



**Here and There:** ... This past Sunday, we took up our **Special Contribution for our Buddy/Mentor Christmas Shopping Expedition.** Money given allows our Bridgeport Buddies to Christmas shop for their own families. So far we've raised **\$1,523.** We're aiming for \$4,000. Contributions still welcome. ... Join Brandon for the ten o'clock **Sunday morning adult class** with lessons drawn from the Gospel of Luke. These lessons coordinate with his current sermon series. ... **The Jesus Class** on Wednesday evenings is focused on "**The Christ of the Apocalypse,**" a discussion class on Jesus as he's portrayed in the Book of Revelation. Join us for the last few weeks of this fascinating study. ... The season for **Thanksgiving Baskets** is upon us. The baskets to collect our food donations are set up in the lobby. Be thinking of non-perishable foods: **canned soups, vegetables, beans, turkey gravies, cranberry sauce, packaged cakes, pie crusts, bread mixes, rice, dried potatoes and poultry stuffing.** If you find items on sale, such as 10 for \$10.00 you may wish to purchase ten of one item as this lends uniformity to the baskets. ... Our **Readings in Current Affairs** next takes up the Papacy of Pope Francis, Thursday evening, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 7:00-8:30 PM. The suggested reading is Austin Ivereigh, **The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope.** ... On November 19<sup>th</sup>, **Brandon** will be presenting an essay at the **American Academy of Religion** conference in Boston on white supremacy and the ways people with power and privilege can better serve those without it. ... **Brandon** and **Dale** blog regularly at: **www.apreachersbookshelf.com** where they summarize some books they read in an accessible, interesting way. We would love for you to check it out! ... **Financial Report (YTD).** Income is running approximately \$5,000 below expenses. This is largely a seasonal rhythm. And our savings and reserves are strong. We are, however, anticipating large capital expenses next year, chiefly for roof replacement and gutter upgrades. Please pay prayerful attention to our giving. ... The most recent **Directory** can be found on the church website under Contact Us. Contact Sandy or Dale for the password to access it.

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**As for Sunday Morning Prayer Requests,** please e-mail those on to Dale at **DalePauls@att.net** if you wish them included in the newsletter.



# This Week at Stamford Church of Christ

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November 12, 2017

## Reflections on the Sutherland Spring Shootings

*This bulletin article is written in response to the shooting in Sutherland Springs, TX that occurred yesterday, Sunday, November 4. It interrupts my usual series "Reclaiming the Point" which will continue in the future.*

Yesterday a young man woke up and prepared himself physically and mentally to drive to a small town some 40 miles away from where he lived, approach a church full of people coming to find some connection—both human and divine—flip the safety off on his assault rifle and fire it indiscriminately into the bodies of Christ inside. Naturally, many today are stunned and searching for something to hold on to so they can steady themselves. We mention it to the people we encounter, "Did you hear?" "Yeah...terrible..." and there is not much left to say about it. Or people are putting their thoughts down in writing on social media.

Among the many responses, the one that struck me the most was one friend who called those who died "martyrs." And yes, I think he's right. They are martyrs. But martyrs for what?

This latest shooting set off another round of a

predictable back-and-forth about the appropriate legislative response. Some are losing patience with a string of mass shootings that have occurred regularly since Columbine. The name of the city is all that needs to be said: Sandy Hook, Aurora, San Bernardino, Fort Hood, Virginia Tech, Charleston, Orlando, Las Vegas. It doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest that, especially given the frequency of these tragedies, the means by which they are accomplished should be called into legislative question. So some will use this story as another platform to talk about reasonable gun control. These 26 dead become martyrs in the cause of better gun control. They died so that people would stop buying and selling AR-15's.

The other side will also offer a predictable argument. They will remind us of the 2nd Amendment, and of the courageous neighbor in Sutherland Springs who returned fire at the attacker and ultimately quelled the attack. How many more in that small town would have died if not for this well-trained good Samaritan with a hunting rifle? So some will use this story as a platform to increase the proliferation of deadly weapons as the necessary means of self-defense against an armed and dangerous foe waiting their turn to shoot up

**PEOPLE GROWING THROUGH THE LOVE OF JESUS.**

another church or school or movie theatre. These 26 dead become martyrs in the cause of the NRA and the primal, savage American spirit of kill or be killed.

The truth is that where one falls on this debate was probably not swayed in any meaningful way by the events that occurred yesterday. The problem is that any one of those who died, who died for no real reason other than both the deranged will of man and his access to tools that could accomplish such horror, could be recruited to the cause of our ultimate concern of politically-tainted legislative allegiances. How absurd. How blasphemous.

To think that these dead would give their lives for either of these causes is cruel and cold-hearted. Their bodies were assassinated and now their legacies are being torn asunder before the bodies can be laid to rest. These folks, and their families who now have to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives, are not your martyrs. They did not die for you.

But they are martyrs to be sure. In Genesis 4 Cain murders his brother Abel, who is a farmer of sorts and who therefore maintains a strong affinity with the ground. When God confronts Cain he calls him to account because “your brother’s blood is crying out to me from the ground” (Gen 4:10). Then in Revelation we hear from the martyrs gathered in God’s presence who cry out “Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?” (Rev. 6:10). Traditionally a martyr is that category of people who have been killed specifically on account of their faith. Those who died yesterday occupy a kind of middle ground here by strict definition. We do not know that they were killed specifically because they were Christian, but we don’t know they weren’t either.

