

**A Pastoral Letter from
The Rt. Rev. Audrey C. Scanlan
Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania**

To be read in worship across our diocese on Sunday, 15 November, 2015

14 November 2015

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Late yesterday afternoon we learned of an attack in Paris in a concert hall that killed more than one hundred people by gunfire. As the evening wore on, we learned of attacks at other sites that included a total of eight assailants in five more locations around the city. Many of us used the telephone and our computers to reach out to friends and family in Paris, hoping for good news of their safety. By the morning, the death toll had reached 127.

As the story continues to unfold, there are many questions still left unanswered about the profiles of the terrorists, their course of action and if there are still accomplices at-large. One thing is certain: the city of Paris- and the world- is left in the grips of fear and deep sorrow as a result of humankind's violence towards one another. It is enough to nearly lose hope.

For some, the instinct is for revenge. To combat the force of evil that has been perpetrated against us with an even greater expression of might. For others, the response is of fear, causing us to tighten our own circles and close ourselves off from any potential danger. And, because this incident happened nearly 4,000 miles away from us, there is even the temptation to look away and not encounter this horrific story at all.

For Christians, there is another way. As ones who believe in the Hope of the resurrection, in the power of God to overcome all evil and to succor those with the deepest of wounds, the Christian way for us is to pray. Pray for the dead that they may be welcomed into God's eternal embrace. Pray for their families who are faced with sudden loss. Pray for survivors and the injured who are traumatized by this event. Pray for a country torn by violence, for a world shattered by the terrorism, and for those who have perpetrated this crime- may God's justice and mercy prevail.

Pray together, on this day of resurrection, in our Sunday worship, the prayer in our prayer book for the Human Family (BCP pg. 815)

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.