

**Remarks at the Community Service in Bethlehem in the Wake of the  
Orlando Shootings  
Metropolitan Community Church, Bethlehem, PA  
16 June 2016**

Rev. Dr. Lloyd Steffen, University Chaplain, Lehigh University

I do not know if we were made for happiness, but in my faith tradition, we believe that we were made for love. Love is not the same as happiness, for love is to worry, to encounter and then even share in the pain of others. It is not happiness but love that calls us to sympathy and condolence, leading us to extend a helping hand to ease the suffering of others, to stand with others in their sorrow and heartache. It is love that opens us to the experience of grief and as well to the pain of loss; it is love that allows us to recognize and then even share with one another, in such times as this, the best that in us, and love that opens us in sadness to call for action when we ask, why all these guns, why so much hatred, why so many innocent dead? Love is not paralyzed in the face of violence or grief, but calls us out of ourselves into the heartache of the world to care for one another and lessen that heartache to the extent we can.

Whether or not we were made for happiness, the events of this past week in Orlando remind us that we were made for love. How can we not extend our hearts, filled with regret and sympathies, to those who are mourning the loss of loved ones; how can we not resolve to change how we live together and refuse to celebrate the right of individuals to possess weapons of mass destruction, which we as a nation have gone to war to prevent others from possessing?

Those who lost loved ones will know again moments of joy in their lives; they will even laugh again; but everything in their lives from now on will be different. My prayer this evening is that whatever comes their way in the days ahead, they will know that in the love they have offered and also received, they have touched the deepest part of who we are, the best that is within us, where in faith and through love we believe we connect to God. And I pray as well that a God of love, filled with heartache even as we are in this moment, despite having all the reasons in the world to turn away from the cruelty of human beings, will, out of love, not give up on us.