

# **Baptist leaders condemn synagogue shooting**

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Leaders of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship condemned anti-Semitism and expressed grief over the loss of life in a Pittsburgh synagogue shooting.

Accused shooter Robert Bowers entered the Tree of Life Synagogue and shouted, "All Jews must die," before opening fire, killing 11 worshippers, officials reported. Police arrested Bowers, who had posted anti-Semitic rhetoric on social media, and federal prosecutors filed hate crime charges against him.

## **‘Words of hate’ remain in public discourse**

Ferrell Foster, director of ethics and justice with the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, wrote in a [personal blog](#) he had been reading a novel when he learned about the shooting at the Pittsburgh synagogue. In the novel, a character talked about Hitler and the countless people who "helped" him carry out the Holocaust by acts of complicity.

"Hitler provided the words, the passion, the motive for hate. Six million deaths followed," Foster wrote. "But evil still roams about seeking whom it might consume. Words of hate still spill into public discourse. Such words kill spirits, and such words sometimes lead to the killing of living persons.

"Again, we weep," he continued. "We think it cannot happen again. It can. It, the possibility for hate, is inside all of us. May we all suppress the little

Hitler inside us that wants to escape, that wants to despise, hate and even hurt those who are different and are a perceived threat.”

The “way of hate and ridicule” is not the way of Jesus, Foster wrote, noting with irony that the Holocaust “arose among a ‘Christian’ people.”

“Beware of ‘Christian’ nations. Seek Jesus people,” Foster wrote. “It is those people who seek to follow Christ who bring life and love to their neighbors.”

David Hardage, executive director of the BGCT, [tweeted](#): “Thank you for joining our Texas Baptist family in praying for the families (and Jewish Community) of those who were killed & wounded in the attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh.”

## **Anti-Semitic rhetoric ‘a despicable lie’**

Anti-Semitic comments made by the accused synagogue murderer of 11 is “a despicable lie of the enemy which we unequivocally reject,” SBC President J.D. Greear [tweeted](#).

SBC First Vice President A.B. Vines, pastor of New Seasons Church in Spring Valley, Calif., and SBC Second Vice President Felix Cabrera, lead pastor of Iglesia Bautista Central in Oklahoma City, were listed in a signature line with Greear’s tweet.

“We grieve with the city of Pittsburgh, the Jewish community, and especially the families of the victims,” wrote Greear, pastor of The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C. “In a nation seemingly full of hatred, we remain committed to demonstrating and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ, pursuing religious freedom for all peoples, and praying for a more civil and loving society.”

# Hateful ideologies condemned

Suzii Paynter, executive coordinator of CBF, also [issued a statement](#) acknowledging “tears and lament for violence and wanton murder at the Tree of Life synagogue of Pittsburgh,” while also condemning ideologies “that motivate support for domestic terrorism” based on religion or race.

“We offer love, strong support and the pledge of solidarity to our Jewish neighbors and friends in cities and towns across the country in the aftermath of hatred and violence,” Paynter said.

“Our words and deeds of compassionate and true friendship must follow our lament. We grieve for each family suffering loss and join hands in protection of houses of worship to forge bonds of solidarity to end hatred and violence. We condemn ideologies of white nationalism and white supremacy that motivate support for domestic terrorism against Jews, Muslims, African Americans, political rivals and persons of color.”

“Our nation is beautiful in its tapestry of religious freedom and beautiful in the diversity of all people of goodwill that bless and do not curse their neighbors,” she continued, noting Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan.

“Shaking our heads in sorrow and grief is not a strong enough response to the actions of such violence and evil,” Paynter said. “Ideologies, words of hatred and murder are not the final response. In each community, we need responses of unmistakable public solidarity, friendship and condolences. As a witness and response to acts of violence, we need words of blessing, acts of neighborly love and generous, public goodwill.”