"FAITH OR FEAR"
(Response to School Shootings and Public Safety)
For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta
By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: Selected Scriptures on “Fear Not”

Objective: To respect the dignity of every human being, by remembering the shooting victims, and by engaging in civil discourse about issues around public safety

The Set up: Moderate

The Plan:

- **Hook:** Vigil for School Shooting Victims (30 mins)
  - Respecting their dignity as human beings, learning about their lives and the impact their lives have made on this world
  - Commemorating them by different reflections (flowering a cross, lighting candles, building a cairn)
  - Lament using Psalm 88
- **Book:** Faith or Fear (20 mins)
  - Watch Campus Ministry Video with Testimonies
  - Write down their fears
  - Read verses about not being afraid
  - Write down their hopes for the world
- **Look:** Discussion (25 mins)
  - Small Group Debriefing
  - Large Group Brainstorming: Sharing ideas about how to make our hopes for the world come true
- **Took:** Prayers & Renewal of Vows (15 mins)
  - Writing prayers of faith over our fears
  - Renewing our Baptismal Covenant to Walk in Faith in the face of fear

The Supplies:

- A Copy of lesson
- Print outs of all the biographies of victims
- Print outs of Reflection activities
- Print outs of “Fear Not” Scriptures and “Lament—Psalm 88”
- Butcher Paper (or lots of construction paper/flip chart paper taped together)
- Masking Tape
- Markers, and Sharpies, and pens
- Rocks
- Flowers
- Cross used for flowers (like at Easter) OR create a cross on the floor with masking tape
- Tealights (like a couple hundred) & clear cups
- Lighters
- BCPs
- AV Equipment

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The Preparation:
- Put up Butcher Paper on one side labeled “Fear” and on another side labeled “Faith”
- Cue up Campus Ministries Video on Public Safety
- Print out and copy everything
- Put tealights in cups and place on table with lighter
- Tape off cross on the floor (or get Easter flowering cross if you can)
- Put Sharpies with rocks on one table
- Put victims’ bios and pictures on several tables throughout the space

Notes for Youth Leaders
These are a few of the areas we want to stay centered around in this lesson. If it veers off, bring it back!

- Public Safety. As a Church, as followers of Jesus, we want to say that we are FOR the youth of our communities feeling and being safe. This is an issue we would like to remain centered around public safety, which we view as a non-partisan issue. The central question is, “What do we do to help our children, youth, and young people feel and be safe?”
- Baptismal Covenant. Our goal is that this issue stay rooted in our Baptismal Covenant to respect the dignity of every human being, and that all discussion be respectful and civil.
- Supporting Young People. Our job as youth leaders is to amplify the voices of our young people who ARE leaders. If they lead, we support. We want to provide them with avenues for taking action on the issues they care about, and use our skills to support the endeavors they undertake and to give them a voice in leading the Body of Christ.

Additional Options: The first part of the lesson, the Vigil, can be done separately, or beforehand. The purpose is to hold a space for youth to feel and process those feelings, and do something with their grief that is positive in remembering the victims. If your group has already provided something like that, you could move past that part or make it an optional pre-lesson activity.

Create a Covenant for Civil Discourse
Here are some ideas:
- Let the person complete their thought
- Pay attention to your response (especially if it is a strong response). Stop yourself from formulating a response before you have taken the time to truly understand
- Think about how you might respond out of your own life experiences and context. Try to learn what it is like for that person. Learn something new about what life is like for someone else. Practice empathy.
- You don’t have to have an answer or a response to what people are saying. You can just let something be said.
- Make “I” Statements. Focus on how YOU feel and how these topics affect YOU.
- Ask questions when you are confused
- Give the benefit of the doubt...that everyone is doing their best to share honestly to the best of their ability
- Be patient with each other
- Don’t repeat another’s story without their permission
- Be gentle in the way we speak to one another
- Forgive each other, and listen for what they mean (not just what they said). Remember, they are trying their best to communicate.
- Keep an open mind. Remember we all are still learning. Be open to receiving new information.

