

I am Pastor Drew Willard and welcome you all to the UCC at The Villages
and acknowledge those who are here from other faith communities.
Temple Shalom, Open Circle MCC,
Unitarian Universalist of Marion Co.,
Doorway in to the Infinite, Rock of Ages Lutheran,
Ba'hai.

We are gathered here this night before Christmas Eve
to bear witness to the tragic loss of 20 children and 8 adults
of Newtown, CT for no good reason.
May they not have died in vain – may their lives count for something
towards the transformation of this society and beyond.
May we begin to have laws that limit the access and use of weapons,
but even more so, may we begin to change the culture of violence
that exists in this society and throughout the world.
May we press forward, on the threshold of a new world.

Someone in Newtown said that,
‘Christmas has been canceled this year.’
It may seem like Christmas is the worst time for such an event to happen,
but actually Christmas came about to challenge this very thing.
Christmas, ‘Hannukah, and Hindu Diwali take place
at the darkest time of the year in response to primal fear.
Ancient people, like little children afraid of the dark,
feared that the Sun would not return as it progressively grew dark.
For Christians – and for anyone,
Christmas is about a defiant hope and undefeated love
that comes into the world like sunrise.

Evil has its own perverse logic that continues on
into its own cowardly end of hatred and self-destruction.
No one is born evil – its root cause is always pain and isolation
It is Love, on the other hand, that is irrational.
You have to choose love – sometimes against great odds.
Love is an act of defiance. An act of affirmation of life.

To love is to live creatively. It is the way to do battle with evil –
and that battle begins in one’s own heart against one’s own darkness
of ignorance and prejudice.

We remember those who were killed
We remember those who survived
We remember the parents
We remember the teachers
We remember the administrators
We remember the first responders
We remember the murderer's family
We remember those who have to pick up the pieces of broken lives
We remember the town of Newtown
We remember the state of Connecticut
We remember our nation
We remember our world

CHILDREN

Charlotte Bacon, female (age 6)
Daniel Barden, male (age 7)
Olivia Engel, female (age 6)
Josephine Gay, female (age 7)
Ana M. Marquez-Greene, female (age 6)
Dylan Hockley, male (age 6)
Madeleine F. Hsu, female (age 6)
Catherine V. Hubbard, female (age 6)
Chase Kowalski, male (age 7)
Jesse Lewis, male (age 6)
James Mattioli, male (age 6)
Grace McDonnell, female (age 7)
Emilie Parker, female (age 6)
Jack Pinto, male (age 6)
Noah Pozner, male (age 6)
Caroline Previdi, female (age 6)
Jessica Rekos, female (age 6)
Avielle Richman, female (age 6)
Benjamin Wheeler, male (age 6)
Allison N. Wyatt, female (age 6)

ADULTS

Rachel Davino, female (age 29)
Dawn Hocksprung, female (age 47)
Anne Marie Murphy, female (age 52)
Lauren Rousseau, female (age 29)
Mary Sherlach, female (age 56)
Victoria Soto, female (age 27)
Nancy Lanza, female, (age 52)