



## **It's Not Enough**

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One of my more somber obligations as your Presbytery Executive was to stand last week with pastors from the Presbytery and interfaith leaders from greater Milwaukee on the dais in Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid. We stood in unity as a community of religious leaders to condemn the murder of congregants during Shabbat services at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, to mourn their deaths, and to decry the violence that's taken hold of our nation.

More than a thousand gathered. We were distressed and disgusted, united but resigned. We were encouraged to be hopeful and engaged, even as we prayed in lament.

My Christian stole marked me as someone from outside the Jewish community. Yet, many Jewish women and men reached out to thank me for being present. One woman down the row took my hand and offered her thanks that I had come. All I could say in the moment was "It's not enough." My presence, my witness to unity, my defiance of those who murder out of fear of "the other," my stand against violence – it all came too late for the Tree of Life Synagogue and for its extended Jewish family in Milwaukee and across the country. I was there now, but it wasn't enough.

As we filed out at the end of the service, words on a bronze wall plaque resonated with me in my mourning. These words are part of a longer poem, attributed to an unnamed prisoner, who scrawled them on a cellar wall in the Cologne concentration camp during World War II:

*I believe in the sun  
even when it is not shining;  
I believe in love  
even when feeling it not;  
I believe in God  
even when he is silent.*

Despite my overwhelming sense that my belated presence was not enough, these words grounded me again in my beliefs and my renewed call to action. Since that community gathering, I have been blessed to receive practical, affirmative suggestions on bridging our divides before it's too late and we find ourselves again standing on a dais together. The first suggestions were in the Jewish community gathering bulletin:

### 11 Small Acts to Help End Hate

1. Shop at stores in neighborhoods that don't look like your own.
2. Invite friends from different religions to celebrate a religious holiday with you.
3. Vote in elections.

4. Visit a museum to learn about a different culture.
5. Attend an ethnic or pride festival.
6. Help transport the elderly.
7. Be a big brother or big sister.
8. Write a letter to your local newspaper.
9. Work toward building diversity in the organizations you're involved with like sports teams and PTO committees.
10. Learn about, and practice using, gender-neutral language.
11. Avoid scheduling meetings or events on ALL major holidays.

From within our denomination, we are offered these additional suggestions:

Read [the article from Presbyterian News Service](#) on the response of Sixth Presbyterian Church, down the block from the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, with quotes from Randy Bush, (former pastor at Racine, First) who serves a Presbyterian church just blocks away.

Find [The Prayer for Pittsburgh](#) from *The Presbyterian Outlook* by Jill Duffield

Download the [hymn "O God, This Day We Grieve"](#) by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, Overbrook Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA

Act on ["Ten Things Christians Can Do to Make the World Safer for our Jewish Friends"](#) by Rev. Jim Rigby, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Austin, TX

Share [the letter from PCUSA Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson](#) in spiritual solidarity with the Jewish Community and calling for an end to the sale of AR-15-style assault weapons, like the weapon used in the Tree of Life Synagogue.

These steps, too, are not enough to bring back those who were murdered. But, we can honor their lives, and the lives of so many others cut down by hatred, by closing the divides between us.