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rose down on my fallen classmates' memorial stone, my heart was extra heavy knowing that another community was about to experience what took me 10 years to recover from.

My heart was very heavy that night as the death toll kept rising. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. All I could do was pray. Pray and write. In my anguish I penned a letter to the Parkland shooting survivors and other mass shooting survivors. I wanted them to know that the world can be a dark place, but there is always hope. There is always healing. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, I decided to send my penned letter to the Daily Herald (a large local newspaper in the suburbs of Chicago).

They contacted me about eight hours later notifying me that they would like to publish the article in the paper and online. I was flattered and agreed. They also sent a photographer to my house to get a picture for the story. The photographer asked me what I wanted to have in the picture, and the only thing I could think of was my "Love One Another" sign I made.

The next morning I went to pick up the paper and my mouth dropped when I looked at the front page. The Daily Herald put my letter and picture on the front page, above the fold! I was blown away! The representative from the Daily Herald contacted me again and told me if there is anything I need or any community event I needed help with, to give her a call. I sat and prayed and asked God, "Do YOU want me to host a community event?" The answer was a very clear, "Yes." I asked God what kind of event I could possibly hold, and the answer was even more clear – a candlelight vigil.

In a day and a half I planned and organized a candlelight vigil for the Parkland students. I had so many people volunteer to help. The Daily Herald published another article highlighting the vigil. One of the news stations even broadcasted an announcement for it! Once again, I was blown away.

I wasn't sure how many people would attend the vigil. I thought maybe 30 people, but I purchased 300 candles just in case. Setting up for the vigil was tough. The weather was freezing and windy. However, the Dubowskis, Curt Ammons (our evangelist), and I prayed for the vigil. We prayed to reach people. For people to feel the love.

After we prayed we noticed one news station van pulled up. Then a second. Then a third. Then a fourth. Then a fifth. The first speaker was Curt, who prayed an incredible heartfelt prayer. The next speaker was Joe Dubowski, who gave a moving speech about moving forward with one another. Next, Laurel Dubowski and I read the 17 victims' names. Then I spoke. It was so hard, but God was speaking through me! My message was one of hope, resiliency, and kindness. I challenged everyone there to promise that they would do acts of kindness to help make the world a better place. As Morgan Freeman says in Evan Almighty, "You change the world with one small act of kindness at a time."

Five local news channels reported on our vigil. Numerous articles were published with our church name and location, and there are even a few people studying the Bible already! I say all this to say that God is faithful. I am beyond grateful that he is using my suffering to illuminate his purpose. So brothers and sisters, I encourage you to, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer" – Romans 12:12.

You never know how God can use your pain and suffering. All glory goes to God.

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• **Black History Month: "I Have Come to Testify to the Truth"**

*Dr. Richard Rodriguez, Miami, FL, USA
— Wednesday, 28 February 2018*

This Black History Month sermon, "I Have Come to Testify to the Truth," is a lesson on why the word of God does not sanction what scholars now call "American slavery." American slavery, a legal and...

• **Catalyst Conference in San Diego April 20-22**

Deb Eskew, Orange County, CA, USA — Sunday, 25 February 2018

The singles ministry in the LA Church of Christ catalyst conference will host the sixth annual Catalyst Conference April 20 - 22, 2018 in beautiful San Diego, CA. Singles from all over LA, San Diego, and the...

• **An Inspiring Weekend of Worship in the Great Outdoors**

Marc Persing, New York, NY, USA — Sunday, 25 February
Harvest is a weekend worship retreat located at Camp Hope for Kids, just a short drive from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It will take place May 18-19, 2018. We focus on simply worshiping our awesome God...

• **2018 Thunder Over Louisville Singles Weekend**

Sarah Rohleder, Louisville, KY, USA — Sunday, 25 February 2018
Your singles ministry is invited to Shake the Earth, a fellowship weekend in Louisville, Kentucky April 20th through April 22nd. The weekend will feature the annual Thunder Over Louisville fireworks show...

INTERNATIONAL & LOCAL NEWS BULLETIN

To Inspire, Inform, Unify and Grow the International Churches of Christ

DT DISCIPLES TODAY

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NIU Shooting Survivor Spreads Hope to Parkland Community

Lauren Carr, Chicago, IL, USA

My name is Lauren Carr and I'm a disciple in the Chicago Church of Christ, West Suburb Ministry. I want to share how God has used tragedy to bring about hope and healing.

On February 13, 2008 I prayed for one of the first times in my life. I prayed that God would wake me up because I felt dead inside. I felt that there had to be more to life than just worldly measures.

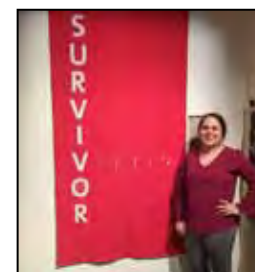
The next day on Thursday, February 14, 2008, my life was altered forever. As I was sitting in a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University, a gunman burst in and started firing bullets everywhere. I quickly threw my laptop so I could get up from my seat and dove into the aisle. Once I was in the aisle I was trampled by classmates trying to escape. I was about 15 feet away from the gunman, so I thought that I had no chance of surviving. Right when I was ready to lay down and surrender, paralyzed in fear, I looked up and saw light shining in from a door 30 feet in front of me.

I decided at that moment that I had to at least die trying. I got up and started running for the door. Out of the corners of my eyes I saw my classmates being shot, falling down, and bleeding. By the grace of God I made it to the glass door, pushed it with all my might and started running.

I made it out the classroom that day. However, five others weren't so lucky. One of the victims was Gayle Dubowski, a disciple and member of the Chicago Church. I knew Gayle growing up. Her dad, Joe, was my soccer coach. But unfortunately we lost contact after middle school. Just when I thought all hope was lost, God wasn't finished yet.

He worked through the Dubowskis, who reached out and loved up on me for five years. On April 27, 2013 I made Jesus Lord of my life (in the Dubowski's backyard). Ten years later, God is still producing hope and healing.

This year on February 14, 2018, I was with the Dubowskis and other shooting survivors from my classroom preparing to lay down memorial wreaths and roses at a 10-year memorial service. At that exact time, word of the shooting in Parkland, Florida began spreading. As I was getting ready to lay a



• **UPCOMING EVENTS**

Spring Leadership Meetings

Orlando, Florida USA
March 19-23, 2018

International Campus Ministry Conference

Cincinnati, Ohio USA
July 5-8, 2018

2018 NE US Christian Conference

Providence, Rhode Island USA
July 20-22, 2018

Florida Discipleship Conference

Orlando, Florida USA
August 3-5, 2018

International Singles Conference

Phoenix, Arizona USA
August 30 - September 3, 2018

Central American Conference

Panama City, Panama
October 5 - 7, 2018

2020 World Discipleship Summit

Orlando, Florida USA
July 2-5, 2020

CONNECTING DISCIPLES IN
CHURCHES AROUND THE WORLD

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International News reprinted
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