

**basket**  
**of**  
**prayers + concerns + joys**

Prayers for all those affected by the massacre in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Twenty-six people - the youngest only 15 months old - were killed with many others injured when a man walked into the sanctuary and opened fire with an assault weapon. Words fail to express the depth of grief in their community. We pray, "Lord, in your mercy" for them, and for all those who face oppression, injustice, and violence. May God's *shalom* and *hesed* prevail as we follow in the way of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior by the power of the Spirit, and Lord, help us to *not stand idly by*.

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The following words for today's 'prayer basket' were written awhile back but resurrected and changed a bit as I was flying back yesterday from officiating at a dear friend's funeral. sjjs

Something amazing can happen when you're a passenger in an airplane flying high at 40,000 feet as the pilot tries to avert the fuller thrust of a strong weather front. It can help put things into perspective! Peeking out the cabin window into the hazy darkness, encountering blood-pressure-raising turbulence, and being told to remain tightly belted in your seat for an unknown duration while someone you don't know is up front behind a closed, locked door piloting the plane to your hoped-for destination can open wide a window of understanding!

What is it with some of us (including this writer) who tend to pray pretty much without ceasing while flying in an airplane, especially when there's jarring turbulence or unexpected air pockets that can quickly bring a sinking feeling of heightened vulnerability in the not-so-friendly-skies. While hoping for calmer skies, we can also become more fully aware that we aren't in control. It's at this point when we can have a perspective shift - an epiphany - about God's unfathomable love, unbounded grace, and unlimited power! Being *up, up, and away* can be a soaring experience of jettisoning fear and accelerating trust in God.

Situations in our lives can at times make us feel as if we're flying-by-the-seat-of-our-pants - or perhaps flying under the radar! Our life's flight plan can be interrupted by unforeseen weather changes that warrant readjustments. We may even be susceptible of wanting to take the captain's seat rather than trusting in God's faithfulness and steadfast love for our whole journey, turbulence and all!

Sisters and brothers in Christ, I pray that we will be convinced that God's loving presence is ever near, guiding and supporting us each step of the way, even in the dense fog of uncertainty, the gale force winds of fear, and the turbulent storms of sorrow. God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit will see us through all our circumstances in this present life, and will one day safely bring us *home* into the fullness of God's presence. But until that time, let's buckle up with God's assurance that nothing in life or in death is able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. For the Holy One who calls us to faithfulness - to follow in the way of Christ, to seek God's will, and to be encouraged and guided by the Spirit - is wholly trustworthy. As we live our lives according to God's Word of promise, let's together keep things in perspective, knowing that the ultimate grounding of our confidence, security, and hope is in God alone. And let us continue interceding for one another, working for peace and justice, and for the many needs around the world. May it be so.