

God's Perfect Love > Fear

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear expects punishment. The person who is afraid has not been made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18, CEB)

While many of us were gathered here at Trinity UMC for worship last week on All Saints Sunday, an awful tragedy was taking place in a church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. A gunman entered their church building, killing 26 and injuring 20 more. It marks yet another senseless mass shooting tragedy in our nation that has become all too common.

I don't know about you, but over the years I find myself becoming more and more desensitized to these tragic events. In other words, what used to shock me years ago (events such as Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Aurora, Charleston, Orlando, Las Vegas, etc.) no longer have the same effect. And that's a sad thing, I think.

Perhaps this mass casualty has caught our collective attention because it happened, in of all places, a place of worship. And so, in the back of our minds, we begin to wonder, "How would we react to such an event, if it ever happened to us?" and "How can we try and prevent such a thing from happening at all?"

What I have learned from law enforcement over the years is that these kinds of tragedies are not completely preventable. Of course, it's very, very unlikely we would ever have to deal with a situation like this, but we would be naïve to think that "it could never happen here." So, we do our best to put preventative measures in place, and if something does happen, we try to minimize the damage and get help as quickly as we can from those who are best equipped to handle crisis situations.

With that in mind, I want to let you know that our Trustees had some conversation about building security at our regularly scheduled meeting this past week. From that conversation, it was decided that we will put the following reasonable measures in place.

1. Beginning immediately, we will reduce the number of entry doors that are open on Sunday mornings and other special events where people gather. We will only unlock doors which can be monitored throughout the morning. Specifically, this means that the entry doors in the preschool wing (NE part of the church) and doors to the small courtyard (West side) will now remain locked. Doors remaining open include: North entry doors from smaller parking area, All entry doors by the Chapel, Sanctuary, and Extended Narthex.
2. We are looking into purchasing and installing a simple camera system for the north entry doors during the week. This is critically important to our office staff, who are unable to see who exactly is coming and going when doors are unlocked during our official office hours (9:00 am-1:00 pm). We will continue to make use of the passcode entry during non-office hours.
3. We will provide training for greeters and ushers related to security, so they can be better prepared to deal with incidents, as well as fire safety and medical emergencies.

I'm glad to say that our Trinity Christian Preschool and Daycare has already put some significant measures in place to protect the security of the children as they meet during the week and that our church staff has collaborated with them from time to time to learn and make improvements. We appreciate your help as we take reasonable steps.

And please know that all of us can help with this effort. We can all keep our eyes and ears open and whenever we become aware of anything suspicious and report when we have good reason to do so. Even so, we want to approach everyone we encounter with a sense of Radical Hospitality, as we welcome the stranger among us.

Above all, we need not live in fear, for that is the goal of people who act out in violence. Instead, we allow God to replace fear with His perfect love, as it's described in 1 John 4:18: *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear."*

Wishing You God's Perfect Love,
Pastor David Rittgers