



A Statement in Solidarity with the Tree of Life Congregations, Our Jewish Sisters and Brothers, and Our Neighbors Who Stand Against Hatred and Fear

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.—Jeremiah 31:15 (NRSV)

The Pennsylvania Council of Churches is a coalition of church bodies and agencies in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania working together for Christian unity for the sake of the world. We join with our neighbors across the state, the country, and the world, standing in horror and disbelief over the mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27th. We express our sadness and grief to all whose lives have been touched by this tragedy, and all who live in fear because of it. Our hearts and our prayers are with the families and friends of the victims, the Tree of Life congregations, the neighborhood of Squirrel Hill, and the greater community as they seek to cope with lives cut short by the hate-fueled actions of the shooter. When one part of the body hurts, we all hurt.

We lament that we are living in a time where hate-filled rhetoric is igniting the spark of long and deeply held fears of the “other,” and where the resulting fire is aimed at hurting anyone who appears to embody the object of that fear. We affirm God’s call to love our neighbors, and to love our enemies as well, difficult as that feels at times like this. We choose the more radical path of love. We call upon our elected officials and anyone in roles of leadership to call for an end to violence in any form in our communities, and to encourage dialogue and understanding. We ask that God’s love, justice, and compassion infuse our thoughts and our actions—and that it may find and soften the hearts of those for whom hate has become a blinding emotion.

We stand in solidarity with all who are working for a more just and loving world in the hope that we may stop further violence and bloodshed in the name of hate and fear. In services of remembrance and candlelight vigils, we join our Jewish brothers and sisters in support and strength of spirit. In times of sorrow and tragedy, we find hope in taking to heart the call to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” Standing with others in the community, we shine the light of God with confidence that it is stronger than the darkness that surrounds us, just as love is ultimately stronger than hate. Beyond fear and pain, we seek ways to strengthen all of our communities through a renewed commitment to listen and learn from one another.

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October 31, 2018