

*Prayers for a
Grieving Community*
In response to the
October 1 Mass Shooting in Las Vegas



*Yea, though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*
Psalm 23:4

*A collection of prayers written by
pastors and members of Nevada Presbytery*

Lord God,

We come before You with heavy hearts.
Our souls cry out struggling to understand.
Many of us feel a deep sadness.

Lord here our prayer.

We pray and mourn for those who have died...
For the first responders...
We thank you for those who pulled people to safety.

Lord here our prayer.

We pray for the healers and medical staff still treating the
wounded of mind, body and spirit.
We pray for the church who continues to show love,
compassion and care for all people.

Lord here our prayer.

We pray for those who plan and commit violence...
We pray their hearts are softened, and that they might see that all
life is valuable
and made in Your image.

Lord here our prayer.

We know that You are sovereign.
You have conquered death,
And hope and joy can only truly come from You.

Lord here our prayer.

Help us to find Your peace
May we rest in You in our time of need.

Oh Lord here our prayer. Amen.

Rev. Mitchell Holley
Captain, United States Air Force

October 8, 2017

Lord, grant to us the humble poverty of a relationship of loving intimacy with you. Help us to remember that the power to transform and heal is not because of our knowledge, skills, personal talents, or gifts; but because of your love, which permeates all of creation; your love planted in the very center of our being. Center us in your love, moment by moment, we pray.

Lord, overcome our doubt in your sufficiency to “cast out our fears by your love.” By your mercy, help us to overcome the nagging suspicion that you are not enough; that the goodness we desire is somehow up to us, to our efforts and busyness. Keep us from the easy judgments we self-righteously render to others. Help us to see ourselves clearly, but always in the light of your immense love for us. Grant that, by your love, we may see you in the faces of strangers, of the lost and lonely. Amen

Rev. Dr. Douglas Gregg,
President, Christian Formation and Direction Ministries

In times of grief, our community and churches can draw strength trusting in the promises of God’s Word. In the Scriptures we are told, “The Lord is near to all who call on him” (Psalm 145:18). Although we find ourselves scattered across the Las Vegas Valley - in our various communities, businesses, and churches - we know and believe that prayer unites us as a people of faith because Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). In our grief and fears, we are invited to join together in prayer knowing that God is with us.

We humbly offer *Prayers for a Grieving Community* in the hope that it will unite us in prayer. And we trust that these written prayers will help each one of us as we look for words by which to call upon the God who reached out to this world in Jesus Christ and said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

In God’s Infinite Grace -

The Pastors and Members of
Nevada Presbytery in the Las Vegas Valley

Eternal God,

We come to you with heavy hearts. Too many times we have watched the news, as senseless acts of violence around the world unfolded, leaving behind broken bodies and broken lives. Now this evil has come to our community, our friends and neighbors – our backyard.

O Lord, we confess that we cannot begin to understand what could motivate a person to commit such a violent and horrific act. We cannot wrap our minds around the reality that nearly sixty beautiful lives were cut short in a matter of seconds, and that hundreds more are suffering from agonizing wounds – both physical and emotional.

O Lord, how is it possible that innocent people could be enjoying music and celebration one moment, only to be gunned down as if their lives didn't matter? How is it possible?

Our hearts ache for the loss of life, the loss of innocence, the loss of security and normalcy. We hurt deeply for those whose lives will never be the same and we grieve the pain and mourning that they will face in the coming days as shock gives way to their new reality.

Loving God, Merciful Father, we long for the comfort and peace that only you can give. Even as we cry out, "Why?" we know that this evil is not your will; that your heart is broken each time your children suffer. We look to you, because you are the source of goodness and hope and love. You are the One who has promised to never leave us nor forsake us; that even when we pass through the valley of the shadow of death, you will be with us.

Hear our cries, dry our tears, and give us grace to withstand what we cannot possibly understand. Remind us that we are resurrection people – sin and death do not have the final word. Show us that returning evil for evil is never your plan for those who love you. And strengthen us in the days ahead with your Holy Spirit's presence, and the hope that is ours through Christ Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Hilda Pecoraro
Presbytery Pastor, Nevada Presbytery

Loving and Compassionate God,

In times of grief, and tragedy we turn to you, Oh Lord, for peace and comfort. In the midst of chaos, with you we know we can find hope.

We pray today for all those who are beginning the healing process, and those suffering emotionally, physically, and spiritually. We also pray for the families that lost a loved one, and those whose lives will be forever changed. Be with them in their darkest hour.

While we will never will make sense of this tragedy, we can have hope in the acts of kindness we are seeing through your people. Shine your light in our dark places that we may heal completely.

