

A Holy Space Defiled

Today I sat in the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh.
And I prayed.

I wasn't mentally prepared for the awful sight of bullet holes inside a sanctuary.

For the feeling of despair and immense sadness as we walked in and sat down.

We came, several dozen community and Jewish Federation leaders from across North America.

We came to hold hands, to hug, to share, and to listen.

I stood with our Federation President Scott Krieger as we heard the Kaddish, as we heard briefings from federal law enforcement and local partners on the ground, as we heard about the amazing work of the local Jewish Federation, the JCC and the Jewish Family and Children's Services. These relationships weren't built on the ground during the crisis. It took years of community-building and a commitment to working together.

In the words of my colleagues from the Pittsburgh Federation, "We were here on Saturday [after the attack] because we were here on Friday, building community." They reminded us that all the safety measures, the plans, the connections, and the preparedness came because of their unrestricted UJA Annual Campaign. They knew how to react during the crisis because their donors recognized the need for drills and training, the need for a commitment to an ongoing community effort.

The impact of this terror attack will last for years. The healing and recovery efforts will take years.

I'm deeply proud that our Jewish Federation Board last week unanimously voted to send an immediate emergency allocation of \$25,000 to our friends in the Pittsburgh Federation for their Victims of Terror Fund. And in the coming weeks we will deepen and strengthen our commitment to our own community's security platform.

Standing in the sanctuary, Rabbi Jeffrey Myers, who was in the sanctuary when the attack occurred, said to us, "my holiest space has been defiled... but they will not chase me out of my house."

May the memory of those killed be for a blessing. May the victims and those in pain find healing. And may we all find peace.



