

# LOVE. TEACH. HEAL.

*Our Mission Guided by the Love of Jesus Christ*

## Tree of Life

October 27, 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

A short time ago, a gunman entered Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill, apparently shouting anti-Jewish slogans and shooting into the crowd of worshippers gathered for the Sabbath. As of this writing, eight people are known dead and others injured.

The newscasts, sickeningly, are referring again and again to this horror as a “tragedy.” It is no such thing. A tragedy is inevitable. This was not. It was murder, murder of a particularly vile and poisonous kind. Human beings have moral agency. Someone chose to hate, and chose to kill. And now we are faced with a choice as well— to do nothing, or to reject this hatred in the strongest possible words and actions, and to refute in every way, in every forum, the philosophical foundations of anti-Semitism wherever they have gained a foothold in our churches and our society.

We are waiting upon the leadership of the Jewish community of Pittsburgh as they consider an appropriate common response in which we also may join to express our grief and support. In the meantime, I ask all the congregations of this diocese to keep the people of Tree of Life, and their leadership, in our prayers, mentioning them particularly, during the prayers of the people in tomorrow’s liturgies, and including a time of silence in commemoration of their dead under the biddings for the departed.

This terror is added to the great heap of such crimes we have witnessed in the past. Yet our hope is not dimmed, and our obligation is clear: “Behold, I set before you this day, life and death, blessing and curse: therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:19) May we especially who bear the name of Christ be fierce in our love and unwavering in our courage, as we mourn with those who mourn, and work with others to lay the foundations for blessing, life and peace for all people.

Faithfully your bishop,



(The Right Reverend) Dorsey W.M. McConnell, D.D.  
VIII Bishop of Pittsburgh

