



# Sermons for Safe Streets



## Clergy Information Kit

World Day of Remembrance For Traffic Crash Victims

November 17, 2019

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We are Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist but we all ache in the same way.

We have buried our children. We are all mothers who have lost a child in a traffic crash. We put human flesh that we had birthed from our bodies into the ground. We had expected to see our children graduate from school, discover love, get married, have children of their own, and be at our sides as we grew old.

The epidemic of traffic crashes is one that unites us all. People of every faith, neighborhood, race, class, gender, age and ability are hit personally by this issue.

Our fellow members of Families for Safe Streets have lost children, spouses, parents, and siblings and/or suffer with life altering injuries. Some of us are now childless, orphans or widows. Others have other children who will go through life scarred by the loss of a sibling or are caregivers now taking care of our family members whose lives will never be the same. Our members represent the full breadth of Denver's religious, racial, ethnic, socio-economic, and political diversity. We have paid the highest price for society's failure to recognize that we have a preventable public health crisis.

***We ask of you to please join with us. Please use your pulpit, prayers and powerful voices to memorialize those who've been killed. Please remind your communities that it is up to each and every one of us to ensure no one else dies in traffic, that we are all responsible for each other and must slow down, pay attention and support solutions to save lives.***

Amy Cohen, Mother of Sammy Cohen Eckstein (12/8/00-10/8/13)  
*Member of Kolot Chayeyinu Synagogue*

Amy Tam, Mother of Allison Hope Liao (3/27/10 - 10/6/13)  
*Member of International Buddhist Progressive Society*

Lizi Rahman, Mother of Asif Rahman (6/20/06 - 2/28/08)  
*Member of Jamaica Muslim Center*

Sofia Russo, Mother of Ariel Russo (3/10/09-06/4/13)  
*Member of Church of the Holy Name of Jesus*

*As posted by Interfaith Center of New York ([interfaithcenter.org/sermons-for-safe-streets](http://interfaithcenter.org/sermons-for-safe-streets))*

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## Introduction

Please join Families for Safe Streets in a *Sermons for Safe Streets* campaign as part of Denver's commemoration of the United Nations sponsored World Day of Remembrance for Traffic Crash Victims, during the weekend of November 16-18, 2018.

Sadly, the epidemic of traffic crashes is one that unites us all. People of every faith, neighborhood, race, class, gender, age, ability, and political affiliation are hit personally by this issue.

Every day across the globe, approximately 3,400 people are killed in traffic. Forty thousand Americans are killed every year and the numbers are rising nationwide for the first time in a half-century. Every five days, someone is killed in Denver.

As a public health epidemic which knows no boundaries, having faith leaders of all religions and denominations devote part or

all of their sermons to this issue on Nov 16-18 weekend, could literally save lives. You will be joining the UN and cities around the world in memorializing those who've been killed in local neighborhoods — and calling for safer streets.

Imagine if all peoples, all religions come together this important weekend to pray as one, for a day when there are no more senseless deaths and injuries due to reckless driving! How amazing if faith leaders use their pulpits, prayers, and programming to remind communities it is up to each and every one of us to make sure this happens, that we are all responsible for each other and must:

- slow down,
- pay attention, and
- support solutions like Vision Zero that save lives.

Sermons for Safe Streets will take place shortly before Thanksgiving, the deadliest holiday on US roads.

Thank you for participating in the first ever *Sermons for Safe Streets*!

**As a public health epidemic which knows no boundaries, having faith leaders of all religions and denominations devote part or all of their sermons to this issue on Nov 16-18 weekend, could literally save lives.**



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**Asif Rahman, age 22, died 2/28/2008***By Lizi Rahman, Asif's mother*

My son, Asif Rahman, was a vibrant, talented young man. He was a poet, a rapper, an artist, a loving friend to many and a loving brother and son. He was full of life and loved to do beatboxing.



He recorded many songs and was planning to release his music CD on his birthday. There are many videos of Asif's various performances and a documentary on him which can be viewed on MySpace at [www.myspace.com/asifrahman](http://www.myspace.com/asifrahman) and YouTube under the name "metaphysical lyrical wizard" and/or "asifalicious".

He also was a student at Queens College where he was studying to become a music teacher. Just days before he was killed, Asif was hired as a para-professional at PS 58 on Grand Avenue in Queens.

But on his way home from his new job, he was hit and killed on Queens Boulevard by a reckless truck driver. The driver hit his bicycle from behind and then drove his truck over him, killing him instantly. All his organs were crushed. The truck driver not only crushed his organs, he crushed all his dreams and hopes.

After this tragic loss, our house became as silent as a grave. There's no laughter, no sound of beatboxing, no calling out loud, 'Hi Mom'. His voice was stopped forever. The truck driver just didn't kill Asif, he killed all of us as well. It's a pain which kills you like a slow poison. It hurts me that I will not see him graduate from college, get married, or have a family like most of his friends. The truck driver didn't only crush Asif's hopes and dreams for his future, he crushed my hopes and dreams as well.

It's been ten years since I lost my son. From that day on, I made it my mission to make New York City streets safer, and this is what has kept me going. I found a new meaning of survival by saving lives of others. I do not want any other mother going through the pain of losing a child. I want New Yorkers not to think of numbers when it comes to a fatality. I want you to think of a person, think about their loving families, think how these deaths impacted their families and communities. Think that today it may be someone else's child or spouse or sibling, in the future it could be your family member or someone from your place of worship.

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## Sermons for Safe Streets FAQ

**What?** Sermons across Denver, of all faiths, will address the public health issue of reckless driving, offering Denverites the opportunity to join the UN and cities around the world in memorializing those who've been killed in local neighborhoods - and in calling for safer streets.

**When?** November 16-18 weekend, World Day of Remembrance, a UN initiative with commemorations taking place around the globe. The weekend before Thanksgiving is the deadliest holiday on US roads.

**Why sermons?:** People listen to you! Faith leaders can use their pulpits and powerful voices to memorialize those who've been killed and to remind entire communities that it is up to each and every one of us to make sure there are no more deaths in traffic, that we are all responsible for each other and must slow down and pay attention. By raising awareness and offering your prayers and blessings, you will be saving precious lives.

**Does it have to be a sermon?** No. We encourage you to raise this important issue in any way you can. These resources can be used for community events, children's programming, adult education and more. Please feel free to share our content in your community newsletters, blogs and in all the powerful work you do.

