



Barneveld Lutheran Church

505 Swiss Lane Barneveld, WI 53507

February 15, 2018

Dear BLC Family,

Another school shooting in the quiet community of Parkland, Florida. 17 killed and that number will possibly still rise. I will offer as your pastor a prayer that we can all lift up shortly but first let me speak as a father of two young children.

There have been at least 12 school shootings so far in 2018. It's only February 15th! We are averaging ONE school shooting every 3 or 4 days. Five years ago twenty 1st graders were shot to death in Newtown, Connecticut. That was supposed to be the one...that was supposed to be shooting which would bring about change in our laws, understanding and action. But since Newtown there have been 300 school shootings. Do the math with me- that's about 1 a week. *When will it stop? When will things change?*

There are over 300 million guns in America. And we will hear the same conversations and arguments about the right to bear arms and that it's people and not guns that kill and that we need more mental health reform and that we need metal detectors at all schools. It's the same round table conversations that have been going on for years...and what has happened? *Absolutely nothing.*

I have no easy solutions. I'm not suggesting banning guns. I'm against violence and we need to start getting real and honest about what is happening right in front of us. Because if things remain the same, it's not a matter of "if" but "when" something will happen right here in our own community. And as a father that nightmare scenario keeps me awake at night afraid for Anna, Peter and all our children. It's time to get serious and honest about violence in our world. The Bible tells us "Jesus wept" over Jerusalem when he saw what they were doing to each other. He wept because he saw their potential while they themselves could not. He wept because of the violence. *Believe me, our Lord weeps again today.*

When I was growing up we practiced fire and tornado drills in school. Today it's "active shooter" drills our children practice. There is something outright wrong about this picture. *Can we not see what is happening right in front of us?*

Prayer helps. It's a starting place for us Christians. It gives us COURAGE to do something. We profess as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America that it is "God's work and our hands." Will our hands do anything? Will we have any resolve at all with our government officials, the NRA, the video-gaming industry, the violence on television and movies? I pray we do. **We must.** This must stop. It's time to take action and do something. This is not a political issue. This is not just a gun issue. This is not simply a mental health issue. This is a HUMAN issue.

Back to "pastor" mode now...I invite you to pray with me. I lean on the wise words of Archbishop Oscar Romero who took a stand against the violence and corruption in El Salvador and was ultimately shot and killed while celebrating mass. His voice became the spark that impassioned others to then rise and speak out against the injustices happening. May we have that same courage **HERE** and **NOW**. Please pray his words with me:

*"It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the Church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything. This is what we are about. We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. **This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.** We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."*

May the Spirit of healing descend upon the community of Parkland, Florida and all those places suffering from the devastating effects of school shootings. May the Spirit of courage be with us all to do something. May the Spirit of wisdom fill our legislative halls, work places, school communities, churches and homes so that we listen and speak with honesty. May our God always and ever be with us.

With you a Christian, Husband and Father. For you a Pastor.

PJ