

Dear Friends

Thank you for coming this evening, for prayer, for reflection, for gathering in solidarity with the Jewish Community of Pittsburgh, and with good people everywhere.

We welcome all of you the JCCP/CBT this evening, members of our congregations from throughout Bergen County, distinguished Rabbis, and honored guests, and especially so many of our elected officials and members of the law enforcement community who have joined us tonight. I want to say to you that despite the rising tide of hate crimes in our great nation in general, and the staggering increase in hate crimes directed directly towards the Jewish community in particular, your presence here this evening is a reminder to all that whatever threats are before us, we do not face them alone.

We will always remember where we were when we learned of the terrible attack at the Tree of Life synagogue, an attack that news outlets as well as the ADL have confirmed to be the deadliest attack on Jews in this country in US history. This takes its place among a series of violent and terrorist attacks against religious institutions that have taken place across America in recent years.

26 murdered at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs Texas in November 2017.

Nine murdered at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston SC in June 2015.

Six people murdered at the Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, in August 2012.

These are but a few. Hate filled people armed with automatic weapons is a recipe for disaster.

With profound sadness we add the Tree of Life Synagogue, a proud and significant part of the Pittsburgh Jewish and greater communities for over 150 years. 11 murdered, others injured. A community grieving. And *Clal Yisrael*, the worldwide community of the Jewish people everywhere are speechless. We don't have the words. We don't have the words.

Sadly, the vicious murderer who perpetrated this unprecedented act of anti-Semitic murder did have words “I just want to kill Jews” according to the FBI report shared with the public. So, this attack, not only shares in the trend in America of recent years, but also is one of a series of violent and hate filled assaults on the Jewish people that began thousands of years ago and still, despite the freedoms and acceptance we enjoy on this great nation, we must protect ourselves against every day.

That is why we have come to out today. To cry. To demand actions. To take strength among each other even as we demonstrate solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Pittsburgh who are mourning at this time. And to remember by name those murdered for the simply taking advantage of America’s greatest gift: the right to live as Jews, pray as Jews, to attend a house of worship, a synagogue just like this one, or any of the other synagogue represented here this evening, and experience the meaning and joy of our heritage.

Yesterday’s brutal attack on this historic synagogue and the precious Jews who worshipped there remind us that this is a gift we must never take for granted. A gift that we must, through our faith, our activism, our votes, and our strength, make sure we continue to enjoy, and that all American can enjoy. And May we see speedily in our day the fulfillment of the words of the Prophet Micah:

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; And none shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken. (Micah 4:4)