**Who suffers from reckless driving?** Everyone! Drivers, Passengers. People in other vehicles and on the streets. People often think this movement is about saving pedestrians and cyclists. Countless drivers and passengers are killed each year too. Reckless driving affects us all!

**Is this connected to specific policies?** No! *Sermons for Safe Streets* is a non-partisan effort. This is a World Day of Remembrance, commemorated around the globe by people of all faiths, all affiliations and all political views. It is a day we find unity in mourning preventable deaths and praying for no more. Sermons will empower all individuals to slow down, take more care, be more conscious and ensure no more families know the pain of a loved one stolen from them by a reckless driver.

**What goes into a *Sermon For Safe Streets*?** This packet contains helpful information including statistics, resources, sample sermon snippets, non-denominational prayer ideas that can be recited, online resources, and stories of crash victims that you can include in your sermon. Families for Safe Streets can also assist clergy in obtaining crash/fatality statistics for particular neighborhoods. We may also be able to offer a guest speaker who has been personally affected by this issue. We are here to help!

This *Sermons for Safe Streets Clergy Kit* is adapted from NYC and has sample sermon snippets, religious references, statistics, collective prayers, personal stories, and additional resources, some of which you may wish to distribute to your congregations. Denver Streets Partnership can also assist clergy in obtaining crash and fatality statistics for particular neighborhoods. We may also be able to offer a guest speaker who has been personally affected by this issue. Please contact [Jill.Locantore@walkdenver.org](mailto:Jill.Locantore@walkdenver.org) 303-895-6376 for assistance.

# Statistics

Each year, 1.25 million people are killed around the world in traffic crashes involving cars, buses, motorcycles, bicycles, trucks, or pedestrians -- **this is typically 3,287 lives lost every single day.** Half of those killed are walking or biking.

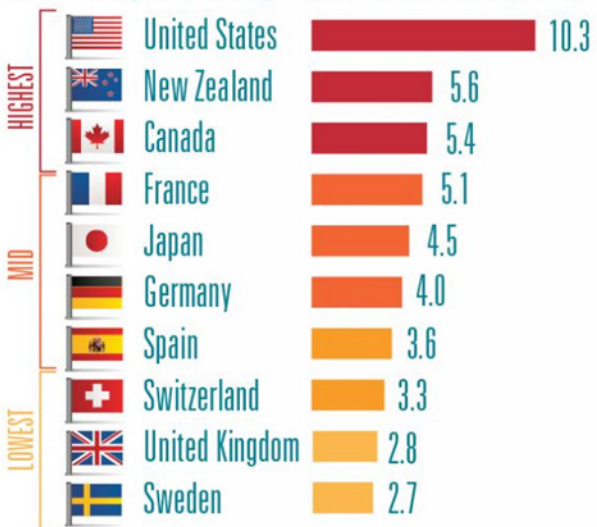
Forty thousand Americans are killed in traffic crashes every year and the numbers have risen for the first time in a half-century. In the past two years, deaths in traffic crashes are up 24%.

In Denver alone, every 5 days someone is killed in a traffic crash and hundreds are injured every year.

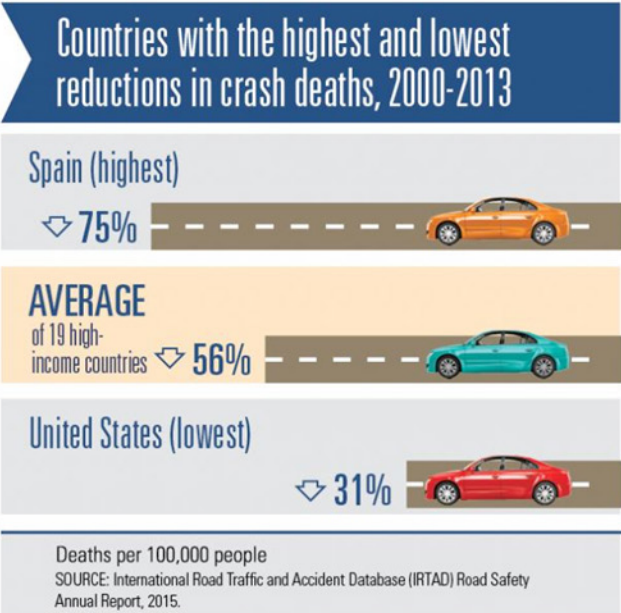
The US is one of the most dangerous industrialized nations -- we are ranked 42 of 51 high income nations in terms of per capita traffic fatalities. Others have dramatically reduced the number of people killed in their countries. Here in Denver, we have started to put in place solutions that save lives. But too many people are still suffering. We can and we must do better.

## Road traffic deaths in the US and other high-income countries.

### Motor vehicle crash deaths in 10 comparison high-income countries, 2013



Deaths per 100,000 people  
SOURCE: WHO Global Status Report on Road Safety, 2015.







**3,287**

**Over 3,000 men, women, and children are killed in traffic every single day across the world.**

**Mothers. Daughters. Fathers. Sons. Brothers. Sisters.  
Nanas. Papas. Bubies. Zaydies. Tíos. Tías. Jaad. Jaada.  
Best friends.**



“

**Carl “Henry” Nacht, age 56, died 6/22/2006**

*By Mary Beth Kelly, Henry’s wife*

Viktor Frankl wrote in, **Man’s Search for Meaning**, that meaning came from three possible sources: purposeful work, love, and courage in the face of difficulty. And whenever I think about the man I was married to for thirty-three years — Carl Henry Nacht, better known to family as “Henry,” I am immensely grateful to have shared my life with someone who embodied Frankl’s three. Henry was a beloved physician committed to patient care, an athlete who held a record for running twenty-six consecutive New York City marathons (mostly under three hours), a husband/father who loved our children and me passionately, a coach of soccer, basketball and baseball, and a person who faced many difficult times in his life with courage. Life was cherished and deeply meaningful to Henry.



On a warm summer night, that man, whom I celebrated, and who knew me better than anyone, was riding his bike next to mine when he was hit by a reckless tow truck driver. He died three days later from his profound injuries.