Further Resources
- Fuller Youth Institute has some great ways to help conversations with young people around processing tragedy: https://fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/processing-the-tragedy-of-school-shootings
- The New York Times published some great ideas geared toward teachers in the school classroom, but there are LOTS of good ideas that can be adapted for youth ministry to help address these issues: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/15/learning/lesson-plans/resources-for-talking-and-teaching-about-the-school-shooting-in-florida.html

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**Vigil for School Shooting Victims** (Hook, 30 mins)

The point of this section is to create a space for youth to grieve, and to remember and honor the victims as children of God, respecting their dignity as human beings. One way we help youth process is by modeling loving ways to commemorate the lives of God’s children.

**Explain:**

- Our nation has experienced a tragedy. Children created in God’s image were killed. We are gathering to spend a few minutes to grieve them, and to learn about and honor their lives, because every life is valuable in God’s eyes.
- There are tables set up with pictures of each victim, and a little bit about their lives. Take some time to learn about who they were, and the impact they made on this world.
- There are 3 reflection activities set up as well. The instructions for each activity are at the tables. There is no need to talk. This is an individual time with just you and God, so please keep Holy Silence.
- When activity is over, please gather at _______________ for small group discussion

- LEADER TIP: Depending on your group’s dynamics and size, you can divide them up and start them at different stations, and then ring a bell to signal when it’s time to switch, or you can just let them be self-directed and visit whichever station they want to for however long.

**For Leader Reference** (materials for each of these reflection activities are at the end of the lesson):

1. **Lighting a Candle.** Reflecting on the ways that these young people were lights to the world, the youth can light a candle, saying a prayer of thanksgiving for the light each person brought. They don’t have to light one for every victim, but they can light one for all victims or ones that particularly touched them. They can also light candles for victims’ parents, for those affected, for those left behind...that they would have light in their lives in this time of darkness.

2. **Rock Cairns.** Used by many cultures throughout time and throughout the world, piling up rocks was a way to remember or memorialize something, some event, or someone. In the Old Testament, the people piled up rocks to remember the things they were thankful that God had done for them. We will be using the rocks to remember the things we are thankful for about these young people’s lives, to say that we are thankful that God created them, that we are grateful for their lives. Youth can write on the rocks the things about each person they relate to and are thankful for (for example, if they go to summer camp, and so did that victim, they might write “summer camp” on a rock, and place it on the table). The rocks will stand as a witness to the ways that young person has affected the world.

3. **Flowering the Cross.** If your church has a special cross they use to put flowers in at Easter, see if you can use it. If not, use masking tape to create a cross on the floor. Put a vase of flowers out, and allow students to place one on the cross. Flowers are symbols of life, even though they don’t last long, they bring beauty to the world. The cross, a symbol of death, is also a symbol of resurrection. God brings beauty from ashes, our Christian hope. Their story and ours is not over. Death will not have the final say.

4. **Journaling.** At the end of the time, give them a journal page with questions (see end of lesson) to reflect on their experience.

**Close the time by praying together Psalm 88—A Lament** (see end of lesson)

- LEADER TIP: A Note about Laments: some are dark and despairing, but Lament is a biblical way to express grief, and even if our youth aren’t feeling particularly sad about this, they can still pray and lament on behalf of those who are (the families of those who were killed). Laments always have a statement of trust, but they also express anger or frustration at God. And that’s ok. God is big enough to handle that.
In this section, we will watch a video the campus ministries created, giving testimonies about some of their fears. Then, we’ll lead the students in expressing their own fears this issue of their safety is creating in them. They’ll write those on a sheet of butcher paper that you’ve set up in advance, labeled “Fears”. Then we’ll walk them through Scriptures where God repeatedly tells God’s people “Fear Not”. Then, we’ll have them write down on the “Faith” Butcher paper the hopes they have for the world. (Faith is “the assurance of things hoped for” so we’ll write down our hopes for a better world). This will lead into a discussion in the next section about how to bring those hopes to reality.

