



Statement on Shooting of Police Officers & Protesters

Dallas-area residents urged to overcome fear & build relationships for change

We are heartbroken over Thursday night's events in downtown Dallas. Like many residents, we spent most of the evening and the following morning watching the horror unfold on the news. The killing of five police officers and the wounding of seven officers and two civilians has no place in our society.

We, as Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish leaders, from 30 institutions in Dallas, from all walks of life and backgrounds, together condemn the attack. Deaths and injuries of police officers and protesters have no place in our society or in our community. A protest in which citizens demonstrated that they're concerned about violent acts earlier in the week in Louisiana and Minnesota had just concluded – in a peaceful manner, just as it was intended. It's horrific that a thoughtfully produced march could be so undermined by selfish acts of violence.

Many of our churches this weekend will retell the story of the Good Samaritan. In it, the listening multitude was challenged to seek out the humanity in those who hate us and to reach out to those who are different as though they were a neighbor. In the book of Deuteronomy, we are reminded that a community does not have to “search in the skies,” nor “across the sea” for the means to live in harmony. We are reminded that the means is “something very near to you, already in your mouths and in your hearts; you only have to carry it out.”

This week's events challenge us all to overcome our collective fear of those who look, act or think differently from us and to build relationships that cross traditional lines of race, class, religion and political perspective.

While racism and violence are not new to the American story, what is new is the ability to see and experience this violence through new technologies. In the face of challenging circumstances, the temptation exists to withdraw into isolation – in fear for some and into familiar comforts for others. The question will be whether we can respond to the challenges by instead looking past our differences to build real, personal relationships and to refuse to hate – or fear – others.

Our prayer vigil on Sunday evening will present an opportunity to come together and mourn and to help us prepare for a new week in Dallas. The effort required to encourage improved relationships between members of our community, however, will be just beginning.

Dallas Area Interfaith will continue its long-term work of forging relationships across traditional divides to build a diverse body that, rooted in trust, can act together. We fought in 2005 for the addition of 700 police officers to bring into reality a form of community policing that relies on fruitful relationships between civilians and officers.

We urge the people of the Dallas area to reach out to each other with that same intent and seek fruitful relationships not just in the coming days or weeks, but for the long term. Those kinds of efforts can forge new relationships with people who are different, and to strategize together on building long-term solutions.

DAI is a multi-ethnic, multi-issue group of institutions, primarily congregations, in the Dallas metropolitan area. DAI is resolutely non-partisan and never accepts government funds or supports any candidate. The purpose of DAI is to give ordinary citizens a structure through which they can negotiate effectively with the government and private institutions that affect their lives. DAI is the vehicle through which member congregations and organizations act in the interests of their families and local communities, helping them become an effective force **for promoting faith values and democratic traditions.**