

Pastor column: A pastoral response to Orlando

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The Orlando shootings are not about me. I'm white, heterosexual (attracted to people of the opposite gender) and cisgendered (my internal gender identity matches the physical traits I was born with).

Let's start with that. I was taught as someone with privilege that the news is always about me — for me to comment on, for me to know something about. Even when I know nothing about it, it is my privilege to believe that I will be heard and am allowed to know something about it.

I confess to not doing enough listening in my life.

Today, the Monday after the shootings, I am looking for the stories written by people in the communities most affected. I am looking for things written or posted by Latino people, things written by people who love those of the same gender or of varying genders, things written by Muslims who will now live in fear because we've tied hatred to Islam, even though Islam is about love, and hate is a perversion of it.

The same way hate is a perversion of Christianity. God is about love.

This is not about me — it is about the people who have lost their lives and those most affected. It is about several communities of people who now will carry more fear every day because they might be shot, bullied, harassed or assaulted. If you are reading this, please put the paper down and take a moment of silence to pray or think about the people who lost their lives and their families.

Whatever your political or religious beliefs on the rightness or wrongness of so many things polarizing this county, I hope that most of us can get behind feeling for those people whose painful stories will not be said, much less heard.

And the reality is that I helped with this violence. Every time I see someone harassing a Muslim person, I condone bullying people of other faiths. Every time I say things about God and the Bible that cause others so much pain they no longer want to live, I condone a hatred that infects all of society. Every time I don't stand up for a woman who is being abused by her husband, I condone domestic violence.

Every time I use my privilege — or neglect to use it — I am part of the problem.

This is not about me, but I can help. I can start listening. I can start learning about how the world looks to others. I can start finding out how the things I say, or don't say, affect the lives of other people. Because we're in this together. And God has our back to create more love in the world.

I have hope, and that is not about me. It is about God.

Cross of Glory is an Reconciling in Christ congregation. Go to www.reconcilingworks.org to learn more.