

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. But when we are faced with news like we received this week, we see a darkness that is far-reaching - not only touching us here, but consuming families, other faith communities, and other victims of past trauma. Sometimes it is hard to know what to say and how to pray. In this time of prayer, we'll be offering ample time for silence and silent prayer, trusting that God hears our prayers - spoken and unspoken, and that God receives the cries of our hearts however they are uttered. Please pray with me.

Triune God - Father, Son, and Spirit.

We pray for the family of Gretchen Harrington. For those still living who have spent years grieving her death, marking milestones, and wondering what her life could have been. A deep wound that never closed has been torn open again. We lift up the Harrington family - Lord, hear our prayers.

[silence]

Lord, we pray for David Zandstra. Made in your image, deeply loved by you, fallen and sinful. How your heart breaks over him, O God. We are angry. We are horrified. And it's hard to know how to pray. Lord, hear our prayers.

[silence]

We pray for David Zandstra's family and the shock and pain they must be feeling. Would you be close to them in these coming days and weeks as they experience and live in this new reality before them? We lift up this family to you. Lord, hear our prayers.

[silence]

We pray for victims of abuse connected with this case. After many long years of silence, tend to their memories and their pain. We pray for other victims of past abuse who live in the shadows of trauma. Stories like this are painful to hear. Tend to their wounds. Lord, hear our prayers.

[silence]

We pray for the faith communities of Trinity CRC and Fairfield CRC that have been most directly impacted. We pray for our sisters and brothers in those churches who struggle to make sense of what has happened and are left with many questions and fears. In this moment, and in the coming days and weeks, we pray for peace that passes understanding. Lord, hear our prayer.

[silence]

Finally, Lord, we pray for your Church, including our own congregation. Some of us feel closer to this situation than others, but we equally share the grief of harm and loss of life at the hands of one within our denomination. We pray that in the coming days, grief and anger can be channeled into meaningful action- taking steps to be church communities that prevent harm to your beloved children of all ages. Lord, hear our prayer.

[silence]

We offer these prayers up to you confident that you are close to the broken-hearted and save those who are crushed in spirit. Lord, hear our prayer. Amen.