

Dear Temple Family,

Although the Temple has been closed for the MLK Jr. observance, with office and other staff home with their families, like yourselves, we have been painfully following events since they began to unfold this past Shabbat. I extend my thanks to Phil Feinberg, who has come in today, enabling us to send out these words.

Here at home, leadership was in immediate contact with each other, with local law enforcement, the FBI, ADL, Rabbis throughout SD county, and with our sister Poway congregations. I, along with Blue Crew volunteers, working in tandem with volunteers from both Ner Tamid and Chabad, have been regularly performing drive-throughs of each other's campuses. Assured by local authorities of no known terrorist threats in our area, we are grateful that we have not seen copy-cat activity. Nevertheless, we continue to be vigilant.

There are no words to adequately share how profoundly grateful we are for the outcome at Beth Israel. Those who were gathered with Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker for Shabbat worship are alive and free without physical injury. We give thanks to You, Adonai our God, who redeems the captive.

Still, as we at TAS know too well, now begins the long hard work of emotional recovery for the hostages, the Beth Israel community, the larger Colleyville community, and the national Jewish community. We pray to You, Adonai our God, to strengthen the steps of the shaken.  
tender

I know that for many of us, watching the news this weekend has brought back anxious memories of not too long ago when our own beloved community was attacked. Feelings of helplessness, distress, fear, and anger have agonizingly resurfaced just as we have been learning to put these emotions into perspective and to find our individual and collective footing. We sorrowfully embrace Colleyville into a circle from which they, like ourselves, will forever be part of those listed when recounting Jewish congregations subjected to hate and violence. We pray that the outpouring of support and love from their neighbors and from around the country will aid in their healing.

During one of the many news interviews over the past 48 hours, a leader within the Jewish community was asked what many have silently been asking, “Why is it always the Jews?” By this point in history, there are a multitude of scholarly explanations to offer. But perhaps the question is uniquely answered with another question, “Why not the Jews?” To such a question, our sages have at times suggested that who, more than we, are better schooled in the horror of such suffering - implying that we, perhaps best among all faiths, have learned how to turn devastation into courage and resolve, how to hope in the face of darkness, how to hold to faith when the world turns against us, how to reemerge even from the ashes, how to transform our pain into healing and use that healing to strengthen ourselves and to better the world. ‘Who else can better handle such hate than we?’

But, as true as this might be, I believe we must understand the question differently. Freedom leaders including MLK Jr., who we celebrate today, have taught us that “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

‘Why not the Jews’ is the same as asking, why not the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Sikhs, the Baptists and so many others. We each have taken our turn in the crosshairs of hate. In recent history, the attack in Pittsburgh, Poway and now Colleyville are numbered among equally devastating attacks against American temples, mosques and churches of many other faiths. What we as congregations have all held in common is that we are all communities of people gathered in love with the purpose of openly sharing that love. Conversely, each of these attacks are perpetrated by people who have lost their motivation to love universally, who have come to understand that their own hurt is exceptional to the hurt of humanity.

Our answer must be that the remedy of tribalism, bigotry and violence, will not overshadow our love. Our country, our world, has seen too much of where this storm leads. We are taught, ‘There are two ways to respond. Either to react with bitterness or seek to transform the suffering into a creative force, that it is upon us to follow the latter course, that we cannot let any man pull us so low as to hate.’ MLK This is truly the only authentic antidote for people of faith.

My friends, the sacred community of Temple Adat Shalom will not give into hate. We will continue to love. We will march ahead with open love in our hearts. We will lead our lives proud of who we are. We will celebrate in our tradition. We will reach out and support our neighbors even as they support us. We will do what we must, but we will not fear anyone or anything except a withdrawal into futility and complacency.

As ever, as we walk strong into the days ahead, please know that I am here to talk with – in person, by email, cell, or after we reopen tomorrow, at shul. Being for and with each other is our greatest blessing. I also encourage you to join us for worship this Friday in a service of healing, healing for each other, for our people, and for our entire community.

I end for now by asking you to join me in prayer.

May the source of our ancestors' strength in every generation, be with us now as we move ahead. Be with the Beth Israel community as they begin to rebuild their sense of security and well-being. Comfort them in healing. Embrace our nation and our world with Your love. Kindle the spark of Your divinity within each of us that we may better share our love with those who need it most. To You our thanks are due, that still, we live and breathe with hope and faith.