

Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting, December 14, 2012, Newtown, Connecticut. 20 year old Adam Lanza shot and killed 26 people, including 20 children between six and seven years old, and six adult staff members. Earlier that day, before driving to the school, Lanza shot and killed his mother at their Newtown home. As first responders arrived at the school, Adam committed suicide by shooting himself in the head. At the time, I was serving as Interim Conference Minister for the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ. It was in that capacity that I drove out to Newtown in support of our Newtown church and its pastor.

Road's End

At road's end,
a lofty church spire beckons all to hope and life.

But below it, a hush blankets the village,
streets clogged with police and medics and media,
people huddled, heads cast downward, voices choaking.

Inside the church
hundreds of soft, colorful teddy bears blanket the altar steps,
where youngsters gather on Sundays
for a moment with their pastor.

Today, the cuddly animals await hugs from sobbing children,
Their tears hard flowing in the aftermath of the mayhem,
the sudden murder of friends, teachers, staff.

Not in some far away place in a world apart, but
Right here, in their town, their school.

The teddy bears await, knowing their gift.
As do sobbing parents, siblings, grandparents, uncles and aunts
All needing hugs, reassurance.

So too do the pastors and priests and rabbis, all
whose holy duty and human emotion contend within them,
making this moment's essential ministries likely their greatest war,
In partnership with their congregations,
tending the grieving and the lost...

Including the family of a mother, another fatality
Of the deranged boy...

Her son, the shooter!

She who tried her best... to love him to health,

a victim, like him,
also to be prayed for.

Like all the other children since, also lost to gun violence,
In spite of millions of prayers, and labors to kill... this cancer.

At the road's end,
a lofty church spire still beckons us to hope and life.

Still!

Chuck Wildman
2021