



December 2, 2016/2 Kislev 5777

Dear Shir Tikvah,

In the three and a half weeks since our national election, the Southern Poverty Law Center has reported nearly 1,000 incidents of hate crimes and violence. Even typing that fact makes my heart ache and my hands tremble.

These incidents are happening in our own community:

- In a Minneapolis suburb, a group of African American men were out walking when three white men approached, called them the "N" word, and threatened violence.
- In North Minneapolis, a swastika was painted on a garage door.
- In a South Minneapolis school, a swastika was written on a Jewish student's materials.

This is not the Shabbat message I ever imagined having to write, but it is the one that is needed today.

What are we as a community to do?

It is important not to be alarmist. We have many good friends and allies in the community. We are important and vital members of the greater Twin Cities and American communities.

It is important to be prudent and to take anti-Semitic, racist, homophobic, misogynist, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim remarks seriously.

The Jewish Community Relations Council is here to help. Anthony Sussman works on issues of anti-Semitism and he's a real mensch. If you experience anti-Semitism, please reach out to him: 612-338-7816.

The Southern Poverty Law Center is an outstanding organization that tracks and prosecutes hate crimes. I encourage you to take a look at their website www.splcenter.org and explore all the powerful work they do.

Law enforcement is here to help. Hate crimes are serious. Please report them.

And we, your rabbis and your Shir Tikvah community are here for you. We exist to be a strong, vibrant, Jewish community, together.

Let me be clear: This is NOT a new normal. We will NEVER accept this as normal.

In response to the swastika in North Minneapolis, Carin Mrotz (Shir Tikvah Board Member and Jewish Community Action Deputy Director) and Wintana Melekin (Senior Organizer at Neighborhoods Organizing for Change) worked together to clean the swastika off the garage.

"From out of the depths of despair, Divine Source of Wisdom, we cry out to You," the Psalmist teaches. When we turn to each other, we find strength to keep going.

Jews are a people who believe-improbable as it may seem at times-in the decency and the dignity of human beings. We will work tirelessly to move the world from where it is today to where it MUST be tomorrow: overflowing with love and justice, compassion, and dignity. That is the promise of our people, the promise of Shabbat, the promise of our covenant with the Divine.

Shabbat Shalom,
Michael