- Show video from Campus Ministries on #schoolsaftetymovement: https://vimeo.com/257973932
- Instruct the Youth to write on the butcher paper labeled “Fear” anything they are afraid of, that these issues of school shootings are causing to bubble up in them.
- Give them about 10 mins to do this
- Pass out the “Fear Not” Scripture page (end of the lesson). Say something like, “Fear Not”…Some version of this command is repeated hundreds of times. Depending on how you count it, it is the most (or one of the most) repeated commands in the entirety of Scripture. One of the other most repeated commands is “Remember”…remember what the Lord has done for us. Let’s take a look at some of the times God speaks to us about fear...
- Have the youth read through some of the Scriptures, and pick the one that speaks to them the most.
- Direct them to the “Faith” butcher paper. Say something like, So if we’re supposed to move past our fear, how do we do that? Have you ever heard the saying “Where you look is where you go?” Let’s look past the fear, beyond it, above it. Let’s look at faith. Hebrews says that Faith is the “assurance of things HOPED for…”, so instead of looking at our fears, let’s TURN our gaze, and look at our hopes and dreams for this world. What do we HOPE will happen? How are we HOPING God will heal this world? Let’s take some time and write down our hopes....
- Give them about 10 mins to write down their hopes for the world
- Say something like, There is always hope. And we can choose faith over fear. It’s where we choose to look. Let’s talk about that...
**Discussion** (Look, 25 mins)

In this part, youth get a chance to debrief their experience in small groups, about 4 students each, with an adult leader.

**Small Group Discussion Questions—Debriefing** (12 mins)

- Think about the activity we did to honor the victims of the school shooting. What would you like to share about that experience? What about their lives resonated with you/are you thankful for?
- If you feel comfortable sharing, what are your fears that you wrote down?
- What “Fear Not” verse stuck out to you the most? Why?
- What were some of the hopes you had for the world?

**Large Group Discussion Questions—Brainstorming** (12 mins)

- The young people of Florida have some hopes for the world, too. What do you know about what they are doing? What do you think about it?
- What are some avenues for action on how we can make some of your hopes and dreams for this world come true?
  - **LEADER TIP:** There are no bad ideas in brainstorming. Write them all down without judgment or evaluation.

**Note to Leaders:** Prepare for this brainstorming session by learning about March for Our Lives, a student-led movement for school safety, led by the survivors of the Florida school shooting. Many students may know about this through social media, and/or may want to support or participate in this movement.

- [https://www.marchforourlives.com/](https://www.marchforourlives.com/)

**For your reference:**

**March for our Lives:** This is a grassroots movement led by the surviving teenagers of Marjory Stoneman Douglass High School. The purpose of the organization is to raise awareness of both public/school safety and gun issues. You can read the purpose statement of March for our Lives here.

**March 14:** Women’s March Youth EMPOWER is calling for students, teachers, and allies to take part in a National School Walkout for 17 minutes, in honor of the 17 killed in Parkland, FL, at 10am

**March 24:** Student organizers, including those from Parkland, FL, are planning March for our Lives, a march in Washington, D.C. to call for school safety and gun control.

**April 20:** A growing movement titled National School Walkout is being called for by Connecticut students that live near Sandy Hook Elementary school, the location of a mass school shooting in 2012 where 20 students and 6 staff members were killed. The plan calls for high school students to walk out on April 20, the 19th anniversary of the Columbine shooting. No time has been specified.

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**Prayer & Renewal** (Took, 10 mins)
The youth will have a chance to write their prayers of faith over their fears, and then renewal their Baptismal Covenant, turning to look at faith, and being reminded of the grace given them in their baptisms: strength to live out their new lives in Christ.

- Instruct the young people to take their “Fear Not” Scriptures, and write the references of Scriptures they are praying over their fears they wrote earlier on the “Fear” Butcher Paper. They can also lay hands and pray for those fears, tracing their hand over each one they have prayed for as a visual reminder of all the prayers.
- Direct them to page 301 of the BCP.
- Explain that they will be renewing their Baptismal Covenant, and that in between each of the 5 vows, there will be moments of silence so that they can add their ideas and prayers for how they can live out those vows to the “Faith” Butcher paper (for example, after they promise to “resist evil” they might add “speak with kindness about hard conversations; don’t demonize people for their opinions” to the “Faith” butcher paper. Or after “strive for justice and peace” they might write “engage in action to make our students safe at school”). Just give them a few moments to add more **concrete** ways they could live out that vow to the “Faith” butcher paper. You might help them with some solid ideas.
- Lead them in the renewal of their Baptismal Covenant, leaving some time in between each vow for them to write.

**Close in prayer.** You might want to use the Prayer of St. Francis of Assissi on BCP pg 833 or the Prayer for Social Justice on pg 823.
Student Journal Questions after Vigil

• What were some of the things that stuck out to you about those who were killed in the school shooting?