In the days and weeks that followed my husband’s death, when I could not focus, could barely breathe, I reached for poetry. There I found the broken shards of my heart in poets like Marie Howe, Donald Hall, and W.H. Auden. Nothing spoke to me so clearly as Auden’s poem, Funeral Blues. Particularly this stanza, which I read at his memorial:

*He was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong*

Grief too can seem as though it will last forever, but as the Buddhists know and remind us, everything in this life is temporal; even grief, will eventually move. Poetry and being in nature soothed me, and soon I reached for a pen. Composing on the page took on more meaning than it had before my loss, and slowly it became a crucial part of my life. It followed too, that writing was one way to be an activist raising awareness about the terrible price and injustice of traffic violence. And in joining my voice with others, I turned my anger and grief into successful advocacy and activism for a more livable safe city; turning forbidding streets into forgiving ones. Nothing since Henry’s death has given my own life — already a full one — more meaning than this work in a great metropolis, where it is possible to make a difference.

”

## Religious References

*We know we haven't included every faith and look forward to growing this section with your important insights and suggestions.*

### Christian

The Bible abounds in illustrations of our subject "Safety". It is a duty that we often fail in, particularly with regard to safety on our streets and roadways. The care of others is summed up in the Royal Law or Golden Rule. Mat 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Psalm 119:18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. We shall see the eternal guiding principles of Christ are even more relevant for the epidemic of traffic crashes and fatalities. Christ's guiding principles demands that we follow the rules of the road, care for our neighbors, and keep one another safe on our streets.

### Jewish

A key tenet of the Torah is to safeguard your life and the lives of those around you. In Jewish law, life is sacred. As indicated in the Talmud, whoever destroys a soul, it is considered as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Yerushalmi Talmud 4:9, Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 37a.)

In addition, a key dictum in Jewish law is *dina demalchuta dina*, which translates as "the law of the land is the law." (Talmud, Gittin 10b and Nedarim 28a)

It is so important that we follow traffic safety laws and press for new ones -- to save lives and keep everyone safe, so it goes without saying that driving at a reckless speed or driving aggressively are forbidden under the Torah obligation to safeguard your life and the lives of those around you as well as follow the law of the land.

In this week's Torah portion, Parashat Vayetze, "He was afraid and he said, How terrible is this place. This is no other than the House of God and the Gate of Heaven." (Genesis 28:17) It might seem strange to respond to the Divine presence with terror, but sometimes we all can be scared of waking. It is always easier to stay silent and asleep. And yet nothing could be more dangerous.

We have the power to save lives — if we are willing to see what is happening and to recognize our capacity to make change. If we fail to wake up, our family, our neighbors, and our friends will continue to die at alarming rates.

### Muslim

The Grand Mufti of Dubai has said it is a sin to violate traffic rules and that failure to wear a seat belt reflects ignorance of Islamic teachings. "There are quite a few fatwas clearly stating that it is obligatory to observe traffic laws and harm to violate them," he said.

He rebuked reckless drivers who argue that safety precautions demonstrate a lack of faith in God or those who claim that their strong faith means they are exempt from traffic safety rules.

The mufti recited the story of a man who asked the Prophet Mohammed if he should tie up his camel and trust in Allah, or keep it loose and trust in Allah. The Prophet replied, “You tie it up and put your trust in Allah.”

The Grand Mufti rebuked reckless drivers who argue that safety precautions demonstrate a lack of faith in God or those who claim that their strong faith means they are exempt from traffic safety rules. Wearing a seat belt, driving safely and following traffic laws including the speed limit, yielding to pedestrians... all are a means of protection that can minimize the outcome of a traffic crash. He said the idea that a seat belt is makrooh, or discouraged by Islam, because safety is in God’s hand is “completely wrong”.

Drivers and passengers must always wear seat belts, must always follow the rules of the road. These are a means of protection not the protector - the real protector is Allah indeed, but He never advised people against taking safety precautions.

## **Buddhist**

To find some safety in the world, you first have to give safety to the entire world. If you’re determined to observe the Buddhist precepts, you’re giving a gift of safety to everyone, in that all beings, universally, will be protected from any harm you might do. In return, you get a share in the universal safety coming from your present actions. If, however, you follow the precepts only in some cases and not in others—if, for instance, you can rationalize driving reckless or opposing street safety measures in certain situations, for whatever the end—it’s like building a fence around your property but leaving a huge gap in the back. Anyone, with any motive, can walk right in through the gap.

Buddhism is built on the premise of karma and rebirth. What made the Buddha special was that he looked for a safety that lasted beyond death, and—having found it—showed others how to find it too. Along the way, he offered the possibility of safety with honor.

As we remember those who have died in traffic crashes and all of the suffering for those who have suffered life-altering injuries, we remember that the harm we have allowed to happen to those in our communities will come back to harm us in our future lives - karma and rebirth..Those lives we save and harm prevented, will also come to us in positive ways in our future lives.

## **Hindu**

One of the cardinal virtues of our faith is Ahimsa and one which was greatly espoused by Mahatma Ghandi. The word is derived from the Sanskrit root hims – to strike; himsā is injury or harm, a-himsā is the opposite of this -- to cause no injury, do no harm. Ahimsa is also referred to as nonviolence, and it applies to all living beings—including all animals.

Ahimsa is a multidimensional concept, ]inspired by the premise that all living beings have the spark of the



divine spiritual energy; therefore, to hurt another being is to hurt oneself. Ahimsa has also been related to the notion that any violence has karmic consequences. Ahimsa's precept of 'cause no injury' includes one's deeds, words, and thoughts.

As we remember those killed and seriously injured in traffic crashes today, we bring it back to Ahimsa and make sure that we as individuals do no harm and that we join together and support solutions to prevent this senseless loss and suffering.

## Mormon

Mormons are instructed to lead their lives in a way that is pleasing to God. "That man [or woman] who resists temptation and lives without sin is far better off than the man [or woman] who has fallen, no matter how repentant the latter may be."

It is sinful to cause harm or loss of life. As we remember those killed and seriously injured in traffic crashes today, we bring it back to this key tenet of pleasing God and make sure that we as individuals do no harm and that we join together and support solutions to prevent this senseless loss and suffering.

