



Dear Friend,

STATEMENT ON TRAGEDY AT TREE OF LIFE SYNAGOGUE IN PITTSBURGH

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

October 29, 2018

The New York State Council of Churches offers its heartfelt condolences to the many families who lost loved ones at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill. We pray for their healing. We also want to encourage any and all actions and gestures helping them to grieve and heal. We walk with the Tree of Life Synagogue in their journey.

This profoundly evil act against Tree of Life was an affront to every person who holds true to the affirmation that we are all loved and created in the image of Yahweh. We confess that our own Christian tradition has historically and presently been twisted in order to justify discrimination, violence and hatred against Jewish people. We disavow this abuse of the Christian tradition and instead align our selves more firmly with the life giving aspects of the Christian faith. We feel a particular affinity for the ideal of Tikkun Olam where we perform acts of kindness and construct public policies which perfect or repair the world and particularly favor those who may be at a disadvantage. In a recent post, The Reverend Dr. William Barber, Co-Director of the Poor People's Campaign reminded us of what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said after four little girls were murdered in an Alabama church; that "we must be concerned not only about who murdered them but the system, the way of life, the philosophy which produced the murderer."

We call on people of goodwill around the world, to not let violence deter them from faithful religious practice or principled action in the public square. We have a special message for all faith leaders to be strong, compassionate, prophetic, and accepting in light of this tragedy. We especially want to encourage our chaplains which serve in our state prisons to persist in their

noble interfaith work with their colleagues, and be extra sensitive to prisoners and staff who may feel particularly vulnerable to discrimination.

We call on our 7,000 congregations across the state of New York to reach out to Jewish communities in their midst to acknowledge the pain of this tragedy and be sensitive to the particular vulnerability they may feel. Prayers and sermons offered in worship, participation in Jewish and interfaith commemorations and vigils scheduled in your community are important along with your sustained efforts to stand up to violence and prejudice in all of its forms. We also encourage principled action to enact public policies which can prevent gun violence.

Finally, we commend to you [this message](#) from the **National Council of Churches** which urges prayers for peace and laments not only the shooting in Squirrel Hill, but speaks against politically motivated bomb threats against national political leaders across the country and the racially inspired shooting of two African-Americans which took place this past week in Kentucky.

May the love of our creator abundantly embrace all affected by the tragedy at Squirrel Hill and the many others in our country who have been traumatized by bigotry and violence. May all of us embrace the sacred call to be Repairers of the Breach.

In love and faith.

The Reverend Peter Cook
Executive Director

The Reverend Dustin Wright
President