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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Phoenixville Leaders Organize Community Peace Vigil January 14th**

In the wake of a year filled with political rancor, international terrorist attacks and incidents of violence and tensions at home, Phoenixville community leaders want to start the new year on a positive note by affirming the civic spirit and neighborly bonds for which the small borough has been well-known over the years. On Saturday January 14<sup>th</sup>, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 121 Church St. in Phoenixville, will host a Community Peace Vigil at 4 pm.

The Vigil will offer speakers from faith communities including Islamic, Jewish, Hindu and Christian traditions; local government officials; and leaders from the Hispanic, African American and LGBT communities. According to vigil organizers, the purpose of this event is to promote peace and understanding among our citizens as our communities become more and more diverse. Organizers hope that bringing people together to meet, hear and talk with each other will foster greater comfort and understanding at a time when world events seem chaotic and media coverage often focuses on fear and violence.

Last June, St. Peter's Episcopal Church hosted a peace vigil in the aftermath of the shootings at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida. An American-born man who'd pledged allegiance to

ISIS gunned down 49 people early that Sunday at the gay nightclub in the deadliest mass shooting in the United States and the nation's worst terror attack since 9/11. Over 200 people packed the church, seeking solace and safety as residents in Phoenixville and surrounding communities came to grips with the grief and fear precipitated by such violence against innocent fellow citizens.

Immediately following the one hour service, attendees are invited to enjoy light refreshments of sweet and savory finger food and fellowship at the Church. Organizers envision this event as a kick-off for continuing dialogue and community engagement in their “Community Peace Initiative,” an ongoing project which will continue to sponsor local forums in the coming year.

The Community Peace Vigil will include scripture readings from multiple faiths, a candle lighting ceremony and music from several local artists and performance groups. Post service, a fellowship gathering will also feature a center with local service group information to encourage neighbors to volunteer in the community and a banner of “Hopes and Fears” where those gathered can write and share their thoughts in each category.

For more information about the Community Peace Vigil and Phoenixville’s Community Peace Initiative, contact The Rev. Dr. Koshy Mathews at 610-933-2195.

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