*If your faith is not listed and/or if you have additional suggestions for religious texts and references please share with us on the Sermons for Safe Streets Registration page ([transalt.org/sermons](https://transalt.org/sermons)) or contact [chana@familiesforsafestreets.org](mailto:chana@familiesforsafestreets.org)*



## Sample Sermon Text

Today, we mourn the horrible loss of life and untold suffering that is happening every single day due to preventable traffic crashes. We bow our heads to remember the 1.25 million people killed on roadways around the world each year -- forty thousand of those are our fellow Americans. We remember that today, like every day, over 3,400 people around the world will die in a traffic crash. And nearly every day, one of those killed is our fellow New Yorker.

We also remember the many millions around the world who suffer life-altering injuries - missing limbs, traumatic brain injuries, paralysis, lifelong pain. Thousands of them are are fellow New Yorkers who suffer each year from serious injuries in traffic crashes.

Traffic crashes and injuries are sudden, violent, traumatic events. Their impact is long-lasting, often permanent. The cumulative toll is truly tremendous. The crash becomes a divider for so many people, so many in our community, of a life before and a much diminished life after. The grief and distress experienced by this huge number of people is all the greater because many of the victims are young, because many of the crashes could and should have been prevented and because society's response is currently inadequate.

We have a national epidemic -- one that all too often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. The United States is currently one of the most dangerous industrialized nations in terms of traffic crashes. Traffic violence is on par with gun violence and the opioid epidemic. Yet until recently, few understood that the country is facing a preventable public health crisis.

Today, we join with Families for Safe Streets, whose members all suffer from a traffic crash, support one another and share their stories to demand that more be done. We join with so many across the globe and with the United Nations s we commemorate World Day of Remembrance for Traffic Crash Victims.

We also join together in prayer for street safety as we enter into one of the most dangerous times of the year with the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

We join with Families for Safe Streets, and with peoples of all faiths, together this weekend. We pray as one, for a day when there are no more senseless deaths and injuries due to reckless driving.

**We are all responsible for each other and must slow down, pay attention and support solutions that save lives.**

“

**Sonya Powell, age 40, died 11/27/2009**

By Dave Shepard, Sonya's fiancée

My fiancée Sonya Powell was a warm loving person who meant everything to me. She was beautiful inside, out, and always went out of her way to help people. Life was good. We were in love and looking forward to spending our life together. We had a wonderful Thanksgiving family gathering and we felt blessed.



But on the night after Thanksgiving, we were walking home together when Sonya was struck and killed by a reckless driver right in front of my eyes. And then the driver fled the scene.

I was devastated. And I was angry. I was angry not just at that driver but at the culture of reckless driving, particularly what I noticed in the Bronx. Two days later, crossing at that same crosswalk, I was almost hit by another driver, and a few months prior to the crash there had been a huge vigil for some others who had died in a traffic crash nearby – it was just out of control. In addition, while there have been improvements, it still is out of control.

As someone very active in my church, it would mean's so much to me for religious leaders of all faiths to speak out during the weekend of World Day of Remembrance and join in our Sermons for Safe Streets.

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## Collective Prayers, Poems, Readings

*Composed collectively by Families for Safe Streets organizers, survivors, loved ones and friends.  
Please feel free to use all or any segment of each reading.*

### Salt in an open wound

*Leader:* Today we mourn.

*Gathered:* Today we mourn.

*Leader:* Our hearts beat today with others that also ache for a loved one cut down in traffic violence.

*Gathered:* Our hearts beat today with others that also ache for a loved one cut down in traffic violence.

*Leader:* We gather and grieve as we remember young and old

*Gathered:* We remember young and old.

*Leader:* We weep for the child who no longer dreams.

*Gathered:* For the child who no longer dreams

*Leader:* We weep for the mother never to come home again.

*Gathered:* For the mother never to come home.

*Leader:* We weep for the spouse never held once more, the grandfather, whose stories will go untold, the brother whose poems will not be sung.

*Gathered:* For the spouse never held once more, the grandfather, whose stories will go untold, the brother whose poems will not be sung.

*All together:* Our grief, like salt in an open wound, is made worse by our knowing these deaths did not have to be.



## **Our streets tell stories**

Our streets tell the stories of you and of me.

The stories of our children, sisters, brothers, mothers, fathers, friends, teachers, and loved ones exist directly beneath our feet.

From this day forward may the soil of this ground be tilled with intentions of

Protection,

Mindfulness,

Patience, and

Safe passage.

May we hold in our hearts the stories of those that have lost their lives and those that have been forever transformed by our failed collective responsibility to keep each other safe.

May we begin to prevent the preventable.

May we be champions of safe streets.

May the story of you and of me be the change we have been waiting for.

## **So we stand**

So we stand together today not only to grieve, but also to beseech those who lead in places of power to hear us. And with unwavering strength commit ourselves to relieving this suffering. For together we can, and will, transform this deep pain to action creating a most livable Denver.

## **Please God help me to look inside**

Please God help me to look inside myself and see how I can be of service to you, how I can be a better person, a more caring and kinder person, more considerate of others. I look at the world and see others that are in pain suffering over the loss of family and friends due to the recklessness of drivers on our streets. Help me to see that I may sometimes be in a rush or stressed and take that out on others inadvertently without meaning to. Please God, help me to see that I can change. I can be that positive force that changes and begins healing in the world because the healing begins with me.

## **We are all connected**

We are all connected. In joy and pain. In love and war. In our pasts and in our futures. We are bound up in one.

Precious human lives. Our lives. Sacred lives.

Brothers. Sisters. Mothers. Fathers. Daughters. Husbands. Wives. Uncles. Aunts. Grandmas. Grandpas. Best Friends.

Our children. Our teachers. Our elders.

Sacred lives lost.

And for what? How did they go?

How do we go? How DO we go?

A suffering no one should know.

We pray today for no more incidents. No more lives lost. No more injuries. No one's safety denied.

We honor. We memorialize. We pray.

We recognize the enormity of this epidemic.

We own our responsibility to change.

