



# A Message from the Rector

10.29.18

Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I'm glad that so many of you came to worship this weekend. I think at times of tragedy and horror like this, we come seeking explanations for such evil and to cry out to God for hope.

In our readings this weekend, I think we found both.

Satan loathes the worship of God and Daniel chapter 9 warns us to expect him, through human hands, to do all that he can to disrupt, spoil and prevent it. The evil on our screens is a manifestation of something yet more evil still behind it.

Humans might have the power to stop some things or at least to respond more effectively, but we will never have the power to prevent them completely. The good news is that we believe in a God, who in Christ, has stepped into our suffering already and who will come again to deal with the evil behind the evil decisively in the end.

Our hope is in Christ alone and the abomination on our screens must call us to cry out for his return to be foreshortened. As our Senior Warden Anne put it, paraphrasing John 5:19, "The whole world is in the power of the evil one, but we know that we are of God."

## Our Own Church

Some of you may be starting to think about our own church. We must always balance the need for openness and welcome with the safety and security of our members. In recent months we have introduced a number of security locks to certain parts of the building, making it more difficult for people to be in places where they should not be. We have also trained our greeters to be more vigilant about people who look out of place and to call 911 if they are in any real doubt. It is better to apologize for an overreaction than to be naive. But, I hope that in Christ, this attack will strengthen our resolve to welcome more people and to worship more boldly, not fewer and less.

## Ways to Help

Many of you are also asking about ways in which you can help or communicate your love and care to the people of Tree of Life and the wider Jewish community.

In my experience, sometimes such offers can overwhelm the recipients and even make them feel obliged to respond in some way. But I have also found that although those in grief need some space, they do not want to be ignored completely.

I think there are two ways in which we can be of real practical help. The first is to write to some of our local Rabbis simply expressing our love for and solidarity with them. A card takes a few moments to write, but the recipient can read it when they are ready and are likely to do so several times. When the frenzy of attention in the aftermath goes away, such notes will be profoundly encouraging. I imagine they'll receive notes from every church, but I would love it if they received the most from us.

To make it easy we have provided a number of church notelets in the narthex along with a stack of stamped and pre-addressed envelopes for anyone minded to join in this ministry. Some are addressed to Rabbi Jeffrey Myers who is the Rabbi at Tree of Life. Some are addressed to Yaier Lehrer who is the local Rabbi here in Fox Chapel, a friend of mine, and beloved member of the Fox Chapel, O'Hara, Aspinwall and Dorseyville ministerium.

If you are looking for something more physical, I am also pleased to let you know that our friend Chris Taylor from Fox Chapel Presbyterian is gathering people to attend at Adat Shalom (Yaier's synagogue) on Friday from 6:45– 7:15pm for a candle-lit vigil outside as Yaier's people gather inside for their service. Yaier has said that he is touched by the gesture. To join in, please bring a large candle, shielded from the wind, that you can hold.

Yours in Christ,

Rev'd Alex