

Dear Kingston Interfaith Community,

Thank you all for your concern and care.

Since the attack in Monsey, there has been much discussion in Jewish groups and among my colleagues, which I would like to share with you.

First, it is important to understand that the knife attack at the rabbi's house in Monsey, NJ came at the end of a harrowing week of Hanukkah. This Monsey attack was the tenth this week in New York alone!

There is no doubt that antisemitism is on the rise. More than half of the hate crimes reported in New York City this year have been antisemitic in nature, with over 150 incidents targeting Jews — a rise of 63 percent on the previous year, according to figures released by the New York Police Department in September. Toronto has reported similar numbers.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted on Wednesday, "It's not enough to condemn anti-Semitism — we have to confront it. The despicable crimes committed against our Jewish community over the last 24 hours are an attack on ALL New Yorkers. The NYPD is actively investigating all of them and will bring the perpetrators to justice."

I would add that these attacks on Jewish New Yorkers are felt by Jews all over the world. We are one.

And so, as many of my colleagues are doing, I call upon you, my non-Jewish friends and community members to speak out about this epidemic of antisemitic hatred and violence. Speak about it—to your friends, your family, on social media. And, most important, if you attend a religious institution, ask the minister or prayer leader—minister, priest, imam, etc—to speak out about it from the pulpit. This is vitally important. (And as some of you are clergy, that is my direct request to you as well.)

And for my Christian friends, the message that Jesus was Jewish so we must care for Jews today is not helpful. It is supersessionist and that is a form of antisemitism. It essentially means that the only reason one need care for Jews is because Jesus was Jewish. (It's like saying violence against women is bad because you have a mother, sister, wife, and daughter.) The message ought to be that violence toward and hatred of Jews is bad period. It is wrong to hate others who are different because we are all God's creatures and taking care of each other and speaking up against antisemitism is the Christian thing to do. Full stop.

Your voice means the world. Thank you for using it in the service of humankind.

A better 2020 to all of us.

B 'Shalom (In peace),

Rabbi Erin Polansky