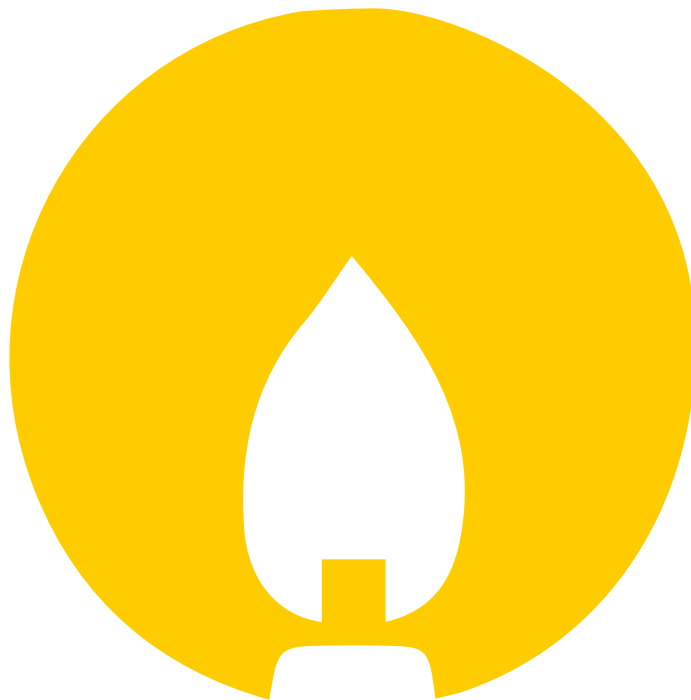
Futures never had. Milestones not celebrated. Discoveries not realized.

Let it not be in vain. Let us find meaning. Let us take lessons. Let us be safe.

We are all connected.

## If you rush through life

People are so often in a hurry pushing others out of the way. If you rush through life and speed when you are driving, tailgating, and driving in and out of lanes, do you think that you will get there any faster and safely? If you begin to pay attention to where you are going and what you are doing and how you are behaving and try as best you can to focus on driving safer, would it help? So many people are injured and killed on our streets every single day. You can help change this. The good you do today may save a life, a family, a community. Give the world the best you have, the best you can. Be the best person you can by being considerate, by being careful, by taking time. Can you stop for people crossing the street? For you see in the end it is between you and God. It was never between anyone else ever.





## What is World Day of Remembrance?

The United Nations proclaimed that the third Sunday of November each year shall be the World Day of Remembrance (WDoR) for Traffic Crash Victims – **a day to remember the many millions killed and injured in traffic crashes around the world, and for bringing together families, friends and all others affected by this epidemic.**

Three years ago, in New York City, Families for Safe Streets (FSS) held the first ever WDR event in the United States. This year, FSS chapters across the country will also join together in remembering those killed and injured in traffic crashes.

As we know all too well, traffic crashes and injuries are sudden, violent, traumatic events. Their impact is long-lasting, often permanent. The cumulative toll is truly tremendous. **The grief and distress experienced by this huge number of people is all the greater because many of the victims are young, because many of the crashes could and should have been prevented and because society's response is currently inadequate.**

This special Remembrance Day is intended to respond to the great need of crash victims for public recognition of their loss and suffering. It has also become an important tool to press for change, since it offers the opportunity to demonstrate the enormous scale and the urgent need for action.



## Additional Resources

Families for Safe Streets is happy to offer additional support and resources to assist you in delivering the most impactful Sermon for Safe Streets in your community. We can:

- Share statistics of crashes in your specific neighborhood/community
- Arrange for one of our members to speak at your services or other programming
- Write a piece for your newsletter or blog
- Provide more information on specific street safety solutions
- Or help in any other way we can!

Please also consider asking one of your members who has been personally impacted by traffic violence to share their personal experience during your sermon or other programming.

## Videos

- Drive Like Your Family Lives Here: Feel free to use the Families for Safe Streets video available on Youtube in the original length 15 minute video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAnSw3nzj0U>) as well as a shorter 5 minute version (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yImrYMM4Lak>).
- Families for Safe Streets WDoR film: A video of our first WDoR event. (<https://www.streetfilms.org/world-day-of-remembrance-for-road-traffic-victims-2015-nyc/>)
- WDoR Videos from around the world by the international WDoR organizers. (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PIEgxsfcpgUInUos-DUqZHfRrBCTANg9>)

## Global World Day of Remembrance Resources

- United Nations: The United Nations issued resolution 60/5 in 2005 (<https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/5>) calling for the establishment of a World Day of Remembrance for traffic crash victims and also has a dedicated page (<http://www.un.org/en/events/trafficvictimsday/index.shtml>) on their website for the event which has the proclamation, background information, resources, videos and more.
- WDoR Events: You can see a list of participating countries and organizations from previous years World Day of Remembrance events here (<https://worlddayofremembrance.org/archives/wdr2017-events/>) and also attached.
- World Health Organization (WHO): They have a wealth of information online about traffic violence and the World Day of Remembrance. ([https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/road\\_traffic/activities/remembrance\\_day/en/](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/road_traffic/activities/remembrance_day/en/))

## Support Services

Visit [FamiliesforSafeStreets.org](http://FamiliesforSafeStreets.org). We offer a range of supportive services including:

- peer mentoring
- monthly support communities for those who've been injured and those who've lost loved ones.
- logistical assistance and referrals
- a downloadable resource guide ([transalt.org/familiesforsafestreets/resourceguide](http://transalt.org/familiesforsafestreets/resourceguide)) for what to do in the aftermath of a crash

## How else you can help?

- Spread the word and encourage more clergy to participate in *Sermons for Safe Streets*.  
Hashtag: #SermonsForSafeStreets  
Facebook: *Sermons for Safe Streets* ([facebook.com/events/110841489836289](https://facebook.com/events/110841489836289))
- Share contacts with us for interfaith coalitions, denominational umbrella groups and others who can encourage each congregation to devote some or all of their sermon or other community programming on World Day of Remembrance weekend to this public health issue.
- Register your participation at *SermonsForSafeStreets.org* and send us a copy of your sermon so that we can share with others next year.
- Have congregants sign the **Crash Not Accident Pledge** (p. 20)
- Post the Families for Safe Streets flyer on your congregation's bulletin board (p. 22)
- Join our clergy task force (register on *SermonsForSafeStreets.org*)



# Crash NOT Accident Pledge

## Commit to #CrashNotAccident

Words matter. They convey meaning and influence perceptions and actions. We invite you to join us in committing to communicate responsibly about traffic safety by taking the #CrashNotAccident pledge in advance of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims on November 18, 2018.

## Why take the pledge?

For too long, we've considered traffic deaths and severe injuries to be inevitable side effects of modern life. Yet "accidents" are tragedies that can be prevented. These are preventable incidents -- crashes, but not necessarily accidents -- for which proven solutions exist, such as designing roadways, managing speeds, and setting policies that prioritize safety.

