

Prayer to Help Promote Peace in Anne Arundel County

Dear God,

If there's one thing I know for sure right now, it's that the world wasn't meant to be like this.

Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Washington D.C. These names, and too many others like them, are my nation's newest synonyms for tragedy. For the friends and family of those who have died, they represent moments of agony that can never be unwritten. For those whose race or sexuality or occupation has given them reason to fear the same kind of violence, they are threats, reminders that catastrophe is a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.

Even for me, though these names are little more than headlines to weep over and shake my fist at, they still leave me reeling. They make me wonder how much longer the world as I know it can possibly survive. They make me wonder what I can do, how I should respond, if I too am complicit in this violence.

But you, God, know these names better than all of us. They're not just names to you. You've studied every detail of every life damaged or lost in these tragedies. You've numbered the hairs on every head, gathered every tear. The people I've only ever known as victims, you've known all along as reflections of your own image.

You know far better than I that the world wasn't made for hatred and pain. You're the one who knew our human race from the very beginning, the one who breathed life into our dust and called us very good. You know just how beautiful we were intended to be.

So, if my heart is breaking right now, surely your heart must be breaking too.

I pray to you not as someone distant and aloof, but as someone near to me, near to us, even in the midst of chaos. I don't have to shout to get your attention. You are close enough to hear my broken whispers. No matter how strong or weak I feel, no matter how much or how little faith I can muster, I'll start by whispering this:

Give us peace.

You are the sovereign ruler, the mover of mountains, the victor of impossible victories. You are Lord over earthquakes and tsunamis, over nations in turmoil and terrorist plots, over starving children and fleeing refugees and prisoners tortured for their faith. You speckled the sky with stars and set the earth spinning like a top. You own everything, control everything. Your hand allows each mind to think and teaches each heart to beat. There is nothing you can't do. So, I pray, even though it seems impossible:

Give us peace.

Bring an end to violence and hatred and discord. Steady the feet that rush into war and the finger poised on the trigger. Bring justice to the downtrodden, restoration to the

marginalized and abused, hope to the hopeless. Guide all those in positions of power—whether that power is political or physical or social—and give them wisdom to use their power wisely. Give them, and all of us, the grace to admit when we are wrong and to seek forgiveness. Give us the grace to forgive.

Help us see your face in the faces of the people around us. Give us courage to love one another even when love seems like a risk. Give us compassion for those who are unlike us. Teach us to listen to those we disagree with, to hear stories that make us uncomfortable. Heal the hatred in the world around us by healing our own hearts first.

Give us peace by making us agents of peace.

Even now, in the midst of the darkness, I believe you are at work. I believe you have the power to fashion something new and beautiful out of our disastrous ruins. Give me patience as you work. Don't let me rush so quickly into peace that I fail to learn from the chaos. If you're revealing ugliness in my nation and world so that I can begin to address it and transform it, don't let me be content to simply sweep it under the carpet. I want more than a temporary cease-fire of my own making. **I want true peace, lasting peace.**

Your peace.

If tragedy and chaos persist, keep me from apathy. Give me a heart that loves deeply enough to break again and again. Give me a passion for peace that only burns brighter as time goes by.

Thank you that your love has never stopped blazing. Thank you that no matter how many times our human race falls, you have never fallen into apathy. When we are faithless, you remain faithful.

One day, I know, you'll give us a perfect peace that lasts forever. One day every sorrow will be erased and every tear wiped away. One day pain will be locked in a heavenly museum and hatred will be the stuff of history books.

But I dare to ask for peace sooner than that. I dare to believe, along with King David in Psalm 27:13, that "I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." I dare to plead with you in the name of Jesus, in the name of the one who suffered so I could plead with you:

Give us peace.

*Please give generously to the **Peace and Global Witness Special Offering**. All money collected from this donation will be used to support Arundel IAF (ACT). Please thoughtfully consider your donation as we work towards advocacy for peace, justice and transformation in Anne Arundel County*

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