



Photo by Donna Rogers

Those gathered at the prayer vigil sponsored by the Minister's Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Winston-Salem worshiped in praise during the song "How Great is Our God."

Photo by Erin Mizelle for the Winston-Salem Chronicle

At right, Pastor Clara Cremedy prays during the public prayer vigil held at Vessels of Honor Church Ministries, 3608 Ogburn Ave., on Tuesday, June 23. The special night of prayer focused on the Charleston tragedy and churches around the world.



Vigils

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plexion, no matter the culture, no matter the law, we are all of one race, and that is the human race," Bishop Cremedy said.

Bishop Cremedy continued the prayer and particularly prayed for Dylann Roof, the 21-year-old white man arrested in the slayings of the nine people at the church.

"Sometimes we have so much stuff going on in the world. We have so many voices that are speaking to us that sometimes it confuses our minds, and it's just who we choose to believe that's going to determine which way we go," Bishop Cremedy said.

Pastor Candy York continued the vigil with her thoughts of the Charleston incident, while leading the congregation in saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

"My heart breaks for them. I've cried for them," York said. "I'm so sorry that their lives were taken, but I do see that things are changing."

York went on to speak of how the media reacted after the victim's families forgave Roof and the news anchors speaking about God when that subject alone is sometimes unspoken in mainstream.

Another member of VHCM, Lynn Roseboro, stood before the congregation and spoke about what was happening from a spiritual standpoint.

"It is time for us to rise up and to be equipped, and to stop looking at things in the natural, and to see things in the spirit," said Roseboro. "Yes, it's a lot going on in the natural, but some of those things are meant to distract us."

The Confederate flag

She explained about how the story of the Confederate flag is getting major attention now, and how elected officials in South Carolina want it taken down, as an example.

"That flag has been flying for years, but now all of a sudden they're talking about it so much because they want to take your attention off of what's happening," said Roseboro.

Pastor Clara Cremedy concluded the vigil by reciting Ephesians 6:10-20 and saying another prayer, telling everyone to "be encouraged saints" through this difficult time.

On Sunday, June 21, the Minister's Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity sponsored a prayer vigil at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Winston-Salem.

Violence has become a way of life in America, and that needs to give way to non-violence as a way of life, came the word from the prayer vigil.

The scene of the slayings, Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, is a historic black church that has withstood

violent acts since it was formed in 1791.

Various ministers conducted a worship service as part of the prayer vigil on Sunday, and others said prayers for various aspects linked to the slayings. Prayers were said for the families of the victims, the church, the city of Charleston, racial reconciliation, the perpetrator and his family, social justice and the nation.

However, the talk on gun control by the Rev. Dr. John Mendez, pastor of Emmanuel Baptist, drew a standing ovation.

Mendez says while Christianity and all other religions consider life sacred, the United States is the most violent of all the industrialized countries. He said the annual death rate linked to gun violence in the United States is thousands of times more than other industrialized countries, such as Japan and England.

"If we really take a critical look at what we call our way of life, there's too much death," Mendez says. He said there is a perpetuation of guns and violence, promoted by the National Rifle Association (NRA) and others.

"Violence in America is almost like apple pie in America," Mendez said. The victims far too many times are minorities, poor people and people who dare to be non-conformists, he said.

The religious community needs to raise the level of non-violence "where non-violence becomes a way of life," not just a method of protest or civil disobedience.

The slayings at the church in Charleston is not the first time churches have come under attack, Mendez said. He mentioned the numerous black church burnings in the South in the 1990s. He said he learned that the churches were being burned by young white men, 19 to 22 years old.

"It's not an isolated event. It's reinforced, it's fed by this climate of hate," Mendez said.

Mendez said the young man who has been arrested in the Charleston church killings case said, "We want to take our country back."

"That's the same we hear from Congress, from state legislators, from governors, from folk all across America. But who are you talking about taking it back from?"

Mendez said the religious community must stand up and become advocates for non-violence and challenge the NRA and others who perpetuate violence.

"The one thing we cannot afford is to become comfortable and used to them [minorities, poor people and people who dare to be non-conformists] being killed. That can never be," Mendez said.

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