



# MASSACHUSETTS COUNCIL of CHURCHES

Tuesday, August 15, 2017

A Letter to Massachusetts Jews and Christians,

Again. These are hard and heavy days again for the Jewish community of Massachusetts and across the United States. As white nationalists posture and protest, a virulent anti-Semitism underwrites their hateful ideology. These bigots trot out tired tropes that still have the power to terrify. Anti-Semitism was on parade in Charlottesville, and in many other places. No Nazi flags, no cartoons, no slurs or caricatures should be promoted in 2017. In person and online, Jews in America are taunted and terrorized. We have failed to sufficiently name and denounce the anti-Semitism among us.

And then, for a second time this summer, [the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston has been vandalized](#). O Lord, we cried to you "never again!" But again, and again, the Jewish people are threatened, not elsewhere but here in Massachusetts. More than the defacing of a sculpture, desecrating the Memorial is an assault on the memories of six million Jews killed in the Holocaust, each with a name, an history and a light extinguished. In desecrating the Memorial, the perpetrators of this violence attempted to erase people a second time.

Please visit the New England Holocaust Memorial (<http://www.nehm.org>) and see for yourself. Today, **Tuesday August 15 at 3pm**, our colleagues at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League of New England will hold a Community Gathering with Mayor Walsh at the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston. You are invited to attend.

We have work to do in Massachusetts. And as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, let me say this: We have work to do in the Church. We do not always know our particularly distressing contributions in our own history to a theologically-justified anti-Semitism. I hear the supercessionism in our churches, again. I hear the ways we treat the "Old Testament" stories as mere prequels to the main act of what God is up to in Jesus Christ, a denial of The Almighty's power in every generation and God's particular and everlasting covenant with the Jewish people. I hear the false binary of the "wrathful God of the Old Testament" and a "loving God of the New testament." I hear the ways we Christians instrumentalize the Jewish people, thanking them for "giving us

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Jesus" as if the legacy of God's faithfulness to the Israelites doesn't have a dignity and completeness all its own.

As Christians we have a tradition of examination, confession and repentance. Even as we condemn the overt violence and anti-Semitism of recent days, our own communities need examining. Our Father's house may have many rooms, but we Christians have some cleaning up to do in ours.

When I visit churches of various denominations, I often share with them what I value and love from their tradition. Grieving the many way Christians have denied and denigrated Jews over the centuries, I'd like to say why I love Judaism, too.

I love Judaism for a faithfulness to God and ancestors across place and across millennia. I am awed by the Jewish sense of peoplehood, forged in the hot sands of Pharos's palace and the cruel fires of anti-Semitism, yet somehow still with an open door to the stranger who might need a seat at a Shabbat meal. I love a community proud and resilient. I long in my own tradition for the dynamic mix of consensus and dissent I see preserved in the debates of the Rabbis. I hope in my own life for the communal sense of Sabbath I see shared in Jewish communities. Especially in these past months, I admire the Jewish philanthropic drive to accompany current refugees, with a deep sense of obligation to care for those displaced in every generation. Each year at Passover, I admire the ways Jews expand their story of exodus from Egypt to see and advocate for those now in bondage and fighting for freedom. I honor the many and creative ways Jews find to be Jewish. I love the Jewish people because I have family members who are Jews, friends who are Jews and teachers who are Jews. I love the Jewish people because they are made in the image and likeness of God. And it is very good.

In hope,

Rev. Laura Everett  
Executive Director, Massachusetts Council of Churches

PS: We want to remind you from [yesterday's update "After Charlottesville"](#) that the Black Ministerial Alliance (of which MCC is a member) and the NAACP Community Debrief and Action meeting is also tonight, **Tuesday August 15 6-8pm at Roxbury Presbyterian Church**. Please attend.