

Dear Members of CEHV,

On Saturday afternoon following a beautiful Shabbat morning of celebration, study, and prayer at Congregation Emanuel I learned of the Hostage Situation at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville Texas.

I, like you, were shaken and concerned. The remainder of my Sabbath and into the evening I prayed continuously for the welfare of the hostages. Finally, after more than 11 hours of being held hostage, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and three members of CBI safely escaped.

I am infinitely grateful for their safety and profoundly saddened for this world of ours that is becoming home to increasing extremism, fundamentalism, violence, hatred, and terrorism. We are all aware of and concerned with the growing anti-Semitism in our country and throughout the world.

We stand with the hostages and Congregation Beth Israel as they heal from this harrowing experience. We are grateful for their resilience and their safety. We are grateful for the vigilance and professionalism of law enforcement who responded to this hostage crisis. We are grateful to leaders who speak out against extremism and anti-Semitism. We are grateful to the Human Community that responded to and stood by the hostages and the entire Jewish community throughout this ordeal.

Moments like these help us to solidify why Congregation Emanuel is so important for all of us and for future generations.

- The only response to hate is to love more.
- The only response to extremism, fundamentalism, violence, and intolerance is to cultivate and protect havens of diversity, inclusion, understanding, and peace.
- May welcoming the stranger remain a foundational value that shapes our community.
- We cannot escape anti-Semitism but we can proudly identify as Jews and commit ourselves to and support CEHV as a beacon of light and hope.
- As Jews may we respond to extremism, fundamentalism, violence and intolerance with our steadfast commitment to the Human Community.
- As Jews may we battle anti-Semitism with the highest ideals of our Jewish faith.

I look forward to sharing our upcoming Shabbat together as we stand boldly as Jews, with courage, pride and an unwavering commitment to our past, present and future.

In faith,
Rabbi Yael

Rabbi Yael Romer, DD
(she/her)