We thank you Father for all the brave first responders and the men and woman that ran to help their neighbor. Give them your peace as they, too, recover from this trauma. We pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Renee Kelly
Director of Youth Ministries
Green Valley Presbyterian Church, Henderson

God of compassion, you watch our ways, and weave out of terrible happenings wonders of goodness and grace. Surround those who have been shaken by tragedy with a sense of your present love, and hold them in faith. Though they are lost in grief, may they find you and be comforted; through Jesus Christ who was dead, but lives and rules this world with you. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer

Submitted by Rev. David Dendy
Mountain View Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is error, the truth;
Where there is doubt, the faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Submitted by Rev. Joe Fontana
Green Valley Presbyterian Church, Henderson

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!"

Psalms 130:1

Oh, Holy God,

Out of the depths, with the psalmist, I cry to you. In this time of tragedy, it seems there is no place to turn. And yet you are there; you hear my prayer. God of grace, give me peace as I grieve the pain this horrific act has inflicted on my city, its people and visitors. Bring comfort to the grieving, healing to the wounded, salvation to the lost, hope to the desperate and grace to the brokenhearted.

For the Las Vegas community, God, I pray that you would continue to reveal yourself through acts of compassion and healing. Let this terrible event bind us together as a family, and may our unity be made stronger as we work to recover. Oh, God, I pray against the kind of evil demonstrated on our streets these past days. Bind the thoughts and actions of people possessed by hatred and violence. Touch them with your healing love. Teach our city love and forgiveness in the face of hatred and violence. Heal my heart and the hearts of those touched by tragedy so that we may, once again, be part of your grace and goodness in our community.

Holy Father, I pray for those who are servants of our community. Bless the first responders, the caregivers, the medical professionals and all who protect us. Bless them with wisdom and faithfulness and so equip them for the tasks to which they have been called by you. Surround them with your protection and heal them as they face the traumatic challenge of recovery from all they have experienced in this tragedy.

God grant me the wisdom and strength to see your light in this dark time. Restore my heart so that I may be part of your work in this community. In the faithful name of Jesus Christ, I pray this prayer, Amen.

Rev. Jim Houston-Hencken
Grace Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

Father God, help me to make sense of my world. How can I possibly comprehend such tragedy? And if I cannot comprehend, how can I find peace and help others? Especially unbelievers? We know that in this world we will always have pain and suffering, but that we have peace because Jesus has already conquered the world (John 16:33). This scripture is the key to our hope. But, I suspect these words will bring little comfort to those who do not know you. So, Father, I ask that you give us the words that will bring comfort to those who do not know you and those who are angry or doubt you. Help us to find the way, even in midst of this tragedy, to give them your hope, Jesus Christ. And give us wisdom Father, so we might push against the worldly view that wants to turn this tragedy into evidence to prove that You do not exist; to engage in a blame game that benefits no one.

Father, help us remember that when the disciples wondered who was to blame for a man's condition, Jesus, to their surprise answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned...this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life..." (John 9:3). C. S. Lewis offers an explanation that helps me to make better sense of my world in his book, *The Problem of Pain*. He says, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain; it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Thank you, Father, for giving us your Spirit to guide us, your Word to teach us, and the fellowship of Christians to comfort us. Keep us close Father, and let us feel your presence now more than ever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Joan Jeffers
Stated Clerk, Nevada Presbytery

O God, our hearts break for the tragic event that happened to our community. We grieve with those who are experiencing grief. Bring them comfort as only you can. Let them know that they are not alone, that you are with them and that we stand beside them. O God, you are our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Because you are always near, we have no reason to fear, even in the midst of danger, violence and destruction, you are a rock of faithfulness. You are a refuge in whom we find shelter, a port of safety from the storm, and a mother's comfort from our fears and anxieties. Hide us now under your wings; cover us with your mighty hand beyond the turmoil and chaos of today. For the hearts seeped in sorrow, we pray for your comfort. For the hearts burning with anger, we ask for a glimmer of peace. For the hearts full of pain, we ask for the gentle touch of your spirit. For the hearts overflowing with doubt, we ask for the certainty of your presence. For hearts full of anxiety, we pray for the reassurance of your love.

God, today we pray on behalf of those who are hurt and grieving, those who do not have the strength to pray, or the words to communicate the hurt in their souls. I ask that you would reach out to those grieving and hurting ones and let them know again that you are real, you are ever-present, and your heart breaks for them. We know that you can satisfy our longings and heal our hurts, so we ask boldly that you would. Thank you for hearing this prayer on behalf of all of us who grieve. We trust you with our lives for you are our God, our Lord, our Savior and our Comforter. Amen.

