

October 28th, 2018/19th of Cheshvan, 5779

This morning there will be coffee at the Shul during Shul School hours, 10 and noon, and I will be there throughout, so that we can support each other.

-There will be an officer in front of our shul during Shul School as well as during the 2:00 pm talk with Prof. Michael Tabachnick.

****This evening at 6:30, please join us for a community-wide memorial at Ohev Shalom at 6:30 pm in Richboro.

Dear chevreh,

The Jewish world is small. We have KHN congregants whose closest relatives go to the Tree of Life synagogue, and those whose college is a block away. I have a friend and colleague whose close friend was shot and killed. Several of my Reconstructionist colleagues were there that morning and lost friends or are visiting wounded friends in the hospital now. Many people I know have friends and family who live a block from the massacre. I'm certain there are others of us at KHN who have dear ones there. This massacre is a nightmare for our people and taps into our worst trauma as a Jewish people.

Just last Shabbat many of us gathered on the National Refugee Shabbat organized by HIAS. The terrorist, anti-Semitic slaughterer was obsessed with HIAS. The director of campaigns at HIAS, Rebecca Kirzner, spoke these words at a vigil in Philadelphia last evening:

"Tonight, I am speaking from a place of deep mourning. It is a sadness only possible from the largest-ever attack on our community. A sadness because we live in an era of incitement to violence and incitement to hate. A sadness because there are 11 people who went to synagogue this morning for services and never returned. Their loss is our loss. They could have been any of us – and they are all of us.

It is also a devastation that comes from knowing that the shooter had knowledge of - and tweeted about - the congregations that participated in HIAS' National Refugee Shabbat last week. What started as a powerful and beautiful showing of our community's commitment to refugees and to a more welcoming, just and compassionate country became part of the deranged narrative in a hateful and vengeful act.

Earlier today, we at HIAS received an e-mail with the subject line "What they hate is the best of us." And I believe that. This shooter could not stand the idea of Jews sitting together peacefully at shul. He couldn't stand the idea of Jews supporting the rights and dignity of others. What he couldn't stand was the best of who we are.

In times of mourning, Jews comfort each other by saying "May their memory be for a blessing." It is a statement that is far more powerful than offering our thoughts and prayers. It is an entreaty that there be some kind of light from their memory, a light powerful enough to puncture a hole in the darkness and guide us through.

May the 11 members of our family who were murdered today be remembered throughout history as the best of us. And may their memory give us the strength to be the best of ourselves, and to continue to work to mend the broken pieces of our world."

From a place of solidarity and hope, my teacher Rabbi Nancy Fuchs-Kreimer wrote the following inspired by Pastor Niemoeller:

First they came for the Muslims and I was not a Muslim. But I said "Not on my watch!"

Then they came for the undocumented and my grandfathers were undocumented and i said "Refugees make America great."

Then they came for Trans and non-binary people and I said "We are all created in God's image, no exceptions!"

And then they came for women survivors of assault. And I said "Are you friggin kidding?"

And they have been coming since before we were a nation for indigenous and black people. And I haven't said enough.

And then they came for Jews. I am a Jew.

And friends of different faiths and races and sexual and gender identities stood with me and said "We will outlive them!"

My love and prayers, and in resistance and hope,

Rabbi Diana

