This morning we wake to greet another day, that itself is no certainty in our uncertain world. A world made more uncertain by the realization, yet again, that Jews at prayer cannot take for granted their safety in their own sanctuaries. This day and every day we offer prayers of gratitude and thanksgiving to the heroic first responders and to the many who showed support to Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker and the members of Congregation Beth Israel who were taken hostage yesterday during shabbat services.

Since Pittsburgh (an event so horrific it needs only the name of a city to identify its significance) Rabbis, Cantors, Staff and congregations have looked out from the *bema* and worried; 'is this unknown person walking into our holy space seeking community or seeking to do harm?'

This is not something many of us think about when you imagine all the things a Rabbi or Cantor does or encounters in the course of their sacred calling. Until two years ago we didn't think much about vectors of virus transmission and zoom B'nai Mitzvah either; the world changes as we well know.

We want to lift up two articles that were published this morning about yesterday's harrowing events. The first is a profile of our friend and colleague, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker. Charlie, as you have learned, is the reform rabbi serving the Colleyville, TX community. He is a kind, intelligent, empathic, thoughtful and inclusive leader. Unremarkable in the sense that he is exactly the kind of person that we would hope would be called to the rabbinate; remarkable in that he chose to use those skills and abilities in service of this sacred calling. The reform movement ordains about 45 rabbis and cantors every year. Many are like Charlie and we need more of them.

The second article is a bit of a behind the scenes of how Rabbi Cytron-Walker conducted himself during the hostage situation. Rabbi Dan's good friend and colleague, Rabbi Andrew Paley is a Chaplain for the Dallas Police Department and was on scene with the first responders. Rabbi Paley exemplifies another important and sacred role that clergy of all faiths play in community. The article provides some insight into the stresses upon rabbinic families in moments of crisis and specifically how Rabbi Cytron-Walker assisted in bringing the hostage situation to a safe conclusion for himself and his three fellow congregants held hostage with him.

We want to reassure you that we take the security of our congregation very seriously. Temple Sholom employs two professional security guards at all of our services. Unknown visitors are greeted and if necessary questioned as to their reason for being there before entering the building. Our staff has worked closely with Daniel Heydenrych, the Director of Security of Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver to continually assess and improve our security precautions. Shortly after the events in Texas became known Daniel reached out to our senior leadership, as did Ezra Shanken, Federation CEO - both were in close contact with the VPD. Though services had ended by that time, VPD increased patrols around Jewish community institutions and we stayed in close contact throughout the day. We will continue to debrief and apply lessons learned from the events in Texas to our security posture here at Temple Sholom.

This morning Charlie shared the following on his Facebook page:

“I am thankful and filled with appreciation for
All of the vigils and prayers and love and support,
All of the law enforcement and first responders who cared for us,
All of the security training that helped save us.
I am grateful for my family.
I am grateful for the CBI Community, the Jewish Community, the Human Community.
I am grateful that we made it out.
I am grateful to be alive.”

- Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, January 16, 2022

I think to those words and all the words that have been offered and said in grave concern and support we can say AMEN.

Shalom,

Dan Moskovitz	Carey Brown	Shani Cohen
Senior Rabbi	Associate Rabbi	Cantor, Interim