## Who should take the pledge?

Individuals, agencies and media outlets have already made commitments to using crash not accidents. Police departments in Denver, New York City and San Francisco have modified their language. The Associated Press Stylebook issued guidance to reporters to avoid using the word accident because it "can be read as exonerating the person responsible."

## What can you do?

Sign the pledge at [crashnotaccident.com](http://crashnotaccident.com)! And, commit to Vision Zero. Since 2014, more than 30 U.S. cities have committed to Vision Zero to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries in their communities, coalescing leaders in the realms of transportation, public health, policymaking, law enforcement, and in the larger community.

**We need to transform our language to reflect traffic crashes as a public health crisis. Encourage your local newspapers, agencies and others to take the pledge today too.**



## About Families for Safe Streets

Families for Safe Streets (FSS) confronts traffic violence and its epidemic of tragic injuries and deaths. We advocate for life-saving changes and provide support to those affected by deadly crashes in our communities.

FSS was founded in 2014 by the families of loved ones who were killed or injured in crashes. Ours is a growing movement to fight for safe streets in New York City -- hundreds of members, representing the full spectrum of New York City's diverse population -- working tirelessly for awareness, policy change, and legislation. Families for Safe Streets has agreed to share this clergy kit with Denver Streets Partnership to spread the word about preventing traffic crashes and the work of Vision Zero to get there.

We have transformed our grief by telling our personal stories of loss to effect change. We know, and have proof that pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles can safely co-exist on our streets. We fight to eliminate all fatalities in traffic crashes because no death is acceptable. These are preventable "crashes" not accidents, and the reckless driving and dangerous street design that cause them have proven solutions.

As we know all too well, traffic crashes and injuries are sudden, violent, traumatic events. The grief and distress experienced is tremendous. We believe that no one should have to endure the loss and trauma alone. FSS provides support services and logistical assistance to those affected by the trauma of traffic violence.

We know that change is hard. For that reason FSS is committed to this formidable challenge. We want to insure that our fellow Denverites can navigate their neighborhoods on foot, bicycle or car without fear, and never have to endure the pain and suffering we have known.

Please visit our website for more information on our monthly support communities, peer mentoring and to download our resource guide for what to do in the aftermath of a crash. **Please also share information with your congregants about our support services and distribute the following flyer.**





Have you been injured in a traffic crash?  
Or know someone who has been killed?

**You are NOT alone!**

Every 5 days someone is killed in Denver as a result of a crash

**---- We are here to support you ----**

Peer Mentoring  
Healing and Support Groups  
Referrals  
Guidance in legal and  
insurance processes  
Community  
Advocacy

**844-FSS-PEER / [info@familiesforsafestreeets.org](mailto:info@familiesforsafestreeets.org)**

**[FamiliesForSafeStreets.org](http://FamiliesForSafeStreets.org)**

## Personal Stories From Families For Safe Streets Members

*Additional stories are interspersed throughout this kit.*

Some of our members have shared their stories so that you can understand the urgency of having faith leaders join the movement for safer streets. You are welcome to share any of their painful experiences in your *Sermon for Safe Streets*. While these stories were compiled in NYC, they universally convey the profound devastation and loss that comes from losing someone dear, whether in NYC or Denver. We hope their testimonies will inspire you and your congregants to join with us and raise awareness about this preventable public health crisis.

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Victoria Nicodemus, age 30, died 12/6/2015

*By Elsa Mauer, Victoria's mother*

Every year, my daughter Victoria pulled out all the stops with her Christmas decorations and was spending the weekend shopping for baubles for the fresh Christmas tree in her apartment. She was smiling and happy with her soon to be fiancé when an SUV driver drove onto the sidewalk, struck Victoria from behind, drove with her on his car for 30 feet, when she fell to the ground and he ran her over. She was taken to the hospital but it was too late.

I was like many parents who feel confident that their adult children would never have anything bad happen to them. Everyday horrors happened to other people. Victoria had lived in San Diego, Chicago and New York, was an Art Curator, a world traveler, and raised to be a productive and caring person. All of this lulls parents into a false sense of security that our children are safe.... until we find out they can be gone in an instant.



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**Seth Jay Kahn, age 22, Died 11/4/2009***By Debbie Kahn, Seth's Mother*

My only child is dead. Seth was our one and only and he was one of a kind. He did not follow where the path led; instead he chose to go where there was no path and leave a trail. Seth left his mark with his sweet, outgoing, quirky personality, in his amazing art, and with his unique sense of style. When he had an idea of something that he wanted to do, be it his artwork, building something, creating and editing stop-motion animation shorts, going on a study abroad trip to Antarctica, or a stage production, he figured it out. Through perseverance, he would get it accomplished and usually in the most amazing ways.



Seth was excited about pursuing his dream of inventing and designing toys and creating a streetwear clothing line. He was a student at F.I.T. in their Toy Design department. He also had a job with a display company and had just installed the holiday windows at Lord & Taylor's on Fifth Avenue in NYC as well as the Hudson Bay Company in Toronto, Canada. He had been put in charge of a new account at Lincoln Center and had installed their 50th anniversary display.

Seth said of his artwork, “My inspiration for many of my pieces comes from everyday objects like fruits and vegetables. I try to infuse each piece with irony as well, so they are more than one-line puns. I try to give humor to my artwork as I see life as a place where we can enjoy all that is around us and have fun in whatever we do. I feel that there is no need to grow up and act like an adult if you don't have to. So, by making my work comedic, and in a way juvenile it keeps me from having to act my age.”

His work and his life were best summed up by the quote he always had at the end of his e-mails, which was a quote from the Muppet Movie by Jim Henson, “Life's like a movie, write your own ending. Keep believing, keep pretending.”

On Seth's way to work on November 4, 2009 as he walked in the crosswalk with the right of way across 9th Avenue at 53rd Street in Manhattan, a reckless bus driver made a left turn, running over and killing him. He was just 22-years-old and exactly one month short of his 23rd birthday. I am sure this was not the ending to the movie of his life that he envisioned.

The loss of my child, my one and only, is a tragedy beyond belief. None of our efforts will ever bring him back to me, but I know we are preventing these tragedies from happening to others. It gives meaning and purpose to my life now and is the most important thing I do.

