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TERROR CANNOT KILL EQUALITY, PASTOR SAYS

The mass shooting in Orlando this morning that killed more than 50 people and left dozens more injured cannot kill the movement for LGBT equality, a local pastor said this morning.

Rev. Alisan Rowland, pastor of the LGBT-affirming Metropolitan Community Church of New Orleans, said while the focus must be grieving, healing and support for those directly impacted by the crime, there is a bigger picture that will emerge.

"Although law enforcement professionals are still gathering information, there is little doubt that this morning's crime in Orlando was a result of hatred towards the LGBT community and misguided religious belief," Rowland said. "In the aftermath, we have to focus first and foremost on prayerful support for the victims, survivors, their families and caregivers, but we must also recognize the global impact on all LGBT individuals and our organizations.

"Yes, we can pray. Yes, we can make financial donations. Yes, we can donate blood. But we also have to stand with a single voice to tell the world - and LGBT citizens and allies - that no act of violence can undo the great strides we have made," Rowland said. "In the United States, same-sex marriage is now legal. More and more communities are stepping up to enact legal protections for LGBT citizens. More and more LGBT people are coming out and coming out strong.

"Our practices and institutions may change in light of this tragedy. LGBT gathering places may have more security now. We may be more vigilant for our temporary safety. But we will never, ever, go away. We will never be cowed. And in our denomination's churches around the world, we will never stop preaching and teaching the truth that God made us and loves us as we are."

For more information about Rowland's church, visit www.MCCNewOrleans.com or www.facebook.com/MCCNewOrleans.

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