

Dear editor:

Last Saturday's attack at the Crossroads Center mall shocked and saddened us. All of our faith traditions are rooted in peace, and we condemn this violence. We grieve with the victims and their families, who remain in our thoughts and prayers. And we convey our thanks to the first responders who rushed to the mall to offer assistance while risking their own safety.

As faith leaders, we are committed to fostering healing, peace and unity in our community. All of us have been wounded by what took place — no matter what faith we profess. But we are a resilient community. As one of our local leaders noted, how we move forward will define us as a community for a long time to come. It is time to come together and work side by side to build a safe and prosperous future for all of our families.

We can begin this work by reflecting on the core values of our faith traditions: respect for every person's sacred human dignity and the call to treat others as we ourselves want to be treated. With these in mind, we are concerned that our Muslim sisters and brothers may face harassment because of the actions of an individual. Our nation was founded on the principles of religious freedom; we cannot tolerate bigotry and discrimination directed toward any faith. The Somali-Muslim community needs our support especially at this time.

Last month, we organized our second annual Greater St. Cloud Area Faith Leaders picnic at Lake George. It was an opportunity to engage in conversation, continue to build relationships and share a meal together. We are a diverse community, but we continue to learn that we share many of the same hopes and dreams for ourselves and for our families. We are one human family.

As area faith leaders, we recommit ourselves to dispelling fear and intolerance and fostering peace and mutual understanding among all people in the St. Cloud area.

Sincerely,

+Donald J. Kettler, Bishop of Saint Cloud
Randal G. Baker, St. Cloud LDS Stake
Rev. Leah Rosso, First United Methodist Church
Fr. William Skudlarek, OSB, St. John's Abbey
Kathy Langer, Catholic Charities
Rev. Randy Johnson, First United Methodist Church
Rev. Darin Seaman, First Presbyterian Church
Charlotte Stephens, St. Cloud Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Rev. Dee Pederson, Bethlehem Lutheran
Fr. Michael Peterson, OSB, St. John's Abbey
Mayuli Bales, Diocese of St. Cloud
Joe Towalski, Diocese of St. Cloud

Fr. William Vos, Catholic Relief Services

Fr. Robert Rolfes, Diocese of St. Cloud

Michaela Hedican, OSB, Saint Benedict's Monastery