

# A Prayer for Pittsburgh

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Dear Friends,

Saturday's horrific attack at the synagogue in Pittsburgh has shaken all of us. As religious leaders, at a time like this, we are called upon to teach, preach, explain and comfort. The nature of this atrocity can be overwhelming.

ADL has prepared some resources to help you understand the reality of anti-Semitism and white supremacy in America today, and to speak and teach about these difficult subjects with young people. Finally, we have suggestions of actions that can be taken in response to this violence.

The challenges that confront us go well beyond the specifics of this tragic incident; we need to join together across communal boundaries to affect the changes we seek and to make our society one in which all can sit, "under their vine and under their fig tree, with none to make them afraid." (Micah 4:4)

## Action

### Speak Out

We believe that religious leaders must speak out about anti-Semitism, anti-immigrant sentiment, hate speech and hate crimes, white supremacy and the general tenor of our public discourse. We also encourage religious leaders to consider programs of outreach and dialogue that will bring people from different traditions and different communities together in order to learn about one another and to work together on issues of common concern. A sample sermon follows at the end of this document.

### Promote the No Hate Act

[Urge Congress](#) to enact the [No HATE Act](#) (S.662 /H.R. 1566). This legislation is designed to improve training and response to hate and violence. It would provide incentives for hate crime reporting, grants for state-run hate crime hotlines, a federal private right of action for victims of hate crimes and additional sentencing options for individuals convicted under the Matthew Shephard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

### Support ADL's #50StatesAgainstHateCampaign

ADL has long been at the forefront in working to pass comprehensive hate crimes legislation, both at the state and federal level. Today, 45 states and the District of Columbia have hate crime laws. We have made significant strides but there is more work to do. The overarching goal of our [#50StatesAgainstHateCampaign](#) is to make sure that all 50 states have comprehensive hate crimes laws. This means enacting laws in the 5 states that don't currently have a hate crime law and making existing laws in other states more comprehensive. If you are interested in this important campaign, please reach out to your [local ADL office](#) to see how you can get involved.

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## Education Resources

- [Gun Violence and Mass Shootings](#) (Table Talk: Family Conversation About Current Events): Updated to reflect Saturday's shooting.
- [Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate](#) (In English and en Español): A guide to what educators and family members can do.
- [The Pyramid of Hate](#): The Pyramid of Hate shows us that when people or institutions treat biased behavior and attitudes as normal, the next and more violent levels become more acceptable.
- [Helping Students Make Sense of News Stories About Bias and Injustice](#): Strategies and resources for talking with students about important stories in the news revolving around bias and injustice.
- [Anti-Semitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist](#): Middle School/High School lesson plan.
- The perpetrator of the heinous act specifically targeted immigrants in his hateful social media posts. ADL's [Education Resources on Immigration, Immigrants, and Anti-Immigrant Bias](#) provides a wealth of useful information and lesson plans.
- [Discussing Hate and Violence with Children](#)
- [Challenging Anti-Semitism: Debunking the Myths and Responding with Facts](#)
- [Community Security and Congregant Safety](#)

## Information on Anti-Semitism and White Supremacy; Community Security

- [Backgrounder on Robert Bowers](#)
- [Extremist Reactions to Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting](#)
- [ADL Audit on Anti-Semitic Incidents](#)
- [White Supremacist Terror Attacks and Plots Against Jews](#)
- [Computational Propaganda, Jewish-Americans and the 2018 Midterms: The Amplification of Anti-Semitic Harassment Online](#)
- [ADL H.E.A.T Map \(Hate Crime, Extremism, Anti-Semitism, Terrorism\)](#)

## A Prayer for Pittsburgh — or maybe a prayer for me.

On Saturday, as the news from Pittsburgh came dribbling in, I was overwhelmed with emotions. Horror. Dismay. Anger. Bitterness. Fear. Tears came to my eyes and rolled down my cheeks as I saw the images of young women crying and praying. Or read the Facebook post from a colleague who wrote:

... people were shot at a synagogue in Pittsburgh this morning. You know who goes to synagogue on Saturday mornings? Me, my friends, my family, my community. And before you ask if I'm okay, I'm not.

She is not OK. I am not OK. My community is not OK.

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Not with Pittsburgh, not with Charlottesville, not with Charleston. And not with the apparent acceptance of racist, bigoted, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, homophobic, misogynistic, anti-immigrant rhetoric that once was deemed unacceptable in public discourse, but now is not only tolerated but also often encouraged explicitly or implicitly by people who claim the mantle of leadership.

We cannot stand idly by while our neighbors near or far are disrespected, humiliated, slandered — and even murdered while they pray.

We must [educate](#) ourselves and especially the next generation about bias, bullying and intolerance. We must [monitor and expose](#) the sources of hatred and extremism whether from the Right or the Left. And we must work with [government and law enforcement](#) to ensure that the rights of the most vulnerable are protected and upheld.

In this moment of despair and anguish, I am grateful to be affiliated with an organization like ADL that does this important work day in and day out, and has done so for over a century.

But ADL cannot do it alone. We have wonderful allies and partners from many different communities who share our vision of a more just society, but we need more people to join with us, to speak out, to educate, to advocate, to vote, to do everything in our power to see that the voices of hatred are repudiated for good.

As a rabbi, a Jew, I believe in the power of action, but also in the power of prayer. I find these words, attributed to Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, to be both comforting and inspiring, especially when I need both — and today, I need both:

*May it be Your Will, our Eternal God and God of our ancestors, to put an end to war and bloodshed on earth, and to spread a great and wonderful peace over the whole world, so that nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

*May all inhabitants of this planet come to recognize and know the ultimate truth: We did not come to this world for conflict and strife, nor for hatred, envy, mockery or bloodshed; we came to this world only to know You (may You be blessed for all eternity).*

*Therefore, have mercy on us, and fulfill for us what is written, "And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid. I will drive the wild beasts from the land, and neither shall the sword go through your country."\*(Leviticus 26:6)*

*"And justice will well up like water, righteousness like a mighty stream." (Amos 5:24).*

*"For the earth will be filled with knowledge (some translate: devotion to) of the Eternal as water covers the sea."(Isaiah 11:9).*

*May it be Your Will. And let us say: Amen.*