• What did you learn that you didn’t know before, and how did it affect you?

• If you feel comfortable, share some of the things that you took away from the reflection activities:
  o Did you light a candle? What did you pray? In what ways did you learn that these young people brought light to the world?

  o Did you write something on a rock? What were some of the things about their lives that you related to? What things about their lives were you thankful for? What things about their lives do you want to remember?

  o Did you place a flower on the cross? What did you pray and reflect on as you did so?

• How did doing each of those activities make you feel? What did you think about as you were doing them?
Psalm 88[a]


1 LORD, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you.
2 May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry.
3 I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.
4 I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength.
5 I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care.
6 You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths.
7 Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves.[a]
8 You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them.
I am confined and cannot escape; my eyes are dim with grief.
9 I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you.
10 Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you?
11 Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction[b]
12 Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?
13 But I cry to you for help, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you.
14 Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me?
15 From my youth I have suffered and been close to death;
I have borne your terrors and am in despair.
16 Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me.
17 All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me.
18 You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.
“Fear Not” Scriptures—From Crosswalk.com

1. “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10
2. “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.” Psalm 56:3
3. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7
4. “Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid.” John 14:27
5. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7
6. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18
7. “When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.” Psalm 94:19
8. “But now, this is what the Lord says…Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.” Isaiah 43:1
9. “An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.” Proverbs 12:25
10. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” Psalm 23:4
11. “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9
12. “Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” Matthew 6:34
13. “Humble yourselves, then, under God’s mighty hand, so that he will lift you up in his own good time. Leave all your worries with him, because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6-7
14. “Tell everyone who is discouraged, Be strong and don’t be afraid! God is coming to your rescue...” Isaiah 35:4
15. “Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?” Luke 12:22-26
16. “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1
17. “Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.” Psalm 55:22
18. “Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.'” Mark 6:50

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19. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6
20. “For I am the Lord, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you. Do not be afraid, for I myself will help you,’ declares the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 41:13-14
21. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1
22. “The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? The Lord is with me; he is my helper.” Psalm 118:6-7
23. “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” Proverbs 29:25
24. “He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Mark 4:39-40
25. “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them.” Psalm 34:7
26. “But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don’t worry or be afraid of their threats.” 1 Peter 3:14
27. “I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears.” Psalm 34:4
28. “Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you.” Deuteronomy 3:22
29. “Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.’” Revelation 1:17
30. “Jesus told him, ‘Don’t be afraid; just believe.’” Mark 5:36
31. “And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love.” Romans 8:38-39
32. “The Lord your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” Zephaniah 3:17
33. “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”...He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you...For he will command his angels concerning you, to guard you in all your ways...“Because he loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him...” from Psalm 91:1-16

Source: https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/debbie-mcdaniel/33-verses-to-remind-us--we-do-not-have-to-fear.html

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Alyssa Alhadeff, 14

Alyssa, 14, was a student at Stoneman Douglas and a soccer player for Parkland Travel Soccer.

Lori Alhadeff, Alyssa's mother, told HLN she dropped her daughter off at school Wednesday and said, "I love you." When the mother heard about the shooting, she hustled to school, but was too late.

"I knew at that point she was gone. I felt it in my heart," she said. "Alyssa was a beautiful, smart, talented, successful, awesome, amazing soccer player. You'll be greatly missed, Alyssa. We love you so much. You'll always, always be in our hearts."

"Alyssa Alhadeff was a loved and well respected member of our club and community," Parkland Travel Soccer said on Facebook. "Alyssa will be greatly missed."

Alyssa also attended Camp Coleman, a Jewish sleepaway summer camp. "On behalf of the entire Coleman community, we offer heartfelt condolences and prayers for comfort to Alyssa's family and friends. May Alyssa's memory forever be for a blessing," the camp said on Facebook.

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

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Scott Beigel, 35

Beigel, a geography teacher, was killed as he tried to usher students back into his classroom when the shooting broke out.

Kelsey Friend, one of Beigel's students, told CNN in an emotional interview that he was shot outside the classroom door and that he saved her life. "Mr. Beigel was my hero and he still will forever be my hero. I will never forget the actions that he took for me and for fellow students in the classroom," she said. "I am alive today because of him."

Kelsey said the teacher was an amazing person and his memory would live on with her. "If I could see him right now ... I'd give him a huge teddy bear to say thank you. But unfortunately I can't do that," she said.

