

I am a complete stranger, but I wanted to write you and express my appreciation and admiration for the wonderful gesture taken through the attendance of the Emanuel AME services by members of St Philip's on Sunday.

The way the city of Charleston has coped with this tragedy is commendable and inspirational. What a contrast between Ferguson and Charleston. Most inspirational and compelling were the very moving words of forgiveness spoken by the nine families at the arraignment of the shooter. I captured my thoughts and feelings in the poem below that I wanted to share with you and your congregation.

### **Charleston**

To those who dwell in darkness and hate,  
The spirit of Charleston still shines,  
A beacon of love to compensate  
The most mindless and heinous of crimes.

Love is stronger than the deepest hate,  
And forgiveness like transcending rain,  
Pours forth unbidden to inundate  
Hardened hearts so darkness be restrained.

From whence springs such nobility  
In the face of tragedy and pain?  
This unexpected civility  
Only through deep faith can be explained.

A reminder of our highest selves,  
So poignant in a cynical age,  
Such great love inspires, and compels  
That our better natures be engaged.

Ours is a troubled land, yet hope lives.  
For we were blessed by the loving souls  
Among us who deigned to forgive,  
And the heart of a nation enfold.

For those who would walk in truth and light,  
The spirit of Charleston still shines,  
Example of how we win the fight,  
A stalwart beacon for all mankind.

Poetry, like fertilizer, isn't worth much unless spread around. Please feel free to use the poem in any way you see fit. I would be honored if you shared it with your congregation in some way. Charleston is not alone; the whole world is watching, and what we are seeing is exemplary. God bless you all.

*Sincerely, Larry Wray (Cupertino, CA)*