

The Doors of the Church Are Still Open

A Litany by Bishop Adam J. Richardson

- Leader: "The doors of the Church are open" is an announcement made at nearly every service. It was regularly spoken at Emanuel Church of Charleston, known to us as the "Mother" of African Methodism in the Deep South. As members of the AME Family, we feel a connection with the Connection, even on Father's Day, and today our proud connection is more keenly felt.
- People: **O God, "The doors of the Church are still open."**
- Leader: Hate and Evil - armed and dangerous - came to an intergenerational Bible Study and Prayer Meeting Wednesday night at Mother Emanuel, accompanied by unfathomable horror, leaving a trail of blood and hurt across the African Methodist Connection, Charleston and the world.
- People: **O God, "the doors of the church are still open," and still we believe that "We sorrow not as those who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13)**
- Leader: The "Emanuel Nine" had names – and families, and lives, and careers, and places to go and things to do. They were colleagues, friends and kin: the Honorable Rev. Clementa Pinckney (41), the Rev. Daniel "Super" Simmons (74), the Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton (45), Brother Tywanza Sanders (26), Sister DePayne Middleton Doctor (49), Sister Cynthia Hurd (54), Sister Myra Thompson (59), Sister Ethel Lance (70), and Sister Susie Jackson (87). Then pure evil showed up at Bible Study and turned their lives to past tense, and our lives to turmoil, and made an infamous name for himself.
- People: **O God, "The doors of the church are still open," and we affirm Your Word that "Perfect love casts out fear." (1 John 4:18)**
- Leader: Our faith will not be stolen, even by violence as heinous as the assassination of nine innocent people, and the terror that left bodies wounded and souls injured among those who survived the attack.
- People: **O God, "The doors of the church are still open," and "our faith looks up to Thee" and "will not shrink though pressed by every foe."**
- Leader: The evil one wanted a race war, instead there came an outpouring of love, sympathy and tears *from* white people; fervent prayers offered *for* him *by* Black people. With shock and anger still wafting in the air, family members amazingly spoke words of forgiveness, and the community sang together and spoke of hope. We have learned at least this much in our walk with God in Christ: "Unmerited suffering is still redemptive."
- People: **O God, "The doors of the church are still open," and we affirm Word of Christ, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27b)**
- Leader: While we are called to a heightened sense of vigilance to protect the lives of those who walk through "open doors" to find an open Altar, and to worship and study in peace, we will encourage ourselves in the Word of God, in fellowship, sharing our mutual woes and joys.
- People: **Holy God, amid so much sorrow and so many questions, we affirm Your Word, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. (2 Cor. 1:3-4)**
- O God, we declare and decree, "The doors of the church are still open!"**