Beigel, 35, was also a counselor at Camp Starlight in Pennsylvania, which called him a "friend and hero" on Facebook.

Source: CNN’s Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

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Miguel Duque mourned the loss of his younger brother, Martin, and set up a Go Fund Me page to help pay for funeral expenses.

"He was a very funny kid, outgoing, and sometimes really quiet. He was sweet and caring and loved by all his family. Most of all he was my baby brother," Miguel said on the page.

"My family and I have no words to describe the event that's has happened on this date, all my prayers to the lost ones. My family and I will appreciate anything that we can get helped with. R.I.P Martin Duque."

Source: CNN’s Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
Nicholas, a 17-year-old senior, was killed in the shooting, the University of Indianapolis confirmed. He was recruited for the university swim team and would have been an incoming freshman this fall.

"Nick’s death is a reminder that we are connected to the larger world, and when tragedy hits in places around the world, it oftentimes affects us at home," said Robert L. Manuel, University of Indianapolis president.

"Today, and in the coming days, I hope you will hold Nick, his family, all of the victims, as well as the Parkland community and first responders in your prayers."

Source: CNN’s Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
Aaron Feis, 37

Feis, an assistant football coach, was killed when he threw himself in front of students to protect them from oncoming bullets, according to football program spokeswoman Denis Lehtio. Feis, 37, suffered a gunshot wound and died after he was rushed into surgery, Lehtio said.

"He died the same way he lived -- he put himself second," she said. "He was a very kind soul, a very nice man. He died a hero."

Colton Haab, a 17-year-old junior who had a close relationship with Feis, told CNN he saw the coach running toward the sounds of gunshots. 
"That's Coach Feis. He wants to make sure everybody is safe before himself," he said. 
"(He) made sure everyone else's needs were met before his own. He was a hard worker. He worked after school, on the weekends, mowing lawns, just helping as many people as possible."

Chad Lyons, a student and football player, said Feis was there for him when he was going through leukemia treatments. 
"He guided me through them. He would send me prayers. He would send me Bible scripts and just stuff to cheer up my day. Funny memes," the player said. 
"He was just an amazing person to be led on and taught by, and I'm thankful enough to even be in his presence, just going through high school."

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

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Jaime Guttenberg, 14

Jaime, 14, was among the victims, according to a Facebook post by her father, Fred. "My heart is broken. Yesterday, Jennifer Bloom Guttenberg and I lost our baby girl to a violent shooting at her school. We lost our daughter and my son Jesse Guttenberg lost his sister.

"I am broken as I write this trying to figure out how my family gets through this. We appreciate all of the calls and messages and we apologize for not reacting to everyone individually," he added. "Hugs to all and hold your children tight."

Skidmore College, where Fred Guttenberg attended, released a statement saying their hearts go out to Jaime's parents and others affected by the tragedy.

"There really are no words to lessen the suffering that the families of victims are feeling at this moment, but perhaps knowing that we stand with them can provide some small measure of solace," the college said.

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
His widow, Debra, was telling CNN that he was "probably the best man that I ... " when she couldn't go on.

She had just described Chris Hixon -- who was the school's athletic director -- as an awesome husband, father and American. "Every one of those students he thought of as his own kid," she said earlier.

Hixon, 49 would give students rides or lunch money and, if they needed it, open up his home to them. "He just loved being around kids and giving back to the community," Debra Hixon said.

A Naval reservist, Chris Hixon deployed to Iraq in 2007.

"He loved being an American and serving his country and he instilled that in our kids," she said.

Hixon was also the school's wrestling coach, something that was his passion.

Source: CNN's Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

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The killing shocked Luke's close-knit family.

Grandparents Eddie and Janice Stroud in Simpsonville, South Carolina, learned about the news of the shooting from TV reports, they told CNN affiliate WYFF in Greenville.

"The day went by and we didn't hear anything about Luke. We kept hoping they would find him wandering around in shock," Janice Stroud told the station.

"By 7 o'clock, I said, 'I don't like this. This is not good,' " her husband said, according to WYFF. "Finally, (police) called us at 1 a.m. and said Luke was among the students that had been killed."

Janice Stroud said, "He was a good kid. He ... never got in trouble. He was the last of my daughter's children who still lived at home."