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Ariel Russo, age 4, died 6/4/2013

*by Sofia Russo*

On March 10, 2009, I became a mother. Ariel Russo, my first child and only daughter, was born that day. I held her in my arms and I told her that she was born to make the world a better place. Having her in my life was pure joy. Every day I was inspired by her inquisitiveness, kindness, creativity, exuberance, bravery and love.



On June 4th, 2013, my family and I learned the ultimate lesson about how traffic violence can end the life of a child and completely shatter an entire family; crushing all the hopes, dreams, and plans you thought you had for your future. On that Tuesday morning, my 4-year-old daughter, Ariel Marina Russo, was walking to school hand-in-hand with my mother. They were on the sidewalk when they were struck by a reckless driver. I remember when I got the call at work from the officer letting me know that my daughter and my mother had been hit by a car. I remember the moment he said it, I tried to imagine something minor leaving them with just scrapes and bruises but when the officer told me her heart beats per minute, my legs gave out, I was on the floor and I couldn't breathe and I couldn't hear anything because I knew that my daughter's little heart was giving out as we spoke. When I got to the hospital my husband was hysterical and I knew she was gone.

Going home that night without our baby girl was excruciating, heart-breaking, incomprehensible. Our apartment had her written all over it: her Barbie dream house, her Baby Alive doll, the clothes she handmade for her small stuffed animals from her socks, her art work on the refrigerator, her clothes and shoes all over, and on her bed- the rainbow build-a-bear she had just made. We had to live with a constant sick feeling, like we had poison in us. Our son asked us where Ariel was every single day. When we told him she was in Heaven, he responded "Maybe she's just playing hide-and-seek because that's her favorite game" and he'd look around under the table, in the closets, behind the doors. He did this every day for about six months and we had to start therapy for our 3-year-old because we didn't know what to do.

As for my mother, she was in critical condition, required multiple major surgeries, and had to spend one month in the hospital. She is still in the process of recovering from her injuries today.

I never want this to happen to anyone, ever. I don't want other parents and grandparents to feel this. I don't want other siblings to go through this. As someone who knows this loss and this pain, I believe I owe it to all New Yorkers, to all children who walk to school, and to my daughter, Ariel, to do whatever it takes to prevent this from happening to another child, to another family. This is why I pour out my heart and soul out, re-telling my darkest experience. Because even though it hurts to relive, you need to know what I know, so that together, we can change the culture of driving and save lives.

**As a mother who lost a child to speeding and as an Assistant Principal at a New York City public school, I pray no parent will have to understand the depths of pain that we know.**

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**Bernadette Karna, crash survivor**

On June 8, 2016, a reckless driver hit me as I crossed the street in the crosswalk with the light. The driver dragged me 50 feet and then fled, leaving me for dead.

While in the ambulance, I thought I was going to die. I couldn't breathe, as I drifted in and out of consciousness. While in the ER, the pain from the insertion of the chest tube was unbearable. I laid in the ICU recovery room for days attached to various tubes and monitors. I was overwhelmed and in constant pain. My ribs were crushed, requiring surgical fixation with metal plates, and I had numerous other fractures to my back, shoulder, knee and foot. I was in physical therapy for nearly two years and unable to work for twenty months.

Surviving a crash is traumatic, exhaustive and life-altering. Every six minutes, another person in New York City is injured in a motor vehicle crash. The clock is ticking.

**Please help us raise awareness of traffic violence and share what we have learned the hard way with the members of your place of worship during World Day of Remembrance.**



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**Ella Bandes, age 22, Died 2/4/2013***By Ken Bandes*

Six years ago, my 23-year-old daughter Ella was struck and killed by a careless bus driver as she crossed the street. She was a dancer, a musician, and an artist. She was a beautiful person, my daughter, and my best friend. Ella was so happy to



be a New Yorker and living in on her own after college in Bushwick/Ridgewood – she loved the energy, diversity and the food choices. One day she hauled me into that supermarket down the street and proudly pointed out the ethnic food items in every aisle. She wanted to emulate her brother’s interest in cooking and insisted I help her purchase various food items so she could experiment – with varying results, I’ve heard.

So just as her neighborhood was inclusive of every background and lifestyle, so too does traffic violence not discriminate. There were three people killed at the intersection where Ella died in a three year period year period – all from diverse backgrounds and circumstances but none of them were spared the repercussions of reckless driving, poor street design and lack of attention to street safety.

It did not seem to us that life would go on, or that it should. What has made it possible to go on is the kindness and help of our community, and the chance to help life go on for others. That is what we honor as members of Families for Safe Streets.

I ask you to do what you can. Even if it feels like a drop, believe that those drops become a multitude, an ocean. Together we can change this city.

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### Devan Sipher, crash survivor

I shouldn't be here.

I shouldn't be alive. On July 3, 2015, I was run over by a double-decker sight-seeing bus while I was crossing Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village.

There's a traffic video showing me on Sixth Avenue in the crosswalk on a green light.



There's another traffic video showing the driver of the bus speeding through a stop sign on West Fourth Street before plowing into me head-on. And there's a video on YouTube showing a river of my blood flowing down Sixth Avenue.

As I rolled under the bus's wheels I remember feeling grateful—grateful that my head was not under the wheels. I spent three months in the ICU at Bellevue Hospital having multiple surgeries.

The thing about traffic crashes is they don't discriminate. Everyone is at risk, regardless of race, class, religion or sexual orientation. Every person is at risk the moment you step out of a building. And trust me, none of you want to endure what I've gone through.

It took two months before I could stand. I had open wounds for more than a year. I still go to physical therapy twice a week, and I suffer from neuropathic pain that feels like someone is trying to cut off my toes with piano wire. And I'm one of the lucky crash victims.

I have remained grateful throughout this experience. I hope I can also be grateful to you and all of New York City's religious leaders for your effort to make New York a safer and more glorious city.

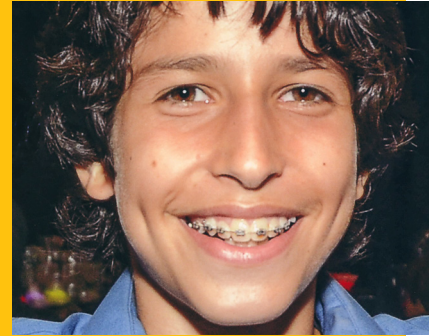
*\*photo by William Farrington courtesy of The New York Post*

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## Sammy Cohen Eckstein, age 12, died 10/8/2013

By Amy Cohen, Sammy's mother

My family's life is divided into two parts - before and after October 8, 2013, when my son Sammy was struck by a reckless driver in front of our home.



