

**Vigil following the Tree of Life Shooting, Pittsburgh**  
**Temple Shir Tikva**  
**October 18, 2018**  
**Rev. Dr. Stephanie May**

Standing together tonight  
feels like medicine for the soul.  
At times like these,  
when grief and anger  
threaten to eclipse our hope and our love,  
we need to be reminded that  
we *are* connected to each other.

As a member of the interfaith community here in Wayland,  
I want to say to our Jewish neighbors and friends  
from Congregation Or Atid and Temple Shir Tikva  
that you are *not* alone.

Your interfaith community  
of Muslims, Baha'i, Christians, and Unitarian Universalists  
share your sorrow over the eleven deaths  
at the Tree of Life Synagogue.

Whatever our differences of religious belief or practice,  
we all share a deep respect  
for the worth and dignity of human life.  
And, we all value the gift  
of finding sanctuary in our sacred places  
and within our religious groups.

The loss of life and the violation of sacred space  
grieves us all.

Although there are some who would declare  
the U.S. to be a 'Christian nation',  
the truth we know is  
that from the very beginning

there has been religious pluralism on this soil—  
including Judaism .  
From the birth of our nation,  
religious freedom has been a core principle—  
al-be-it one the nation has too often failed  
to live out fully,  
such as allowing anti-Semitism  
to justify acts of violence and exclusion.

But, as we gather together,  
we witness to the reality of our nation  
as a place we where can come together  
as an interfaith community.  
By remaining linked in support and mutual care,  
we manifest a different vision  
for how to be in this world.  
Living out a love for our neighbors  
becomes our resistance to prejudice and hate.  
Living out an ethic of mutual care and respect  
challenges those who would  
divide us with fear.

In this time of grief and anger,  
may the unity of this community  
bring some comfort and some hope.  
May we not lose faith  
in loving our neighbor.  
May we not give up hoping for  
A safer, more just world.  
We need not do this work alone;  
We can do it together.  
As the Rev. Ken Sawyer,  
my predecessor at First Parish, wisely said—

when our own grief is too much to bear  
then “hope is something people around you,  
your family and friends, hold for you  
until you are ready to receive it back.”

However you may be feeling this night,  
know that together we can carry hope  
for a safer, more loving and just world.

So may it be / Thank you