

## A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MODERATOR

March 7, 2018

Dear Fellow Church Members and Friends,

This past Sunday, after our Worship Service, about twenty people gathered to reflect on and discuss the recent Florida school shooting tragedy. The meeting attendance was diverse – young, old, longtime members, new members, parents with children, teachers and empty nesters.

During this meeting, parents expressed their concerns and fears for their children. Current and former educators discussed school safety concerns and preparedness (something they think about every day on the playground). And we had a teenager, who attends a local school, talk about the fear and confusion such events have created among our youth.

A common thread was how saddened all were by the loss of precious human life and questions about how we might respond in a meaningful, but peaceful and respectful Christian manner. All were also struck – and moved – by the many voices of the surviving Parkland students. Their passion and courage to speak out and lead by example has made this particular sad incident potentially a turning point.

We believe that a continuing dialogue on this topic is important. We also believe that church is where we can open our hearts, find solace and comfort with others, and deal with the questions we all have as a community of faith. Our hope is that being in spiritual reflection with others during these tragedies will help to give all of us strength in the midst of it all, to keep going. And that our strength, hope and prayers can lead toward solutions.

We ask that if you have questions, concerns or ideas, that you reach out to the clergy and/or Office of the Moderator. We also want to understand if you would like to be part of a continuing dialogue on this topic that has touched so many in our congregation.

We hope to provide more information in days ahead.

Respectfully and In Service,

Gintas Vildzius, Moderator

Janeen S. Hansen, Moderator Emerita

Mary Hill Canavan, Rising Moderator

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