

# Art helps heal the pain in South Carolina

By Denise Haerr

CHARLESTON, S.C. – When one approaches Charleston, S.C., you become aware of why this town is called The Holy City. Its skyline is defined by the spires of more than 400 places of worship.

When one of those holy places, the Mother AME Emanuel Church, was the target of a massacre one year ago, the entire town was rocked to its core. Nine souls were lost due to the hatred of one.

Upon an extended recent visit to Charleston, we were aware of the immense pain still being felt, yet also the healing that permeated its populace.

We were invited to an art gallery opening, The Holy City: Art of Love, Unity & Resurrection, created in the immediate aftermath. The community needed to focus its pain somewhere and the survivors, victims and their families turned to art. The exhibit space is a sanctuary for the healing to begin.

We were given a glimpse of the raw emotions of a year ago through works that encourages healing, provokes thoughtful discourse, promotes peace, and reveals community.

While in the gallery, surrounded by the people touched by personal loss, we felt such love and forgiveness radiating from the space.

If “art is a wound turned into light,” as artist Georges Braque has said, then The Holy City: Art of Love, Unity & Resurrection has shed light on the tragedy while also providing hope and peace to its community.