

Dear Friends,

I have just returned from a community-wide security meeting sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council in response to the heinous anti-Semitic incidents that have occurred in Bergen County over these last several weeks. The meeting was attended by Jewish and community leaders and State, County, and local law enforcement and Homeland Security professionals.

There are several messages that I'd like to share with you regarding this moment in our community's history:

First of all, we stand in solidarity with everyone who has been a victim of these hateful crimes. *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh l'zeh*—all of Israel is responsible for one another. Every synagogue is our synagogue; every Jew is our brother or sister. Despite our differences, we stand united and resolute, determined to overcome and stop these repugnant attacks.

Still, more important than the crimes themselves, has been the outpouring of support and concern from the larger community. Below I have included a letter submitted to the Bergen Record by the Upper Pascack Valley Clergy Association which eloquently denounces these crimes and states the unwavering commitment that our Christian neighbors have to the values of peace and justice and friendship.

Moreover, our law enforcement officials are dedicated to our safety and well-being. I am particularly grateful to the Township of Washington Police Department who has been in constant communication with our professional and lay leadership, and has stepped up their surveillance of our property.

I am convinced of our safety. I am also determined not to let the hatred of others interfere with the sacred activities of our congregation. However, there are several safety tips that are critical for us to bear in mind during this period:

- **Stay alert. If you see something, say something.** The law enforcement officials all made one thing exceedingly clear: it is *never* a bother to respond to a call regarding a suspicious person, object or event. We need to trust our instincts and communicate with the police. We have been instructed to call either 911 or 866-4SAFENJ (472-3365).
- **Take measures to enhance the security of the building.** This includes low-cost security measures, including keeping the building locked; creating neighborhood watches; and sharing information with our nearby synagogue neighbors.
- **Most importantly, we will continue to enjoy a vital and full communal life.** As Charles McKenna, the Director of the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security stated, “there is a fine line between prudence and paranoia.” We will remain prudent, but we will not allow these crimes to inhibit the full expression of who we are as a sacred Jewish community.

Tonight at 7:30 we will gather to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.” Let us respond to this challenging moment

by coming together and fulfilling Dr. King's dream by celebrating our lives and our freedom, and rededicating ourselves to the Jewish value of *tikkun olam*, healing this broken world of ours.

Please feel free to reach out to me, President Lyle Press, or Erika Kremin, our Temple Administrator with any questions or concerns.

In the meantime, I send you warmest regards for a Shabbat shalom,
Ruth

Here is the letter sent by our Clergy Association:

To the Editor:

To our distress, we have noted the wave of anti-Semitic acts that have occurred in Maywood, Hackensack, and Paramus in recent weeks. These acts deserve to be named for what they are: crimes that terrorize, threaten, and dehumanize the Jewish community. As a fellowship of Christian and Jewish clergy that meets regularly to enjoy fellowship and to listen together for God's guidance for the boroughs in which we serve, the Upper Pascack Valley Clergy Association deplores these actions. While these cowardly acts are directed at our Jewish brothers and sisters, the threat they represent goes even deeper. They inhibit the free exercise of religion that we, as Christians and Jews together with all persons of faith, prize as citizens of the United States.

Such acts can not be tolerated. As leaders of faith communities and as inheritors of the American tradition of religious freedom, we decry these hate-filled acts as both sacrilegious and anti-American.

We call upon all houses of worship, and all persons of good will, to join with us in rejecting anti-religious bias in any form. We particularly urge our non-Jewish coreligionists to stand alongside our Jewish colleagues to make common cause with the temples and synagogues

in their communities. And, in the face of these incidents that expose both the persistence and ugliness of anti-Semitism, we invite all fellow citizens to perform positive actions that reaffirm a common commitment to “one nation under God, indivisible.”

Sincerely,

(names listed in alphabetical order, by person's last name)

Sudhama Ananda, Park Ridge United Methodist Church

Mark Biddelman, Temple Emmanuel, Woodcliff Lake

Gerald Friedman, Temple Beth Sholom, Park Ridge

Sam Goertz, Montvale Evangelical Free Church, Montvale

Charles Granstrand, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Park Ridge

Ed Hasse, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Montvale

Wilma Houston-White, First Congregational United Church of Christ in Park Ridge

Paul Janssen, Pascack Reformed Church, Park Ridge

Frank Kowar, Hillsdale United Methodist Church

Regina Lambert-Hayut, Temple Beth-Or, Washington Township

Debra Orenstein, Temple B'nai Israel, Emerson

Ben Shull, Temple Emmanuel, Woodcliff Lake

Robert Ulak, Our Lady of Mercy Church, Park Ridge

Tom Willingham, Community Counseling Service of Pascack Valley

Ruth Zlotnick, Temple Beth-Or, Washington Township