Rev. Mariano Ordoñez
First Filipino American Presbyterian Church, Henderson

Heavenly Father, we ask You to place Your healing touch on the families of those who died in the Las Vegas shooting. Guide them through the paths of grieving that they may know your love and constancy! Father, be with those victims who are still in critical condition; heal them; bless them! Be with their families as they, too, follow in the path of healing.

Father, we ask that you would comfort those who witnessed the carnage first hand, and those first responders who came to give aid and assistance. Bless those who helped by taking the wounded to hospitals in their own vehicles. Finally, Father, we lift up the entire city of Las Vegas in gratitude that the citizens pulled together to provide the needed blood for the hospitalized. Help us all heal from this evil situation as the city moves forward in the aftermath. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, we offer this prayer. Amen.

Gary Koon, Deacon Moderator
Grace Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

God of All Grace and Mercy,

We believe that you hold the whole world in your hands, but we find ourselves filled with doubt, questions, and tears. Like so many people before us, we cry out to you, "Why? Why our community? Why those we love?"

Lord, we are incapable of understanding the violence that seems only too commonplace in our world. We are filled with more questions than answers, more fear than hope, more tears than joy. As we look around us, we feel helpless, unknowing what to do or how to respond.

In your Word you have said, "Joy comes in the morning," but we are plagued with questions of despair. We long for answers. We cannot help but ask, "How long will this night last, O Lord?" Our grief consumes our joy. Our tears come to us like waves of an ocean forever changing the landscape of our lives. We know that we will never be the same. Yet we cling to you, O Lord, because you have said, "Come to me all who are weary and heavy burdened."

We confess that we are overcome with doubt. We admit our faith is weak, but just like Peter, we cry out, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

We admit that we have been brought to our knees for we truly believe that it is in you that "we live and move and have our being." Lord, we know that our only comfort in life and in death is that we belong to you. Comfort us as only you can.

Be with all who grieve the loss of life; wrap your arms of grace and mercy around all whose lives have been forever changed because of the unspeakable horrors of violence.

In our weakness, give us the strength we so desperately need to trust in you even when we fail to understand the events of this world. Give us the grace to trust in you even when answers fail to quench the pain of this life. Renew us with hope because of your promise never to leave us nor forsake us. Give us courage to live as beacons of light in the darkness and pain of this world. This we pray through Jesus Christ, the Savior of our world. Amen.

Rev. Adrian N. Doll
Green Valley Presbyterian Church, Henderson

Anne Lamott says that the best prayers to know are “Thank You, Thank You, Thank You” and “Help me, Help me, Help me.” Today great God, as we come before You, maybe these words are all we really need. Thank You Almighty God, for Your assurance that You are with us always, even to the end of the age. Thank You, Jesus the Christ, for revealing Yourself in the faces and actions of strangers, help and hope given by doctors and nurses, the touch of compassion given by our families and friends both far and near. Thank You, Holy Spirit that You come to provide healing, grace and mercy in small and large ways. Great God... there are so many things that we are feeling and questioning and even some things we are avoiding and unable as yet to process.

Come now, Holy One. Help us. By Your Word, grant us hope and help. Help us ask. Ask for Your peace and presence; ask for Your mercy and grace; ask for Your miracles. Help us speak, to tell the story, and by its telling (and hearing) begin to heal wounds – some that are yet unknown. Lord, help us in Your great mercy.

Help us lean into You, not on our own understanding or abilities, but on and into Your loving arms. Help us see the good in the midst of the awful and unimaginable. Help those who mourn. Comfort them with Your perfect Shalom. Help all of those who now have a very different reality than even a week ago... with a new normal that is not yet materialized. Lord, grant Your mercy.

We, thank You, great God for hearing our prayers, for helping us in this time of trial and pain, and for Your deep peace. We pray in Jesus’ Holy name, Amen.

Rev. Dana Pope
Grace Presbyterian Church, Las Vegas

Dear Lord,

Our whole city, as well as our country, is mourning right now. It is impossible for us to understand why someone would commit such an evil act that kills and injures so many innocent people. We need your healing power, your comfort and your guidance. We thank you that we have such well trained and dedicated first responders who undoubtedly prevented many more fatalities and injuries. We thank you for all the people who risked their own lives to help others.

Please be with all those loved ones surrounding the victims who didn’t survive. We ask that you be with those who are recovering from physical injuries and all the loved one surrounding them. We also ask that you be with all those at the concert, who may not have been physically hurt but mentally and emotionally, they will never be the same. Please be with our medical personnel as they use their skills to heal the injured.

Dear Lord, this tragedy touches everyone. We have so much healing to do and we can’t do it without you. Please be with us as we begin the long road to an eventual new normal. We need you every step of the way. In your Son’s name we pray, Amen.

Linda Rauenbuehler
Director of Older Adult Ministries
Green Valley Presbyterian Church, Henderson