What we do know is that they had faith. They were among the shrinking group of people who still find public gathering for the sake of worship and sharing life with other Christians to be important enough to disturb them from their sleep. And so we can be

sure that their lives were not so trivial as to be given on account of some political agenda. Their lives were given united together in the body of Christ. It was Christ’s body that was shot, Christ who once again took on himself the wrath of this twisted and almost unrecognizable image of God in the form of a person and society that has gone mad.

And so they are martyrs, to be sure. They died as Christ, with Christ, and for the sake of Christ. They did not choose this death, they were not given much of an option in the matter. But their lives were given for the sake of and welcomed a God who knows what it means to die at the hands of wicked men.

So I begrudgingly admit that there remains a place for legislative debate—and to be honest I am continually dumbfounded at our national inability to make more serious attempts at curbing tragedies of this scale. No matter how we look at it, this situation will be politicized by people from both perspectives. The best of us will not give in to competing ideologies, but find some reasonable and factual middle ground to discuss what could be done.

But let us not lose the significance of these people’s lives, and deaths, and lives again with God. Let us remember them as martyrs who find their place among the many others whose lives were cut short on account of faith. Let us find the deeper meaning of our faith in their lives as they become united with Christ not just in his resurrection and glory, but in his suffering and death. May they find rest and peace not just in the justice system of our country, but in the arms of a God who loves them, who knows what true justice looks like, and who will not fail to set things right.

- Brandon Pierce

### Sunday Mornings Coming Up! 11:00 am

Nov. 12 In Search of a New Kingdom - The Dinner Guests in God’s Kingdom - Luke 14:12-24

### Calendar of Events

- Sat., Nov. 11 **Memorial Service for Janice Stenger**, Robert’s sister. 11:00 AM in our sanctuary. With a reception in the community room downstairs afterwards.
- Sat., Nov. 18 **Fall Clean-Up Work Day**. Starting at 9:00 AM, including a chili lunch at noon.
- Wed., Nov. 22 **Thanksgiving Eve Devotional**. 7:00 PM in our community room. The perfect way to express our thanksgiving to God, and the perfect way to start the holiday season.
- Fri., Nov. 26 **Homeless Meal**. Prep at 10:00 AM. Delivery at 5:00 PM.
- Sun., Nov. 26 **Deck The Hall**. After morning worship we transform our building for the upcoming Christmas season.
- Sun., Dec. 3 **Our A Cappella Christmas Carol Sing Along**. Mark your calendars.  
  
Earlier that day our **Buddy/Mentor Christmas Shopping Expedition**.

**Prayer Updates:** ... **Norma Collins**, with a fractured pelvis and fractured lower back from a fall this week; headed for rehab at Cassena Care ... **Tamarie Sterling**, undergoing treatment and tests at MSK ... **Nylah**, Nitza’s charge, with sickle-cell anemia ... **Frank Bova**, in his ongoing struggle with his health ... **Amit Ramachandran**, again fighting off mononucleosis ... **Aaron Andrews**, with his position with the Town of Trumbull eliminated and now in a different department with a sizable pay cut; also meeting with a pulmonologist to resolve coughing and throat issues ... **Gerry Fraioli**, in his ongoing difficult struggle with MDS (myelodysplastic syndrome), a rare cancerous disorder in which bone marrow fails to make enough healthy red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets ... **Susan**, Velma’s friend’s sister, who after years taking care of her parents, now has lung, liver and brain cancer [*This quote from Velma*: “She has considered stopping the treatment, but as we know, God has the last word. God can heal her and I believe He is willing to heal her and show His almighty power. So let’s take this to God’s throne.”] ... **Clementina Baker**, Velma’s mother, on regular dialysis ... **Carol Keating**, Tony’s sister-in-law, diagnosed with breast cancer ... **Anita Mae Kahan**, 15, Elaine Lechtreck’s granddaughter, down with mononucleosis ... **Paul Johnson**, Scott’s brother, recovering from knee surgery ... **Dylan**, younger sister of Penelope Cheng’s friend, Avery, diagnosed with a bone tumor but whose surgery last week was very successful; Dylan may prove to be cancer-free ... **Richard Duffy**, Vanithe’s friend, diagnosed with lung cancer ... **Norma Collins**, suffering with rheumatoid arthritis and curvature of the spine ... **Wynona Wade**, being treated for non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma ... **Len Johnson**, the husband of Kristin Lomoriello’s co worker, diagnosed with cancer ... **Sharon Wetcher**, Nitza Perez’s friend, suffering from early on-set Alzheimer’s ... **Doroteo Paras**, Nitza’s boss’s father, suffering from kidney failure ... **Paula Burgess**, Shane Bigby’s mother, having some health issues possibly related to her kidneys ... **Glen Martin**, 27-year-old son of the church snow plow man, Rob Martin, injured in a motorcycle accident in May 2014 and paralyzed from the mid-chest down, living at home ... **Tom Konobeev**, Aaron Andrews’ friend, having suffered kidney failure and on dialysis, making progress in his weight loss in order to have transplant surgery ... **Joe Mattiello**, Aaron and Anna’s friend, diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and unable to work; also his wife, **Gail**, struggling with MS for many years and recently diagnosed with colon cancer and facing possible surgery and/or chemotherapy ... ALSO continue to pray for: **communities struggling with violence in America, the plight of refugees worldwide, all those impacted by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Jose and Maria, the extreme flooding in Bangladesh, India and Nepal, earthquake victims in Mexico, and wise, compassionate resolution of matters related to DACA and Temporary Protected Status for Haitians.**

**Our sympathy** to **Robert Stenger** and his mother, Alice, and family on the death of his sister, **Janice**, early Saturday morning, October 21<sup>st</sup>, after a short, intense struggle with cancer. Memorial services will be here at the Stamford Church of Christ, this Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 AM.

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