

Reprinted from the Christian Science Monitor, January 10, 2011.  
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## *Embracing Tucson after the shootings*

By Elise L. Moore, CSB

A text message startled me Saturday morning as I sat in Tucson, Ariz. US Representative Gabrielle Giffords had been shot moments before.

Instantly I began praying fervently, and enlisted others through Facebook. As many as 50 people from Representative Giffords' office immediately formed a prayer circle. As the media updated their information, reporting that others in addition to Giffords had been shot, it felt among those praying as if there was a palpable unity, regardless of location. Tragically, six innocent people have died, while Giffords and 13 others have survived the attack as of this writing.

The shock of death shouldn't shake the resolve of spiritually minded individuals to "watch and pray," as Jesus instructed, for those still struggling. I think of the three disciples Jesus asked to pray with him through the dark hours at Gethsemane. Perhaps they felt it was hopeless. Perhaps they felt overwhelmed. Whatever the reason, they ignored the need. We might learn from them and pray steadfastly for those still in need. The opportunity for prayer is not past.

I think about the power of God, Love. Which is more powerful – hate or divine Love? Jesus demonstrated that divine Love is more powerful than hate. Jesus countered intentional violence when he healed a servant of the high priest after Jesus' disciple, Peter, cut off the man's ear. Jesus proved that Life and Love were more powerful than death and hatred. I want to put

the entire weight of my thought and prayer unreservedly on the side of Love's power to preserve and protect.

Why should people of faith pray? Because prayer enables us to feel the presence of divine power. Through prayer we are engaged with the power of God, supreme good. Every spiritual thought has a healing effect. The divine power becomes tangible through a spiritual understanding of God.

There is a spiritual power that supersedes the operation of matter or human logic. Jesus taught his disciples how to engage this divine power on earth, when he gave them the prayer now known as the Lord's Prayer. It begins by acknowledging our direct relation to God: "Our Father which art in heaven." Then the prayer proceeds to affirm that God's kingdom governs on earth.

We could certainly use a little more of that divine government to prevent outbursts of fatal violence that shatter the lives of politicians, innocent children, harmless bystanders, and their families. Hatred needs to be disarmed and neutralized. We might begin by addressing the angry rhetoric in our own lives. And our prayers can help stop the trend to demonize opponents in politics, religion, or the community and can help lessen the influence of those who are caught up in this trend. Fear feeds hate. Compassion quiets and comforts.

The night of the shooting, the Rialto Theater in downtown Tucson canceled its scheduled entertainment and opened its doors to those wanting to give and receive comfort. Some musicians spontaneously played. Other people offered words of encouragement.

In the days to come, we can unite mentally, if not physically, with those in Tucson to quiet fear and neutralize the effects of hate with compassionate prayer. Divine Love does cast out fear. Divine Life is an ever-present power that preserves and protects. Those with a spiritual conviction of divine Truth will strengthen and support those still in need.