REDEFINING SACRED
Just Communities of Arkansas Responds to the 11.05.17 Texas Church Massacre
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Home.
School.
Office.
These are places once defined as safe.
Church.
Mosque.
Temple.
These are places once defined as sacred.

Yet all these spaces—home, school, office and places of worship—have been the site of violence in general and gun violence in particular, leading us to wonder where we can go to feel safe and what we can now view as sacred.

Just Communities of Arkansas stands staunchly opposed to any and every kind of violence that threatens the harmony of relationship. We denounce all harmful interactions between people be they expressions of dissent, tactics for conflict resolution, the free exercise of Constitutional rights, hunger, poverty, economic inequality or inadequate education.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the 26 worshipers shot dead and the 20 wounded victims of the domestic terror attack at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, Sunday, November 4, 2017.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the 8 people mowed down by a truck and the 27 wounded victims of the international terror attack in New York City, New York, Tuesday, October 31, 2017.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the 59 people shot dead and the 527 wounded victims of the domestic terror attack at an outdoor concert in Las Vegas, Nevada, Sunday, October 1, 2017.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of Philando Castile, Sam Dubose, Freddie Gray, Eric Courtney Harris, Tamir Rice, LaQuan McDonald, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Jason Harrison, Trayvon Martin, Oscar Grant and Emmett Till, a small fraction of unarmed Black men murdered by the hands of law enforcement agents in various cities throughout these United States of America.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the world.
Our thoughts and prayers are with our country.
Our thoughts and prayers are with our state.

Our thoughts and prayers, our thoughts and prayers, our thoughts and prayers…that’s our usual response to terrorism, especially when the perpetrator of violence is white and male. In the face of the afore mentioned tragedies and others throughout history, our thoughts and prayers are simply not enough. Thoughts and prayers only don’t make our world safer. Thoughts and prayers only don’t affect policy change. Thoughts and prayers only won’t destroy the culture of power nor eradicate the systems of oppression that authorize this kind of violence, this evil in our midst.
Perhaps it’s time for us to redefine sacred.

Sacred can no longer be understood as being dedicated to a particular place or devoted to a particular purpose. Sacred must come to mean the equitable and inclusive way we intentionally choose to interact with each other across all lines of difference.

Rather than search for places in our communities where we can feel safer, let us seek to become human places of safety. Let our hands resist the urge to harm. Let our minds reject the notion that life is ours to extinguish. Let our hearts be bound in a love we choose never to sever. Let our eyes see in another’s a reflection of ourselves. Let our mouths only label each other good, worthy, valuable. Let our bodies become sacred. Let it be that wherever we are, there another can be also and not be afraid.

Then, let our sacred bodies mobilize in solidarity to tackle the social, psychological, spiritual and emotional issues that plague our society. Let us work together to broaden access to healthcare, especially care for our mental health. Let us work together to erase the stigma attached to being LGBTQIA+ or living with HIV. Let us work together to honor the faith practices of those who choose not to be Christian. Let us work together to expose racism and classism and their active use to dehumanize targeted populations among us.

Just Communities of Arkansas is dedicated to creating healing spaces in which we stand united. In the spirits of truth, transparency and oneness, we offer every community opportunities to be reconciled now to the other. Beyond that, JCA is also committed to helping individuals challenge their own assumptions, perceptions, attitudes and ideologies so that we can offer ourselves as healed agents of change.

To that end, Just Communities of Arkansas offers these affirmations. Take a few minutes daily to recite them and be reminded that we can redefine what it means to be sacred and live in a safer society.

❖ I will treat others the way they want to be treated.
❖ In conversation, I will seek to understand rather than be understood.
❖ I will approach all situations with an open mind, seeking only what is good.
❖ I acknowledge that every person I meet is gifted and talented.
❖ I will recognize rising emotions within me and choose to respond from a different place.
❖ I refuse to normalize violence.
❖ Today, I offer my presence to the world as a safe place for others to be.

Just Communities of Arkansas is a social justice organization that builds communities where every person is valued, every voice is heard and everyone has a fair chance to succeed.