



A Response to the New Zealand Terrorist Attack on Masjid Al Noor and Linwood Masjid

The news of another terrorist attack targeting a religious community has broken our hearts. Fifty people killed and many more wounded is a tragedy, not just for Muslims, but for all of us, for the whole of humanity. Breaking the sanctity of people in worship with an act of violence doubles the pain, whether it is a mosque in New Zealand, a Black Christian congregation in South Carolina, or a Jewish synagogue in Pennsylvania.

We send our deepest condolences to the families of the victims, with prayers from the many different faith traditions. We send our appreciation to the New Zealand people and government who have, through this first experience of mass violence, stepped quickly to take measures to reform gun laws and to cultivate an environment of compassion and support for the Muslim communities in your country.

This latest atrocity is the result of hate unleashed. No one part of humanity has a monopoly on hating. In truth, any of us are capable of hate and violence, but hate is not inherent in our nature as humans. We have to be taught to hate, and we have to be inflamed to move to violence. We are in a time of conflict escalation, and leadership of groups, organizations, clans, or nations who inflame hate prey upon the isolated, the lonely, the confused, and the angry who become the shooters.

We can learn to love and learn to speak with love. We can learn to appreciate human differences. We can learn to speak up and speak out for each other. Let us trust our basic instinct of love and compassion, and not be swayed by examples of hate and violence.

Each of us has a role to play. Our leaders create an environment and set the tone of inclusion. We must hold them to this task. Each of us must speak of love to those who speak of hate. We must reach across the divides of religion, color, ethnicity, and ancestry to get to know and care for one another. This is a time to build compassion. Do not expect the targeted ones (Muslims, in this most recent shooting) to be the only speakers. All of us must speak with courage, with mercy, and with humility in order to find our place of strength and to find the place of action for peace.

We pledge our love, our support, and our willingness to stand together across differences to foster a community where love is free to flourish.