Grace and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We had a stark reminder that the world can be a dangerous place. We hear about the wars at various places in the world paying more attention perhaps to those wars in which we are we are involved in and because this is ongoing in places more recently which, for me, would include Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan just to name a few to the point we get used to that violence. that perhaps we get used to it. You cannot be any more divisive than you are in a war. Then there is ongoing violence closer to home. We are used to reading and hearing instances of violence in our own town, villages, townships, schools, work place on a daily basis to the point where again we can get complacent. Then suddenly one act of a sniper to try to assassinate a presidential candidate shocks us and the world and takes up several new cycles and unnumberable media, electronic and print which we will hear over and over again for a long time. We are suddenly reminded of the assassination of a President John Kennedy in 1963; Presidential Candidate Robert Kennedy, in 1968; Presidential Candidate Alabama Governor George C. Wallace: in 1972: President Gerald Ford twice in 1975; and finally, Ronald Reagan 1981. So now here we are 42 years later where there was an attempt on Donald Trump. At the same time, we hear of school violence. But none come close to the greatest school massacre of all time which time seems to have forgotten and regularly left out of [accounts](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001454.html) of terrorism in America. 97 years ago in 1927, the small town of Bath, Michigan, less than 6 miles by car Northeast of where we are now, a farmer named Andrew Kehoe set explosives concealed in the basement of the local school. Thirty-eight children and six adults were dead, among them Kehoe, who had literally blown himself to bits by setting off a dynamite charge in his car. The next day, on Kehoe's farm, what was left to his wife---burned beyond recognition after Kehoe set his property and buildings ablaze---was found tied to a handcart, her skull crushed. With seemingly endless stories of school violence and suicide bombers filling today's headlines, this massacre serves as a reminder that terrorism and large-scale murder are nothing new. As Sony and Cher sang “and the beat goes on” to which we add and on and on. I have often felt we have a failing Mental Health system that could help reduce the violence but yet Thomas Crooks, the sniper that shot Donald Trump, parents are certified behavioral health counselors. What can we make of that?

We understand that the world can be a dangerous place, and we all long for leaders, who will watch over us and protect us from all harm. That is why many people feel the most important thing role of our government is to have a strong military to protect us. However, there are many other ways we can be protected. The prophet Jeremiah issues strong cautions to those who abuse the trust placed in them to care for God’s people that today exemplifies the historic use that the church has made of the Old Testament: to understand the New Testament and describes God as the worthy shepherd, and today’s gospel assumes the hearer knows this metaphor when it hints that Jesus is that shepherd. The well-known and popular 23rd Psalm expands on this and praises of the Lord who guards and guides us through life’s trials.

But yet we hear the words of Janet Schlichting OP who says “Piecemeal peace. That’s about the best it seems we humans can do. Here and there by some miracle of good-heartedness, we see reconciliation, healing, harmony. But so often we use the word “peace” to mean lack of visible conflict, where hatred or mistrust simmers beneath the surface. But God’s peace is of a different sort. It is that peace which Paul says surpasses all understanding. It is a strange peace, a disruptive peace, a peace that often demands suffering, conflict, the pouring-out of self, all in the likeness of Jesus, who won our peace by his blood, who gave himself on a cross, uniting us “who were far off,” who was killed for our hostility, who was broken for our wholeness.

—*Janet Schlichting, op*

[Janet Schlichting, op, in *Homilies for the Christian People*, 313-314.]

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul suggests that lasting safety comes through the healing and reconciling work of Christ, which allows us to share a meal with those we are inclined to regard as enemies, because Christ has “broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” So, in Christ, aliens become citizens and strangers become members of the household of God.

Living into this reality requires all of us to be diligent in our practices with and policies toward all kinds of “strangers and aliens” in our world and in our lives. It means making peace with those whose politics make them strange to us, and creating genuine welcome for the newcomer in our classrooms, workplaces and congregations. It means considering the needs of immigrants and refugees through the lens of Christian faith as well as national identity, and not assuming the two are the same.

The reassuring news this day is that God, unlike so many who hold power in this world, is already reconciling the world to God’s own self and us to one another. We enact this new reality each time we pass the peace or come to the Lord’s supper, not because we have finally achieved the peace we seek, but because in Christ God’s future reign of peace has already broken into our present.

Today, with the author of Ephesians, we can say that there is no more dividing wall between different flocks. Christ the shepherd is our peace, the single cornerstone on which the church builds. Yet we see divisiveness that raise to violence in our country. It is baffling to me personally because from my perspective it was not like this. Politically people didn’t always agree but they did not confront people at a restaurant, picket politicians and judiciary they do not agree with at their homes, violent protests, property destruction and violence. How do we become united again? Once person at a time. We treat others with dignity and respect regardless of their political views, religion, sex, nationality, color, etc. We were all made in the image of God and we are to love and others and serve others. Who we are is good enough for God and who others are should be good enough for us. We work to be united in our faith community as we love one another regardless of who or what they are, as we love them like we like to be loved and treated. After worship go and treat others this way in this divisive time.