walking quickly or wandering slowly on 2nd and 3rd street, with Wayne State hoodies peaking out from down coats. [I see you here, tonight.]

We are told that Arielle wanted to be a pediatrician. Alex was studying forensics, her twitter bio said, "Can't stop dreaming." Brian was, as his sister said, "A light in our lives." And if we did not know them before, we will not know them now, for they have ceased to be. And our lives are dimmer, and God's hopes are cheated, for breath of life that animated their being is gone. I know that they are with God, but that's actually not good enough, I want them here, doing and being. They who were made in God's image and likeness, given amazing gifts to offer our world, I want them to be living the lives that their parents and grandparents, siblings, friends, teammates, and schoolmates wanted them to have. I want our world to be changed by their presence and instead there is a gaping hole, that try as we might, we cannot fill with thoughts and prayers.

Each of us will respond to yet another mass shooting, with different reactions. As a student, I try to imagine how you may feel, numb, cornered, angry, scared. As a parent, I try to imagine how you may feel each morning as you send a child to school. As an alumna of MSU, I try to imagine how you feel, sad to be far away, watching online instead of standing at the rock in solidarity with your fellow Spartans. As a citizen of this country, racked by an epidemic of this uniquely American way to die, we may feel overwhelmed, hopeless, and inept wanting to help, not knowing what to do. I am sad. I am so sad. And that pool of sadness is contained in a bucket of anger, I can hear it clanging in the well, yet that bucket barely containing my despair is tethered to a rope, a line of hope.

"What does the Lord require? O Mortal what does the Lord require? Making sacrifices, prayers at an altar? No. What does the Lord require? The Lord requires, says the prophet Micah, some 700 years before Jesus walked the face of the earth,

"But to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

(Micah 6:8)

I have hope-- for we have agency. And God calls us, as God called on the people of Micah's age not to wait for justice, or to long for justice, or to pray for justice. God calls us to DO JUSTICE.

We are the people who God is calling to make the connections that cause the changes to create justice. We are the ones, individually and collectively to do justice and create the changes that keep you safe, that keep our young people safe, that keep our neighbors in the city safe, that keep our elders in the rural world safe, to make the changes to our laws so that we inhabit a state with sensible gun laws, kind people, who strive to walk in God's Holy path.

We are the ones whom God is calling, we are who God has-- to create the relationships, to make the connections to do the justice that keeps all of us safer. I have hope that we will overcome our timidity, embrace our gifts and work together so that we will not have to gather again, in this place, mourning someone who has died needlessly, senselessly because of a gun.

When that day comes, "God will be with us, and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and unnecessary death will be no more, and mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the former things, and our former ways will be no more, and the one who sits upon the throne will say, "Behold I make all things new."

For this my friends, on this night when lament, I still have hope.

Amen.