

KMarie Tejada: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

KMarie Tejada: Welcome to morning prayers. If you would please stand as you are able and join me in a responsive reading, which this morning, is Psalm 122 founding your Appleton Psalter book on page 61. "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord.'"

Congregation: "Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem."

KMarie Tejada: "Jerusalem built as a city which is bound firmly together."

Congregation: "To which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord."

KMarie Tejada: "There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David."

Congregation: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May they prosper, who love you."

KMarie Tejada: "Peace be within your walls and security within your towers."

Congregation: "For my brethren and companions' sake, I will say, 'Peace be within you'"

KMarie Tejada: "For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good."

Choir: (Singing)

Shane Snowdon: This is a reading from Numbers 35. "The Lord spoke to Moses saying, 'Speak to the Israelites and say to them, "When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you so that a slayer who kills a person without intent may flee there."'" These verses commanding the Israelites to create cities of refuge for unintentional killers are unfamiliar to most people. But they've brought great constellation to some of us. I know this because I'm an unintentional killer.

Shane Snowdon: One night, 22 years ago on a rural California highway, I hit and killed an 18-year-old. He was crossing the road, and I was coming around the curve. We didn't see each other until he flew over my hood, into my windshield, and over my roof. He died instantly at 18. I wasn't found at fault in the crash. I wasn't drunk or high. I wasn't speeding or using my phone. I don't remember being distracted. I don't know how it happened. So when people ask me, "What did you learn from your crash?" I always say that there's a lot we can't explain and a lot we can't control.

Shane Snowdon: People also ask me, "How did you go on living?" "With difficulty." I didn't smile or laugh for a very long time. Even now, I question whether I deserve happiness. And still, whenever I see a crash, which is often, I say a prayer for the many, many people affected, the dead, the injured, their loved ones, the first responders, the later healers, the witnesses, and the drivers. You probably know people who've been affected by a fatal crash. You may have been affected yourself because crashes happen often, much more often than most people realize, certainly more often than I ever realized before my crash. Every year, at least 36,000 Americans die in a car crash. Crashes are actually the leading cause of death for Americans between 5 and 44, and our car death rate is much higher than peer countries.

Shane Snowdon: So how I go on now, 22 years after my crash, is by talking about it by mentioning as often and as gently as I can how common death by car is and also how preventable it can be. Fatal crashes are a public health crisis, but we can do a lot about them collectively. We can demand safer roadways, and safer cars, safer driving laws, and much, much more. Crashes are also a spiritual crisis, but there's a lot we can do about them individually. We can stretch for safety technology when we buy a new car. We can just drive less.

Shane Snowdon: When we do get behind the wheel, we can remember that we've just acquired the power to bring death. We can decide to get out of the car if we feel sleepy, or tipsy, or high. We can set aside our phones, and we can set aside our impatience. We can see speed limits, and stop signs, and traffic bumps as angels, not as enemies. In other words, in a world where there's so much we can't control and where death is so close at hand, please don't increase your chances of becoming me.

Shane Snowdon: 22 years ago, my family, my friends, and wise counselors helped me go on living. They created a city of refuge for me. Now, thanks to them, I can leave the city and talk about becoming an unintentional killer just driving home one night. Cities of refuge are crucial and compassionate, but we don't want anyone else to join us there. So a prayer. As we make our way through the world today and every day, may we remember both our vulnerability and our power. May we not be harmed and may we not bring harm. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.

KMarie Tejeda: Let us pray the Lord's prayer together on the reverse of your order of worship.

Congregation: (Singing)

All: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us for our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen."

KMarie Tejada: Please stand as you are able and join together in singing the hymn, God Moves in a Mysterious Way, found under your crimson hymnal. This is hymn 201. (singing) And now let us go. May the Lord's face shine upon you and give you peace and joy throughout the day. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.