Times Such as These

On Sunday, the news was filled with violence: The mass shooting at Brown University; the anti-semitic mass shooting at Bondi Beach in Australia; and Rob Reiner and his wife murdered by their son. All of this during the "season of light."

Hundreds of mass shootings are perpetrated in the United States every year, so we have become kind of numb to them. Until they hit so close to home. At a time like this, we all are painfully aware of just how small Rhode Island is, and how we all seem to be connected by only two degrees. We've all been on that campus. We all know someone who is there, or was there. Ami, our music director, lives only a couple of blocks from where it happened.

We're really feeling our connectedness right now, as we feel the anxiety over the assailant still being at large, and the release of the names of the dead, Ella Cook and Mukhammad Aziz Umurzokov, two people who by all accounts were very, very different. It's the kind of thing that makes us all feel like we aren't safe.

Part of me wants to rail right now about sensible gun laws, despite the fact that Second Amendment activists will always tell me it's not the right time. But Australia enacted some of the most stringent gun control laws in the world after a mass shooting in 1996, and here they are again. And Rob Reiner was killed in his own home, by his own son, with a knife.

The world isn't safe. It never has been. Even when Jesus of Nazareth was born, his life was threatened by an imperial ruler, even though he is still considered the "Prince of Peace."

Maybe that's the thing we should try to remember right now: Life will always be scary. There will always be turmoil and violence. It's how we respond during these times that creates peace. Not the absence of conflict.

May we all respond with care, mindful of the suffering of others. May we remember that everyone involved — even the perpetrators, and the pundits whose opinions are different from our own — are all human.

May we be present to those in need.

In Peace,
Rev Denis