



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

J. HERBERT NELSON, II  
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

### **Statement on Pittsburgh Jewish Synagogue Shooting**

The news of the senseless shooting deaths of eleven worshippers in the Tree of Life Synagogue during worship in Pittsburgh this past weekend is a painful tragedy within our nation. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is deeply saddened that families and friends across the country are suffering senseless grief brought on by this violent act of hate. We grieve with Rabbi Jeffrey Myers and his congregants who intimately know the depth of pain under such circumstances.

We consider ourselves friends through our work together and now our common grief.

Our relationship as interfaith partners provides opportunities for dialogue, discernment, and reconciliation. Rabbi Myers is a known interfaith partner among Presbyterians both in Pittsburgh and around the country. These relationships have not been without disagreements. However, we have chosen to work through our differences so that our common calling could be a witness to unity in faith. A result of this relationship is continued love and unity for our common calling in serving the God of Creation while promoting a faith that shuns indifference and embraces love. In 1944, while WWII still raged, our General Assembly sounded an unequivocal warning against anti-Semitism, whether of thought, speech, or overt act; and it called upon our churches to cultivate understanding and friendly relations with rabbis and members of synagogues. Therefore, today we join Rabbi Myers in calling for the end of "words of hate (in our country) that begins with our leaders." Furthermore, we are deeply saddened that families and friends across the country are suffering senseless grief brought on by this violent act of hate. We grieve with the members of the Tree of Life Synagogue and the entire Jewish community who intimately know both the historic and the current depth of pain under such circumstances. We also pray for the Pittsburgh community that grieves together as much of the nation does over the senseless acts of violence that occurs daily in the United States.

As a denomination we also call for an end to the sale of assault weapons. The gunman who entered the temple armed with an AR-15-style assault rifle utilized a war weapon that is often used in mass killings on our streets and other public venues. It is our hope that elected officials

will take seriously the banning of assault weapons being purchased, sold, and used in the United States. We maintain the belief as do others that this action will reduce a significant number of mass killings in the United States.

Our Jewish friends, we mourn with you in this time not because we are without hope, but because love draws us both together through the healing balm of the Almighty.

We hold deep and longstanding roots with the Jewish community in the United States. We will not be strangers in this time of your trial. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) stands with you in this time of pain and grief. May your faith accompany you and give you shalom.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Herbert Nelson, II". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a distinct "II" at the end.

The Reverend Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)