

Prayer written in the wake of the shootings at Tree of Life Synagogue, Pittsburgh -- also the International Day for Religious Freedom

God of mercy, look down upon the people of Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh with mercy.

We cry out in anguish that once again people have been killed because they gathered for religious worship. We are appalled that those who gather in synagogues, temples, mosques, churches and other religious sites become targets of violence, that worshippers would be subjected to such hate. O God, we have no words.

God you are the one who sees people's suffering, bring peace and comfort to those who have lost loved ones. Give wisdom and skill to those who care for the injured. Surround the community of Pittsburgh with your love, may Christians in Pittsburgh be examples of care and compassion.

Give us the courage, O God, to speak for, work for, and commit ourselves to religious freedom for all around the world. We recognize that religious freedom is threatened by the practices of governments, the attitudes of communities, and the actions of individuals. Give us courage to challenge governments when their practices limit religious freedom, give us courage to speak up from religious freedom for all who live in our communities and neighbourhoods, and give us courage to confront those who act to limit the religious freedom of others.

We pray for the Rohingya and the Karen people who have fled Myanmar; for Buddhists in Tibet; for Christians in Saudi Arabia; Yazidis in Iraq and many others who face persecution because of their religion. O God, transform our world so that freedom of religion would not just be words, but would become a reality so that as individuals and religious communities all people would be able to practice their religion and proclaim their beliefs without fear of physical harm, imprisonment, or libelous harassment. Bring comfort to all those who have had loved ones killed because of their religious convictions, grant comfort we pray.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Peter Bush