

Concerning the slaying of children at Newton, CT 2012

A thought – This morning in church, we came to the section for the Prayers of the People. In my small church, they are precisely that – the people, whoever wants or needs to, pray aloud about what is lying in their hearts. Usually, there are a lot of prayers, some only a name, others a paragraph. Today we arrived at that moment in silence. Then our young music director said something like, “I’ve been trying since Friday to find words to pray, and I can’t, so I’m going to play it instead.” She played, slowly and beautifully, and we cried. We didn’t need any more prayers.

It has made me think back to November 1963, when I was young and teaching on a U.S. army base in Augsburg, Germany. When John F. Kennedy was shot, there was no way for the endless TV rehashes to reach us. So the U.S. Military radio station played beautiful and somber music for days, interrupted by brief news announcements. And the people of Augsburg put candles in their windows and held silent vigils in the main square. And we all simply mourned.

I’m not suggesting that we don’t need to do something, because we, as a nation, really do need to begin the process of working on the very complex problems of violence in our nation. But maybe we should just step back for a few days and allow ourselves to mourn. Then, if we can listen to one another, we might be able to make some progress.

h. olson (2012)