

May 14 – Responses to the Buffalo, NY Mass Shooting

Our hearts are broken at the news of a mass shooting at a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo. The shooter, Payton Gendron, an 18 year old man espousing white supremacist views, used a gun with additional magazines, to shoot 13 people, killing 10 of them. Of the 13 he shot, 11 were Black. He traveled many miles from his home in Conklin, New York in Broome County which is not far from the Pennsylvania state line. He was an engineering student at SUNY Broome.

According to [this article in the New York Daily News](#), Mr. Gendron was influenced by a New Zealand white supremacist who murdered dozens of people in a pair of shootings three years ago, according to a 180-page manifesto posted online. He wrote a terrifyingly cold “questions and answers” section in the manifesto that spelled out the white nationalist beliefs that he said led him to plot the Buffalo attack."

He said the “particular person that radicalized (him) the most” was Brenton Tarrant, the man who [murdered 51 people](#) in shootings at two New Zealand mosques in 2019.

The manifesto also named several other people who inspired Gendron, including Dylann Roof, the young man who killed nine Black people at a church in South Carolina in 2015, and Anders Breivik, the Norwegian man who killed 77 people in 2011.

The chilling document described how Gendron planned the attack to the tiniest detail.

“Zip code 14208 in Buffalo (the zip code for Tops Friendly Market) has the highest Black percentage that is close enough to where I live,” Gendron wrote.

He also said he bought body armor to protect himself from bullets fired by security at the store. Police leaders said Gendron gunned down the security guard, a retired Buffalo police officer, before continuing his rampage.

Gendron’s manifesto also included pages and pages of anti-Semitic rants — but his attack plan focused solely on Black people.

At this time, people of faith or no faith along with imams, pastors, rabbis, and other clergy across the state are surely trying to figure out what to do or say to their communities as they sort out their own feelings in light of their religious and secular traditions. This evening, I reached out to my friend and colleague, The Reverend James Giles, President of Back to Basics Ministries in Buffalo for his thoughts and counsel. He wisely said it was too early for recriminations but that we need to call on God for his divine guidance at this time and comfort the broken hearted. He noted that many people will be gathering for prayer and worship in the Tops parking lot tomorrow morning. He also stressed, as did Governor Hochul, that it is still too easy to obtain semi-automatic weapons in New York which is designed to do nothing but kill human beings. We need to follow the Governor's lead in supporting gun control legislation which has been in front of the Assembly and Senate for awhile now but may surface for deliberation and a vote on Tuesday. More information to follow.

As we mourn, let us have deep empathy and love for the family and friends of those who have died, for the people of Buffalo who are really struggling and are having trouble comprehending a tragedy of this scale. We also pray for the family of the shooter and Mr. Gendron himself, our brothers and sisters in Conklin, Broome County and his classmates at SUNY Broome. May our prayers lead us to venture out into our communities to listen, be present, pray, speak, and act as the spirit may lead us. I am in communication with other

faith leaders and community people around the state to discern next steps on how best to respond. Your counsel is most welcome in shaping further responses and being present to others. if you wish to call me to discuss I can be reached at 508-380-8289 or Pcook@nyscoc.org.

As we pray and discern together, I am reminded of the Gospel of John reading from the lectionary tomorrow where Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:33 to 35

If you are looking for a hymn to speak to gun violence, I commend this hymn to you from Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.

God, In Our Church's Teaching

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 2021

Aurelia

Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864

1. God, in our church's teaching, may we be bold and clear;
2. I - sai - ah bold - ly told us you hate our worship ways
3. May these be crucial lessons we teach the old and young;
4. O God, we grieve the violence, the shoot - ings, and the hate;

may it be - come our prac - tice to coun - ter hate and fear.
when we ig - nore in - jus - tice and sim - ply of - fer praise.
that ra - cist ways are e - vil, that sex - ist ways are wrong,
we grieve our own in - dif - ference— our speak - ing out too late.

We've said that Je - sus' mes - sage is one that's filled with love,
And Je - sus gave a warn - ing: When we— in sin and pride—
In Sun - day schools and pul - pits, may this be what we speak:
God, in our church's wit - ness, may we say loud and clear:

and yet our sweep - ing state - ments are clear - ly not e - nough.
re - fuse to wel - come oth - ers, we turn our Lord a - side.
God made each per - son pre - cious, be - lov - ed and u - nique.
We wel - come ev - ery neigh - bor. We work for jus - tice here.

Tune: Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864 ("The Church's One Foundation")

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Please share this hymn with pastors, church musicians, worship planners, activists and others who might find it helpful.

A music video of this hymn, recorded by Rev. Casey Carbone for recording this video, can viewed by clicking here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GR7t3mJOg4w>

Finally, I invite you to reference your denomination's social statements on gun violence, racism, Islamophobia and anti-semitism and also consult the website of GunsenseNY.org among others.

Lord have mercy upon us.

In love and faith,

+Peter

Remember to frequently [visit our website](#) which is updated daily with new information and events.

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