

From the Congregation Board:

ALEINU: What Congregation Tikkun v'Or Stands For

The Jewish prayer *Aleinu* literally asks us “What is upon us at this moment?” What is it that we are called to do? In this moment following the presidential election, we ask what our congregation stands for.

On December 11, 2016 members of our congregation came together to discuss these questions. Those gathered asked the board to draft a letter to the congregation and the larger community addressing freedom of speech, bigotry and the targeting of those seen as other.

Congregation Tikkun v'Or is a progressive Jewish congregation that puts “Spirit, Community and Justice” at its core. We are dedicated to creating an inclusive community in our congregation where open, respectful dialogue that embraces the diversity of our beliefs is a source of strength and learning. Pursuing justice locally, nationally and globally is integral to the teachings of Judaism and inspires and guides us. We see the life of each individual as sacred, and we are dedicated to protecting the human rights of all.

We are deeply disturbed that the current political discourse is disrespectful, disregards the voices and lives of the most vulnerable, and that those in power seek to dominate, and cultivate aggression. We must embody the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, “The degree to which one is sensitive to other people's suffering, to other (people's) humanity, is the index of one's own humanity.” We must not let the humanity of our country be in jeopardy.

At this time we have grave concerns about the potential erosion of human rights. Again the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel speak to us. He notes, "The opposite of good is not evil, it is indifference... Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself. It is a silent justification affording evil acceptability in society." In this spirit we support the rights of those in our congregation and in our community who speak out and act to:

- Preserve freedom of speech.
- Safeguard the right to practice one's religion without fear.
- Resist all versions of Islamophobia.
- Pursue racial justice and work to dismantle the mass incarceration of African Americans.
- Increase economic equality including access to affordable healthcare.
- Prevent any erosion in the rights of the LGBTQ community.
- Protect the rights and safety of women, including reproductive freedom.
- Support the welfare of refugees in our community and elsewhere.
- Seek human rights in countries where the US provides economic and military assistance.
- Ensure justice, equality, human rights, and security for all Israelis and Palestinians.
- Defend the environment in the face of climate change and stand with those who protect our water supplies.
- Work for food justice locally and globally.

These injustices, as well as many others being addressed in the Ithaca community, are numerous, interconnected, and challenging. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... whatever affects one directly, affects all.” As Jews, we tell and retell the story of our enslavement in Egypt. Throughout our history we have experienced displacement, persecution and genocide. Our history connects us to a core commandment of our biblical and prophetic tradition -- that we act in empathy and in solidarity, with an open house and an open heart, with all oppressed people. In describing the Exodus from Egypt, Michael Walzer writes, “There is no way to get from here to there except by joining hands, marching together.”

May we all join hands and march together!

*Board of Directors and Rabbi Brian Walt
Congregation Tikkun v'Or
Ithaca, NY
January 29, 2017*