




Q&A

# Refusing Scapegoating, Choosing Care

## A Community Guide for Supporting the Trans Community in Times of Fear and Grief

A few Queer and Trans Religious Leaders pulled together this document as a resource because we know how quickly tragedy gets turned into attacks on trans people.

It's written for three groups:

-  **Trans folks** who need grounding and care
-  **Cis allies** who want to know how to show up
-  **Faith communities** looking for words and next steps

It may not get everything right, and information is still unfolding, but it's practical, human, and rooted in love.

Created: August 27th, 4:20pm  
Updated August 28th, 12:20pm.

## Table of Contents

### [How can I use this resource?](#)

#### [For Our Trans Kin](#)

- [Q: I'm scared that this will be used against all trans people. How do I process this?](#)
- [Q: I'm feeling internalized transphobia after this news. Is that normal?](#)
- [Q: Should I go into hiding or avoid public spaces right now?](#)
- [Q: How do I respond to people who will say this proves trans people are dangerous?](#)

#### [For Cisgender Allies](#)

- [Q: How can I support trans people right now without centering myself?](#)
- [Q: Someone in my family is already blaming trans people generally. How do I respond?](#)
- [Q: What should I know about the broader context right now?](#)

#### [For Everyone in Our Community](#)

- [Q: Why are trans people being blamed for one person's violence?](#)
- [Q: I don't know where to look for allies or people to take action with to support trans people. Where do I start?](#)
- [Q: How do we hold both grief for victims AND protection for a vulnerable community?](#)
- [Q: What would a faithful response look like in my congregation/community?](#)
- [Q: How do I talk to children about this?](#)
- [Q: What does justice look like here?](#)

#### [Responds to Emerging Reactions](#)

## [Moving Forward Together As Community](#)

[Q: What are practical next steps for our faith community?](#)

[Q: How do we prepare for the political exploitation of this tragedy?](#)

## How can I use this resource?

Please read it, share it, and use it within your communities in whatever way makes sense. You do not need to ask permission for use. We do not need credit as we are articulating the shared and collective wisdom of our community back to itself.

**CC0** This work has been marked as dedicated to the public domain.

## For Our Trans Kin

Q: I'm scared that this will be used against all trans people. How do I process this?

A: *Your fear is valid and grounded in experience.* We have seen how individual actions are weaponized against entire communities, especially marginalized ones. We don't know the full information yet, but even if this person is indeed trans, their actions cannot and will not define all of us. Just as one act does not define a life, so too one person cannot define a community.

*Don't process this alone:* reach out to your chosen family, trusted friends, or supportive community members who can hold space for your feelings without judgment.

Remember that your existence and dignity are not contingent on the actions of others who share your identity. One person's violence does not define you or diminish your worth. You belong in this world, in our communities, and in our care.

Q: I'm feeling internalized transphobia after this news. Is that normal?

A: Yes, this reaction is unfortunately common and completely understandable. Do not let the identity of a shooter become the reason you give in to transphobia, whether it's your own internalized feelings or what's coming through the news and government responses. These moments can trigger shame and self-doubt that aren't yours to carry. Resist the urge to let one person's actions shrink your sense of self-worth. Resist the urge to read the comments or feed the despair that's already everywhere. Instead, ground yourself in the love and support of people who see your full humanity.

Reach out to a trusted therapist, counselor, or crisis line if the feelings feel overwhelming—mental health supports exist to hold you through moments like this. You deserve help, connection, and care.

You can also call or visit [Trans Lifeline](#) a peer support and crisis line run by and for trans people.

**Q: Should I go into hiding or avoid public spaces right now?**

**A:** Trust your instincts about safety while refusing to let fear completely constrain your life. Connect with trusted friends, chosen family, or support networks. If you need to modify routines temporarily for safety, that's wisdom, not weakness. But please don't disappear entirely, your community needs your presence and light, and you deserve continued access to the spaces and relationships that nourish you. Reach out to your local trans-led organizations for cues about safety.

