

Vigil Service Template Following Violence

Notes to religious and/or civic leaders: Violence here is defined as using deadly force that tragically ends life or leaves catastrophic injuries in its wake. Offered as a template given the short duration between the time of tragedy and the necessity to hold a vigil, it can apply to the tragic death (or life threatening injuries and/or inflicted disabilities) of one individual, several or a consequential number. It can be adapted depending on the age(s) of the victim(s) and if the violence occurred in civic or religious settings.

Online resources addressing violence:

- <http://www.ucc.org/gun-violence> (A UCC Resource offering liturgical and other resources in the wake of gun violence)
- http://www.ucc.org/commentary_it_is_up_to_us_to_stop_gun_violence_10022017 (Rev. Traci Blackmon offers resources in conducting vigils and mobilizing to confront gun violence in our communities and nation).

Possible Theme: When whom we loved is lost, what is left?

Opening Music* (See resource document with suggestions).

Welcome

Leader: "It is hard to forget someone when they gave you so much to remember."

But we are here *not* because it is hard to forget;

Nor because it is unthinkable to forget.

We are here because forgetting [them or specific names here]

fundamentally denies what makes us more human,

what brought out the best in us and others,

what helped us and others know

and remember whom **we** are. (JM)

Opening prayer/gathering litany

Sacred reading:

Music/singing (acoustic guitar, cello, violin) - stringed instrument

Center or gathering rituals (stones to sink fears, flowers to float hopes)

Reading of names (if applicable)

Prayer (see page #132)

Charge to initiate change (adapted from UCC pastor, preacher & poet, Shelly Davis, from *A Child Laughs*)⁶

Leader: For those who were caught in the crossfire and lost their lives – let us in solidarity, courage and hope – RISE (ALL STAND):

People: If I stand in the crossfire of a country at war with itself... even as we face carnage, suffering and sorrow

Leader: Then, God Amongst Us, let our decision to stand in this crossfire begin now:

People: In memory of those whose lives were lost

- **I will rise to the challenge.**
- **I will rise to a new level of conversation with those whose views are diametrically opposed to mine.**
- **I will rise to a framework of justice – which ignites my passion for love, courage and hope.**
- **All: Sovereign Hope, walk with each of us...into the crossfire of change. Amen.**

Benediction

6 Maria Mankin & Maren Tirabassi, eds, *A Child Laughs: Prayers of Justice and Hope* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2017), p. 69-70.