Cousin Grant Cox called Luke "an amazing individual. Always happy, always smiling. His smile was contagious, and so was his laugh.

Another relative, Mary Beth Stroud-Gibbs, posted on Facebook that the family is "very close" and it is "devastated by this senseless shooting."
"Our Luke was a precious child."

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-shooting-victims-school/index.html
Cara Loughran, 14

Cara danced at the Drake School of Irish Dance in South Florida.

"Cara was a beautiful soul and always had a smile on her face," the dance studio said in a statement. "We are heartbroken as we send our love and support to her family during this horrible time."

Danny Vogel, a neighbor, posted condolences on Facebook. "It is with a heavy heart and much regret that I write these words. Our next-door neighbor's daughter was one of the lives taken (too) soon by a senseless act of violence at Stoneman Douglas High School. "RIP Cara, and fly with the angels. You will be greatly missed, and we will always love you and celebrate your beautiful life."

Source: CNN’s Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
Gina Montalto, 14

Gina was a member of the winter guard on the school's marching band.

The Winter Guard International mourned her death Thursday, saying, "Unfortunately, one of the victims in yesterday's St. Valentine's Day Massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School was a member of the school's winter guard.

"No student should ever go to school afraid," the group said.

One of her middle school color guard instructors told The Miami Herald that Gina "was the sweetest soul ever."

"My heart is broken into pieces. I will forever remember you, my sweet angel," Manuel Miranda told the paper.

Shawn Sherlock, Gina's aunt, posted a tribute on Facebook, describing her niece as a gifted artist.

"I know somewhere in the heavens she's designing the latest and greatest trends and has her art book she always carried with her as well," she wrote.

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta
Joaquin was born in Venezuela, moved to the United States when he was 3 and became a naturalized citizen in January 2017, the Sun-Sentinel reported.

"Among friends at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, he was known as 'Guac,' a moniker that appeared on his Instagram account. His interests: football, basketball, the Venezuelan national soccer team, urban graffiti and hip-hop," the paper said.

An Instagram post dated December 31 was his final social media post -- a message to his girlfriend, the paper said. "Thank you lord for putting a greater blessing than I could ever imagine into my life this past year," he said. "I love you with all my heart."

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/15/us/florida-shooting-victims-school/index.html

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta
Alaina's family said she was vibrant and determined. She had volunteered after Hurricane Irma hit Florida in September.

"Alaina loved to serve," the statement from her family said. She was also a part of the "Helping Hands" program of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"While we will not have the opportunity to watch her grow up and become the amazing woman we know she would become, we are keeping an eternal perspective," her family said.

Alaina, 14, was also a member of the junior ROTC at her school, a leadership program taught by retired Army personnel.

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
Meadow Pollack, 18

Meadow, 18, had been accepted at Lynn University in Boca Raton, spokeswoman Jamie D'Aria said.

"Meadow was a lovely young woman, who was full of energy. We were very much looking forward to having her join our community in the fall," D'Aria said.

Condolences were posted on an online guestbook kept by Star of David Memorial Gardens Cemetery and Funeral Chapel.

"Please accept my deepest condolences on the loss of your beautiful daughter, Meadow. May she rest in peace. Your family is in my continued prayers," said Alisa Thomas of Youngstown, Ohio.

Friend Gill Lovito said on Facebook: "Please say a prayer for the family of an amazing girl I got to call my best friend growing up Meadow Pollack ... her life was taken way too soon and I have no words to describe how this feels. Rest In Peace my beautiful angel.

"You are and forever will be loved."

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta
"My family lost an absolutely beautiful member today, due to a senseless school shooting," Curtis Page Jr. said in a Facebook post about Helena, who would have started college next year.

"Helena was a smart, kind hearted, and thoughtful person. She was deeply loved and loved others even more so. Though she was somewhat reserved, she had a relentless motivation towards her academic studies, and her soft warm demeanor brought the best out in all who knew her. She was so brilliant and witty, and I'm still wrestling with the idea that she is actually gone."

Page said he hopes others can be inspired by Helena’s "life well lived, no matter how short."

Fena Cooper, identifying herself as a cousin, said in a Facebook posting, "Valentine's Day will never look the same for my family.

"Helena, we miss you dearly and are so incredibly sorry that your life was cut short. You didn't deserve this. We love you so much and will miss you greatly."