**Q: How do I respond to people who will say this proves trans people are dangerous?**

**A:** You are not required to justify your existence or defend your community's right to safety based on one person's actions. When safe, appropriate and when you have the capacity to engage in the conversation, you might say: "Violence is about the individual who chose it, not about identity. Trans people are far more likely to experience violence than perpetrate it. What makes American violence uniquely deadly isn't the identity of shooters, it's their access to weapons designed to kill many people quickly. Every person deserves to be seen as an individual."

## **For Cisgender Allies**

**Q: How can I support trans people right now without centering myself?**

**A:** Lead with care, not questions. Call your trans loved ones, don't just text. Tell them they are loved and that you will fight for them, then share one specific actionable step you're taking to do that. Show up with tangible support: bring bread and soup, share tomatoes from your garden, offer to grocery shop or do laundry. These concrete acts of care matter more than perfect words right now. Shield the babies, trans kids and newly out adults alike, and pour extra support into those who are already shielding them, because being a loving parent or partner is hard enough on ordinary days. Amplify trans voices rather than speaking for the community. Use your privilege to redirect conversations toward systemic solutions rather than scapegoating.

Q: Someone in my family is already blaming trans people generally. How do I respond?

1. **Redirect to Shared Values:** Interrupt with facts and bring the focus back to what you both care about. Try: *"This tragedy was caused by one person's decision to commit violence. Let's focus on preventing all forms of violence rather than blaming entire groups. Trans people face discrimination and violence at much higher rates than they perpetrate it. What makes America different from other*

*countries isn't that we have more people in crisis, it's that we give them easier access to weapons that turn personal pain into community tragedy."*

2. **Know When to Step Away:** If the conversation isn't moving toward shared values or becoming more productive, give yourself permission to shut it down. You don't need to win an argument to hold your ground.
3. **Use Social Media Strategically:** If you have the bandwidth, comment briefly on posts that spread harmful blame. Do this not to convince the original poster, but to signal to others who are reading, especially trans people, that they are not alone and that scapegoating will not go unchallenged. This is a perfect way for cis-allies to use their privilege and take on emotional labor for our trans and nonbinary kin. It's also a way of combating the ambient violence that comes from silence and unchecked rhetoric.

Q: What should I know about the broader context right now?

A: Trans people, especially trans youth, are already facing unprecedented legislative attacks, harassment, and violence. So many are really, really struggling already, even before this tragedy. This incident will likely be exploited to justify further restrictions and persecution. The most loving response is to be extra vigilant in protecting trans people's access to healthcare, education, and public life, while also holding tight to the trans people in your life who are carrying so much right now. Remember: being a supportive parent, partner, or friend to trans people isn't hard enough on an average day, and these aren't average days.

## For Everyone in Our Community

Q: Why are trans people being blamed for one person's violence?

A: This is part of a long history of scapegoating marginalized communities. Black people have been stereotyped as violent, immigrants as criminals, Muslims as terrorists, Jews as collectively guilty. Now trans people are being targeted the same way. Scapegoating distracts from the real causes of violence—like easy access to guns, systemic gaps in care, and a culture of hate.

Q: I don't know where to look for allies or people to take action with to support trans people. Where do I start?

A: Begin with your local trans-run organizations—they know the needs on the ground and how best to meet them. Pair this with state-level LGBTQ rights groups, like your local or [state wide equality organization](#) or [PFLAG](#), which often coordinate legislative advocacy and community support.

These groups can connect you with others who share your values, give you tangible ways to be involved, and help ensure your energy goes toward efforts that make a real difference. You don't have to figure it out alone—community is built by linking arms with those already doing the work.

Q: How do we hold both grief for victims AND protection for a vulnerable community?

A: Love demands that we refuse false choices. We can fully grieve this tragedy, support survivors, and work to prevent future violence while simultaneously protecting trans people from collective punishment. Our grief includes grief for how this will be weaponized. Our love expands to hold all who are hurting.

Q: What would a faithful response look like in my congregation/community?

