



## A Call for Prayer

*Psalm 121: 1-2, 7-8*

*I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The Lord will keep you for all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.*

Friends,

I write this to you in the wake of the tragic shootings at Emanuel AME church in Charleston, SC on Wednesday night. All of our heart broke as we learned that nine of our sisters and brothers who killed while gathering to pray and turn their hearts to our Lord. I ask you to join me in this coming week, Sunday June 21 – Sunday June 28 to pray each day for the victims of this shooting and for their families. Let us as the Allegheny Synod enter into a week of prayer for those who were lost, for their families, and for the congregation of Emanuel church who has lost their pastor and members of their church.

Unfortunately, we are no strangers to evils like this in central Pennsylvania. We remember that in 2012 a gunman went on a rampage in the village of Geeseytown killing three of his neighbors. We remember to our east the tragedy at the Nickle Mines School when eleven Amish children were gunned down. We all carry the memories of when Flight 93 came down near Shanksville in Somerset County. We have know sorrows and tragedies here. Let us pray for those who are suffering through this tragedy now.

I also ask you to pray for those in South Carolina because they are part of us. The nine who were slain are baptized children of God. Jesus claimed them in their baptism. Jesus made them one with and part of the body of Christ, just as he did us. That means that part of the body, part of our body, has been taken away. It is our sisters and brothers who fell on Wednesday.

Finally, I ask you to pray because I personally lost a friend in this massacre. The Rev. Clemente Pinckney, pastor of Emanuel AME church, was a friend of mine. He attended Lutheran Southern Seminary in Columbia, SC with me. He did this while serving full time as a SC State Senator, and a parish pastor. Together we slogged through Greek, Church History, Gospel, Pauline Studies, and a host of other classes. This was a man I worked with, ate with, laughed with, and prayed with, and I am honored to be able to call him my friend. I know that he and the other eight who were killed rest with the Lord. The resurrection of Jesus is the hope I hold to now. I ask you to pray for Pastor Pinckney's family especially his wife and two daughters he leaves behind.

I cannot give a reason why evils like this happen. Nevertheless, I know that in the face of such evil the God who rose again from the dead walks with us and comforts us. I also believe that our Lord calls us to respond to evil with love and grace and mercy. We see in Jesus the one who took all of the evil that the world could throw at him, and responded by giving himself for the sake of this world. Therefore, what I know to do in times like these is to turn our hearts and our prayers to God, and to pray for those who have been left behind.

May the God of peace be with us. Thank you for joining me in praying this week.

In Christ,

+Bp. Michael