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Phoenixville Community Peace Vigil Calls for Reflection and Action in the Aftermath of Recent Violence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 4, 2018 - Community leaders from St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Diversity in Action, Phoenixville Town Watch and Phoenixville Area School District have organized a Community Peace Vigil set for Sunday January 14, 2018 at the Church St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 121 Church Street, Phoenixville, PA at 3:30 PM.

In the aftermath of two recent violent and tragic incidents involving gun violence in the Borough, Vigil organizers hope to offer a quiet and reflective atmosphere of solace and solidarity. In late September, 20 year-old Joshua Mitchell was shot in the Children's Plaza on Bridge Street following an argument and later died of his wounds. Most recently on December 27th, fifteen year old Jayson Ortiz-Cameron was shot and killed in the parking lot at the Phoenixville Dunkin Donuts in an incident now being investigated as a drug-related homicide. The Vigil was already in the planning stages well-before the most recent violence. "In fact, we had already been planning this Community Peace Vigil as an occasion for Phoenixville Community members to proactively come together, reflect and plan how to make our community even stronger in the New Year," said committee member Rev. Koshy Mathews, Rector at St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

The Vigil is designed to support both reflection and action. The first hour will be an interfaith service offering scripture and prayers from various faith communities including Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Ba Hai and Native American traditions, along with music from Phoenixville High School's acapella group, Vocal Fusion and a candle lighting ceremony. Immediately following the one hour service, attendees will be invited to enjoy refreshments, engage in activities designed to invite connection and conversation about themes of peace and explore an information table with literature featuring a wide range of community-building efforts. Organizers stress that this Vigil is as much a call to action as an occasion for reflection.

Volunteers began planning this Community Peace Vigil as the United States experienced the deadliest shooting in modern history when Stephen Paddock killed 58 people in Las Vegas, Nevada and injured hundreds more on Oct. 1 after he shattered windows of his suite on the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay hotel-casino and fired on crowds at the music festival below before killing himself.

Creators of the Vigil explain that their intention is to help the Phoenixville community 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. They hope that by bringing people together to meet, hear and talk with each other, those who attend will experience solidarity, comfort and understanding at a time when local and world events seem chaotic and media coverage often focuses on fear and violence.

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