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St. Peter's United Church of Christ

Speaking at Congregation Shaarey Tefilla  
on July 30, 2018

Today's rain and clouds mirror my spirit. I am drenched with sadness, and my heart is heavy. And yet, just as our dry lands need rain, we, too, need to be together tonight.

We are here to acknowledge our strength, receive the care of one other, and trust that this painful experience will refocus our energy to the pursuit of inclusion and justice for ALL in our community – No exceptions. We have work to do.

I'm wearing this t-shirt for a reason. Among other things, the back of my shirt reads: "Be the Church. Forgive often. Reject racism. Fight for the powerless. Embrace diversity."

Right here, right now, I **forgive** the ones who are too close-minded to see you, Shaarey Tefilla, as a beautiful part of our community. I **reject** the hatred and hurt caused by this cowardly act. I **stand** in solidarity with you, and I **value** what you bring to Carmel and beyond.

You are light. You are peace. You are creativity and compassion and boldness in the face of religious persecution. Thank you for welcoming all of us in this time of pain. Some would choose to hunker down. You have chosen to open your doors.

May all that is sacred lead us to more hope-filled tomorrows, and may our shared tears bring healing. Shaarey-Tefilla, you are not alone. You are surrounded by love, and you are a treasured part of our Carmel community.

With gratitude for your witness, our journeying together, and for the rains that will continue to nurture our withered spirits, may this be a beginning, and may you feel our love as our work, together, continues.

May it be so.