

A Statement of the Faith Leaders Coalition of Greater Houston
From Mourning to Response:
November 2, 2018

The Faith Leaders Coalition of Greater Houston stands in solidarity with the Jewish community today as, together, we #ShowUpForShabbat. Citizens of all faiths are invited to share in worship services at Jewish houses of worship tonight to demonstrate resistance to anti-Semitism in our country and in Houston. In response to the murder of 11 Jewish elders and members at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Houston joins with communities throughout the nation to demonstrate that hate will not define our country. This effort is needed now more than ever in light of the alarming rise in anti-Semitic actions over the past two years that culminated in the violence we witnessed one week ago. This is not an isolated incident of one deranged person but an ongoing scourge that needs to be opposed by all people of faith.

The freedom to express our religions is a bedrock principle of our Constitution and unites us as people of varied faith traditions. The brutal attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue is a call to all citizens of faith to stand against hatred, prejudice, and bigotry. Anti-Semitism is a pernicious scourge which must be rooted out of our body politic.

Writing to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island in 1790, George Washington summarized two cardinal principles of American democracy: the separation of church and state, and the right of individuals to believe in and practice their religion. He wrote:

The citizens of the United States of America have a right to applaud themselves for having given to mankind examples of an enlarged and liberal policy—a policy worthy of imitation. All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship.

It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights, for, happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.

The Faith Leaders Coalition of Greater Houston invites citizens of all faiths and none to stand with our Jewish sisters and brothers today. It is our hope that many of us #ShowUpForShabbat at synagogues across the Houston area and continue to support fellow people of faith in the weeks and months to come. Our presence demonstrates our unity in opposition to anti-Semitic forces which would divide us from one another. We share the vision of Hebrew Scripture that “everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid.” This is a trying time in our nation and one that requires faith voices to combat hate and display compassion for all.