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta
Alex Schachter, 14

Alex participated in the school marching band and orchestra, playing baritone in the former and trombone in the latter, the Sun-Sentinel reported.

"I felt he really had a bright future on the trombone," Alexander Kaminsky, director of bands at the Parkland high school, told the paper.

A Go Fund Me page was set up by Alex’s family as a scholarship fund.

"In an effort to continue his memory, this scholarship is being created to help other students experience the joys of music as well as fund increased security at schools. Please help keep Alex’s spirit alive," the page said. "The money raised will be sent to the Stoneman Douglas Marching Eagles."

Update: The University of Connecticut, where Alex dreamed of going, and where his mother and uncle were graduates, granted him posthumous admission into their fine arts program for trombone.  

Source: CNN’s Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling  

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey  
for the Diocese of Atlanta
Carmen Schentrup, 16

Carmen was a National Merit Scholar semifinalist.

"Marjory Stoneman Douglas had 10 students qualify as semifinalists for 2018, which is the second year in a row 10 students have qualified," the Eagle Eye student blog said.

Carmen was mourned in the community and on social media.

"Rest In Peace Carmen Schentrup," one tweet said. "You family is forever in my thoughts and prayers. I'm so sorry."

Source: CNN’s Article *These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting* by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling
Peter Wang, 15

Peter had been a member of the junior ROTC program, and his parents owned a restaurant in West Palm Beach, the Sun-Sentinel reported.

Kelsey Friend, who shared a culinary class with Peter, said she "started screaming and crying" when she found out about her friend's death by looking at images on Google of those who had died. "I am wearing my culinary shirt right now, to remember him," she told Alisyn Camerota on CNN's "New Day" on Friday.

Kelsey said Peter had been excited about the Chinese New Year, which fell on Friday. "Me and my family celebrated it for him, eating Chinese," she said.

Kelsey said the two of them were close. "It's hard to not have him in the hallways anymore because me and him used to laugh with each other. He used to make me smile. And now he's gone."

Kelsey and other friends said Peter was shot while holding a door open to let fellow classmates get to safety. Thousands of people have signed a White House petition asking for him to be buried with military honors.

"His selfless and heroic actions have led to the survival of dozens in the area," the petition says.

Update: Peter Wang earned admission to West Point, the prestigious military academy, for his "heroic actions on Feb. 14, 2018," at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., West Point said in a statement. Witnesses and authorities said Wang, who dreamt of attending West Point, died in his JROTC uniform while holding a school door open so classmates and faculty could escape...He was buried in his JROTC uniform.

Source: CNN's Article These are the Victims of the Florida School Shooting by Eric Levenson and Joe Sterling

"Faith or Fear" by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta
Light a Candle

Reflect on the ways that these young people were lights to the world.

Light a candle, saying a prayer of thanksgiving for the light each person brought.

You can also light candles for victims’ parents, for those affected, for those left behind...that they would have light in their lives in this time of darkness.

You don’t have to light one for every victim; you can light one for all victims or ones that particularly touched you.

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta
Rock Cairns

Used by many cultures throughout time and throughout the world, piling up rocks was a way to remember or memorialize something, some event, or someone.

In the Old Testament, the people piled up rocks to remember the things they were thankful that God had done for them.

We will be using the rocks to remember the things we are thankful for about these young people’s lives, to say that we are thankful that God created them, that we are grateful for their lives.

Take rock, and write on it something about each person that you relate to or are thankful for (for example, if they go to summer camp, and so did that victim, they might write “summer camp” on a rock, and place it on the table).

The rocks will stand as a witness to the ways that young person has affected the world.

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta
Flowering the Cross.

FLOWERS are symbols of life. Even though they don’t last long, they bring beauty to the world.

The life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. But from everlasting to everlasting the LORD’s love is with those who fear him (Psalm 103:15-17)

The CROSS, a symbol of death, is also a symbol of resurrection. God brings beauty from ashes, our Christian hope. Their story and ours is not over. Death will not have the final say.

Place flowers on the cross in honor of the victims’ lives, and as a reminder that death does not have the final say. God is already working on Resurrection, God is already doing something new, and bringing beauty from these ashes!

“Faith or Fear” by Sally Ulrey for the Diocese of Atlanta