



**From Rabbi
Nancy Wechsler**



From Rabbi Nancy Wechsler: What is normal?

Our hearts are heavy with the news of another horrific mass shooting, this time at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The Reform Movement is committed to pursuing common sense gun violence prevention measures at all levels of governance. All too recently it was Las Vegas.

My daughter Eliza asked me last night if I thought that as school kids are taught to memorize the names of presidents of our country, will they one day be called upon to remember senseless shootings?

While it is a minority of people who brandish the gun and shoot the innocent, as citizens of this country we have given a consensual nod toward the normalization of national violence. Go to most movie theatres and the feature film or the previews with full screen and full volume impose an unprecedented level of violent stimulus. "That sure was a violent one" may be said with a shrug as we enter our cars and head toward home.

The impact however, of what we have seen, and what our senses have absorbed lead to a scarring armor which permits us to move through our days as though horrific violence and shootings were "normal."

We seem to have reversed what we normalize and make exception for that which is good and beautiful. The violence we experience in our country is not normal and it must never be normalized.

For example, last Shabbat we were blessed as we celebrated with K'tantanim, our youngest children in Kehillah, our CBS-MLC partnered religious school. They jumped onto the Bima; they sang songs about loving G-d and marched proudly with our miniature Torah scrolls. The precious innocence of hearing how the

Jewish Sammy Spider welcomed a new friend was a breath of fresh air. It was exhilarating to feel this happy, and to be lifted by their sweet voices.

Beautiful, uplifting and spirited can be the norm, if we decide that is how we want life to be.

With all my heart, I pray that we begin to remember that joy is normal, not a quick trip to the candy store. And what should not be normal, and rare if ever, should be the violence, negativity and anger we inhale on a daily basis.

We pray that the tide be reversed and that gun legislation on a national level be strengthened. This is our country. We are all complicit. I still believe we can decide what we want to call the norm.

Shalom,

Rabbi Nancy Wechsler