A: Center care for those directly affected first. Talk directly with impacted people and their supportive families, listening with compassion and offering concrete help. Then, be proactive in affirming your community's commitment to trans inclusion. Consider a statement, pastoral care outreach, or educational programming. Don't wait for controversy to arrive, lead with your values. Create space for both grief and resistance to scapegoating.

Q: How do I talk to children about this?

A: Age-appropriate honesty: "Sometimes people make terrible choices that hurt others. This was about one person's decision, not about any group of people. All people deserve to be safe and loved for who they are." Reassure them about safety measures while affirming that diversity makes our communities stronger.

Q: What does justice look like here?

A: Justice means accountability for the individual who chose violence, support for all affected by trauma, systemic changes to prevent future violence, including addressing America's unique relationship with firearms, AND protection of marginalized communities from collective punishment. We can pursue all of these simultaneously. Justice is never served by expanding harm to innocent people or ignoring the policy choices that make our violence so uniquely deadly.

When there are calls for action, respond. Show up both as an individual and as part of collective community action. Justice grows when our responses are shared and sustained together.

## Responds to Emerging Reactions

Reaction	The Truth
“The shooter doesn’t deserve pronouns.”	Use their name and pronouns.
“I don’t want to dignify the shooter by using their name”	Everyone has pronouns because everyone has a self. Using them is about accuracy, not honor. Refusing to use someone's pronouns or name is dehumanization, and dehumanization fuels the same culture of violence we’re grieving.  Even when someone’s actions are reprehensible, when refusing to honor their humanity, reinforced the same discourse weaponized against trans people.
“Trans people only transition for attention.”	Transition isn’t about spectacle—it’s about survival, authenticity, and the right to live fully. The attention trans people often receive is more negative than positive: scrutiny, hostility, and stigma. That’s what needs to change. Our commitment should be to ensure that trans people are met with dignity, respect, and care; not suspicion or scorn.
“Gender dysphoria is a mental illness that causes violence.”	Gender dysphoria is discomfort caused by a mismatch between a person's internal sense of gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth  Gender dysphoria does not cause violence. What harms trans people most is stigma, rejection, and blocked access to care. Trans people are far more likely to be victims of violence or self-harm than to perpetrate harm.
“This just shows people with mental illness are dangerous.”	This is stigma, not fact. People living with mental illness are far more likely to be harmed by violence than to cause it. Blaming mental illness distracts from real solutions, like reducing access to deadly weapons and increasing access to care and support.

<p>“There are so many trans people now—it must be a social contagion.”</p>	<p>What’s changed isn’t the number of trans people, it’s the visibility and safety for people to come out. As stigma lessens and access to information and community grows, more people are able to name and live their truth.</p> <p>This isn’t a contagion. It’s what happens when shame lifts and people find language and community that affirms who they’ve always been.</p>
--	---

## Moving Forward Together As Community

Q: What are practical next steps for our faith community?

A:

- Immediate: Call (or text or both) trans members and friends, tell them they're loved and share one specific way you'll advocate for them, even if that is a commitment to doing so in the future. Offer concrete support: meals, childcare, errands, whatever helps them feel held
- Short-term: Plan proactive messaging about your values and inclusion; resist engaging with inflammatory content or comment sections that feed despair
- Medium-term: Examine how your community can better support mental health, address isolation, prevent violence, and advocate for sensible firearm policies. Ask trans members how you can use your resources to keep them safer
- Long-term: Deepen your anti-oppression work, transgender inclusion, and commitment to policies that protect all life. Leverage wealth, invest your time, and surrender your ego to protect and uphold the lives of our trans siblings.

Q: How do we prepare for the political exploitation of this tragedy?

A: Know the facts: Trans people face violence at disproportionate rates and are not more likely to commit violence than others. Gun violence is a public health crisis requiring systemic solutions. America's relationship with firearms, more guns than people, with some of the weakest access restrictions among developed nations, is what makes our violence uniquely deadly, not the identities of those who perpetrate it. Prepare simple, consistent messages about shared humanity and the need to address root causes of violence, not scapegoat vulnerable populations while ignoring policy solutions that could actually save lives.