Rabbi Marc Baker’s Remarks at Boston’s Vigil for Pittsburgh
Sunday, October 28, 2018

Our world and the Pittsburgh Jewish community lost 11 precious souls yesterday, and 6 more were injured. We’re here today together, our Jewish community and our Greater Boston brothers and sisters from every faith and background, because we feel this loss as if it is our own. We are devastated. We are heart-broken. We are angry. Any of us who is part of any faith community - who finds comfort, joy and peace in community and in prayer – knows . . . that could have been us.

As the shock of this horrific event and all of the emotions that come with it settle in, we offer the tree of life congregation and the Jewish community of Pittsburgh our support and our love. We cannot properly express our gratitude for the first responders who risked their own lives – and nearly lost them – trying to save the lives of others.

It’s not lost on anyone that the name of this synagogue is one of the most powerful symbols in the Jewish tradition: Tree of Life. It reminds us of the beauty and tranquility of the Garden of Eden. It represents the culmination of thousands of years of values, wisdom and spirit that are our roots and our life-force. For thousands of years the Jewish People has endured – through joys and sorrows – because our tree of life has reminded us where we come from and what matters most.

Our resilience enables us to overcome even when some try to break us; our empathy moves us to stand with one another in times of suffering and loss; and, our faith inspires us to shine our light in times of darkness and to keep striving to build a better world.

Today, around the country and around the world, Jews and our allies like so many of you are doing what we do – we’re coming together. We come together because we know that when anyone or anything tries to strike fear in our hearts, connecting to one another and uniting in love are forms of resistance and activism. The congregants of Tree of Life Synagogue were attacked as they stood in prayer and celebration, and as new parents welcomed their baby into our covenantal community. To attack a community at a moment like this is not only an egregious and intolerable act of antisemitism; it is an attack on our very humanity and on all of us.
We will not retreat in fear. We will keep coming together, keep raising our children, keep holding fast to our tree of life.

Thank you to our Greater Boston Community, to all of our leaders and our partners in the interfaith community for standing with us. The outpouring of love support from our elected officials, from law enforcement and from all of our faith communities is comforting and truly uplifting.

Next Saturday we will take part in a Sabbath of Solidarity, joining synagogues across the country. Please be on the lookout for more information and consider joining in this powerful expression of compassion and hope.