

PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd



Dear Compassionate Friends:

This week has been a sorrow-filled reminder of how dark, cruel and painful our world can be. The school shootings in Connecticut and the loss of several young people here in Billings have brought back the stark memories of the grief and heartache of our own losses. We feel the devastation and shock of those families with an understanding and awareness that no one else can feel unless you have been in that dark place.

No one should have to bury their child. No one should send their little child to school with the knowledge they may never hug or kiss that child in this life again. Every day is a bright, shiny adventure to a 6 year old. They are too young to understand cynicism, quick to give hugs and affection and eager to please. They still believe in magic and Santa Claus and the tooth fairy. The loss of so many of these little ones, and the brave adults who lost their own lives in trying to protect those little ones is overwhelming.

We grieve with the family of the shooter. That family is grieving the loss of a mother, wife, brother and son. In addition, they will suffer as the actions of their son and brother are vilified and used as a political platform. What could have driven him to this madness? What kind of unendurable pain must he have been in to make the choices he did to harm so many innocents?

We grieve with the families of Shaun and Andrew. Our community lost two bright, loving young men this week with all their dreams and lives ahead of them. Shaun lost his life in a car accident west of Billings and Andrew lost his life as the result of a brutal, racially motivated assault. I knew both of these young men well. My youngest son played sports with and against Shaun from Little Guy Football and traveling basketball on up through high school. Shaun's mom and I sat together through many games, and my heart aches for the loss of her son.

I met Andrew through work and knew how hard he had worked to overcome several bad choices he had made. He was looking forward to going back to school and staying sober. His enthusiasm and pride that he had come so far was infectious and you couldn't help but cheer him on.

We grieve knowing the long, painful journey of grief these families must travel. We know that the path to healing takes many steps, and sometimes you take one step forward and two steps back. We know you can feel very alone on this journey. We know you will feel deep sorrow and anger; guilt that somehow you could have prevented this; guilt that you could not protect your child; even guilt when you have a good day. We grieve for the senseless loss of these young lives. We grieve for the loss of these children not only to their families, but also to our community and world. The sun shines less brightly and the wind feels colder with their loss.

We pray for healing and comfort for these families left behind. We pray for strength to get through the pain. We pray that we remember the love to overcome the pain. We pray for the peace that passes all understanding, for surely we will never understand why this happened.

In friendship,

Nadine