Sammy was just two months shy of his thirteenth birthday. A warm, loving, energetic, and bright child. He was full of life. He loved sports and played on a travel soccer team where he was the anchor of the defense. Only a few weeks before he was killed, Sammy rode a 100-mile century bike ride with my husband all around New York City. Sammy was comfortable in his own skin and put on no airs. He made friends easily and was kind. He hugged us every day, regularly said he loved us, frequently held hands while walking with us, and adored his 15-year-old sister.

Just days before he died, he wrote this beautiful short assignment for school about his name:

*"Sammy Cohen Eckstein...My name means God heard. It means high priests, and it means architectural strength. My name means pretending times are good, when they are bad. It means leadership, and it means pain. My name was chosen because it sounded like happiness, but that happiness put an invisible weight on my shoulders. The weight of leadership.*

*I am Samuel, the one who God heard, Cohen, the one who (with my family and ancestors) lead a religion, Eckstein, the one cornerstone among thousands. The one corner that has to support everybody, while withstanding pain and sorrow.*

*I like my name, I just can't imagine myself as a Jacob or a Luca. I'm a Sam that's just who I am. I used to prefer Sammy, but now it sounds too young and childish. Sam is more substantial. It's a name that sounds like stubborn impartiality and neutrality. That, is who I really am, somebody who is like a moon to the earth. I'm close to the center, but always closer to one side than the other. Sometimes I have a strong feeling about some things but most of the time I prefer to be neutral. My real name is Samuel, but that is such a religious name. I think that religion is something that is there so that you always have hope, so that you can pray to something or somebody to solve your problems. I'm not religious enough to be a traditional Samuel. I think that if I were a Samuel, that is not what it would mean. To me Samuel is always at the extremes. Samuel is either a contented servant, or an angry flame content to kill and devour for power. I am neither a Samuel nor a Sammy, they are too extreme, I am in the middle, I am a Sam. I am like a lake. I look pure and simple, but if look in the right places you can find a lot beneath my surface."*

Sammy was just weeks away from celebrating his Bar Mitzvah. It would perhaps have been the time when he publicly changed his name from Sammy to Sam with his friends and family. But he never had the opportunity to grow up.

His death has rocked the very foundation of who we are and forever changed our lives. It is a struggle just to keep going without him.

It's been equally horrific to learn that his death is part of a much larger, preventable public health crisis. One that together we could end. **So please, for Sammy, be a leader as he was. Join with us and help end this unnecessary suffering.**

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**Giovanni Ampuero, age 9, died 4/28/2018***By Raul Ampuero, Giovanni's father*

I lost my nine-year-old vibrant, funny, adorable and loving son Giovanni just six months ago. He was the heart and soul of our family. He loved to dance and do crazy things to make us laugh. His smile and laughter were infectious.

After my son passed away I couldn't even leave my house. I stayed home for a week. It was very difficult, and likely will be for the rest of my life. I cry and I cry, sometimes I sit in my car and I don't want to go home. I miss Giovanni so much.

It has been very difficult for me to speak out. But I have to do this. Why?

**Because I don't want any more children to die.** It's inexcusable for a parent to bury his own son. It's unacceptable. I know that after I die, I will be with my son, and that knowledge gives me the relief I need to fight. I hope you will join with me in remembering those who have died and helping support an end to the epidemic of traffic violence.



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**Cara Cancelmo, crash survivor**

I was a dancer and a college student -- carefree and loving life. I had grown up in New York and was excited to be home for a visit during my freshman year. This was my city. I grew up in Manhattan. I loved the liveliness and missed it.

I tried to hail a cab in the rain. I wasn't planning on crossing the street, but a cab saw me and stopped for me on the other side of the street. So I crossed the street and another cab hit me while I was trying to get into the car.

The next thing I remember was waking up in the hospital and my parents so relieved that I had survived.

I was lucky to be alive. But being hit in a car crash is a life altering event. The visceral pain and memories of having a multi-ton vehicle catapult your body into the air is incredibly traumatic - physically and emotionally. My shoulder was shattered and will be a source of chronic pain for the rest of my life. But the emotional trauma was also immense. I relived the crash and became frightened just being on the street. The City I loved became a place I am afraid to visit. My carefree days are now gone.



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**Medhat Sami, age 73, died 6/3/2013**

*By Kevin Sami, Medhat's son*

My dad was killed in a crash over five years ago on June 3, 2013. He was stopped at a red light when a speeding, distracted driver plowed into him at over sixty miles per hour without braking or swerving. My dad died on impact and my family lives his loss every day and carries this trauma with every step we take.



At first, my dad's crash and death dominated my thoughts about him. It's hard to not let such a traumatic loss color every inch of your world. But over time, I'm grateful that the pain of that day has faded some, and the person my dad was has come back into focus for me. He was a brilliant doctor who emigrated from Egypt in 1967 to join the residency program at Bellevue Hospital. He married my mom, Viviane Sami, in 1976, and had three children. He thrived here and built a beautiful, rich life. His was a life of service, foremost to his family and his calling in medicine. He cared for his patients and communities with the same warmth he filled our home with, and he taught us everyday what it means to be a good person and a loving dad and husband. I like to think that when I do something kind, it's always him doing it with me.

My dad fought his entire life to be here, he really did. Our hearts break for all of the moments he has missed and all of the happiness that has been taken from him. He had so much more to give and to teach and to love - we do our best to honor him by giving and teaching and loving the way he showed us to.

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[sermonsforsafestreets.org](http://sermonsforsafestreets.org)  
[familiesforsafestreets.org](http://familiesforsafestreets.org)  
844-FSS-PEER  
[info@familiesforsafestreets.org](mailto:info@familiesforsafestreets.org)

**Thank you for participating in  
*Sermons for Safe Streets.***

**Together we can prevent the  
preventable.**

**Register your participation at  
[sermonsforsafestreeets.org](http://sermonsforsafestreeets.org).**

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or suggestions:

[info@familiesforsafestreeets.org](mailto:info@familiesforsafestreeets.org)

844-FSS-PEER

**With gratitude,  
Amy Cohen  
Debbie Kahn  
Chana Widawski**