

this kind of love, or patriotism, to become universal, “the word patriotism, in its specific sense, meaning such a love for one’s country as makes its possessors ready and willing to take up arms in its defense, might be appropriately expunged from every national vocabulary.”

—Carl Bowman

When bad things happen

This is from the sermon “When Bad Things Happen,” preached Sept. 16 by Christy J. Waltersdorff, pastor, at York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill.

The late Henri Nouwen once wrote, “The good news of the gospel is not that God came to take our suffering away, but that God wanted to become a part of it. The agony of the world is God’s agony. Outside of God, human suffer-



ing is not only unbearable, but cannot even be faced.”

I wish it could be different. I wish that we did not have to face the realities we faced this week. I wish that pain and suffering were not such a part of our world. But they are, and the only way I know of to walk through this and emerge whole on the other side is to walk through it with God. Being children of God does not protect us from life’s tragedies. Being children of God gives us the promise that no matter what happens, we will not be alone.

We worship a God who walked the earth, in the human body of Jesus Christ. We worship a God who suffered and



was killed. But the story doesn’t end there—because he rose to life again on the third day. And he offers that promise of new life and hope to us as well.

Helen Keller once said, “Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.” As Christians, this is our message. We do not deny the realities of pain. We do not deny the need for us to grieve and to hurt and to cry.

We also, however, need to remember that the promises of God are true and, even if we cannot see God, God is with us, as close as our own heartbeat.

So the question for us this morning is, how will we respond to the tragedy of this week? Our national leaders are talking about revenge, retribution, and war. As Christians, perhaps we need to model another response.

Let us make the right choices in this crisis—to pray, act, and unite against the bitter fruits of division, hatred, and violence. Let us rededicate ourselves to global peace, human dignity, and the eradication of the injustice that breeds rage and vengeance. Let us begin a process of seeking the healing and grace of God.”

—Christy J. Waltersdorff

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem

This is a prayer offered on Sept. 16 at the New Freedom (Pa.) Church of the Brethren by Harold Martin, editor of the Brethren Revival Fellowship’s newsletter, the BRF Witness.

We address you as the God whose eyes are in every place beholding the evil and the good.

We saw again this past week something of the depths of human depravity, when buildings were blown apart and human lives were lost in horrendous acts of violence.

We pray that you:

—will have mercy on those who planned the dastardly deeds.

—will use the shock and fear and inconvenience of these events to bring revival to your church and salvation to many.

—will pour in comfort and healing to the families of those who died in the disaster.

—will give strength and courage to those whose job it is to risk their lives

in order to rescue others.

—will bless those who work in fire service, and police service, and medical service.

—will give wisdom to the leaders of nations and to the President of the United States (and those who counsel him).

Remind us that the root of the problem centers around a city and move us often to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.”

May the experiences of this past week cause us to reflect on our lives, to make new commitments of devotion to Jesus Christ, and to become more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

We pray in the powerful, saving, victorious name of Jesus. Amen.

—Harold Martin

Friend sees a sign of peace

Chuck Fager, a Quaker writer from Bellefonte, Pa., sent this out to many in the Quaker community during the week following the tragic events.

Yesterday I drove a few hundred miles to attend my granddaughter’s seventh birthday party.

All the way down and back along the highways, there were flags and signs and flashing messages, the most frequent of which was, “God Bless America.” On the radio there were the continuing calls for revenge and retaliation.

But as we passed through the town of Martinsburg, W. Va., I saw something different, which I want to bring to your attention.

A small church there had a plastic message board on its lawn, the kind which usually has some preacher’s quip, intended to be attention-getting in an innocuous sort of way (e.g., “If you’re going the wrong way, God allows U-Turns,” etc.).

But last night the message, in sizeable black letters, was as follows:

“God will repay those who deserve it. “God bless all of humanity.”

Simple. Quite orthodox as far as theology goes. But so different from all I have been seeing in the dark