At 9:50 a.m. on Saturday morning, October 27, 2018, the deadliest anti-Semitic attack in US history occurred at the Tree of Life synagogue in the historic Jewish neighborhood of Squirrel Hill in Pittsburgh. A 46-year-old white male shooter entered the synagogue during a baby-naming ceremony. He shouted, “All Jews must die.” Armed with a Colt AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle and three Glock semi-automatic pistols, he killed eleven people and wounded seven, including four police officers who engaged him in a shoot-out. He was wounded and taken to Allegheny General Hospital, where Jewish staff attended him.

In Albuquerque, that Saturday afternoon a widely circulated statement from Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld of Congregation Albert included the words, “I want you to know that we live in an amazing community. A few minutes after 10:00 am this morning, an Albuquerque police sergeant arrived at the synagogue to make sure we knew what had happened and...
SHABBAT continued from page 1

to assure us he would be at our front door until we could get a patrol car on the property. He assured me that APD would also be present tomorrow during school and if necessary, called in the National Guard. When I thanked the sergeant, he replied: “No need. It’s what my mother would want me to do.” I was moved speechless as we shook hands. A call went out on social media that there would be a community gathering at sundown that evening at Nahalat Shalom, the Jewish New Mexico congregation. A gathering led by the cantor and president, took place outdoors in a semi-circle in the courtyard as the leaves fell in the late evening.

On Sunday afternoon, there were organized gatherings throughout New Mexico at synagogues, at the Holocaust and Intolerance Museum in downtown Albuquerque, and in smaller communities. In Placitas, a village between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, there was an armed guard inside the temple. And in other parts of the Jewish community and friends at the Placitas Library packed their small activity room. About fifty people an armed guard inside the temple members, eleven candles were lit, and then people stood up spontaneously and spoke. Among those was Navajo linguist and educator Frank Morgan, whose presence and words seemed to strike a special chord, as a number of people came up to thank him afterwards. He spoke briefly about the Navajo origin story of the Twins who vanquished the evils in the world. Later he said, “It was my way of consoling the Jewish people that things will change and that we move forward, not as Jews or Christians or Muslims, or any faith you belong to, but as a single community, as a single people, we must be wholly ourselves and allow our love to conquer the hatred and the insanity that snuffed out the eleven precious lives at the Tree of Life Synagogue. We commit ourselves to stay that path of love. Shabbat Shalom.”

Rabbi Adam Haqq, president of Dar al-Salam Mosque: “Look around you. See who’s here. Our community is united, and I think that’s what’s important. As Muslims, we believe that all life is sacred and all life is precious and that the taking of a single life carries the loss of all of mankind. Conversely, we believe that saving a single life carries the same weight as saving all of life.”

Abdul Haqq quoted from a hadith, a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: “To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to comfort the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, to heal the wounds of the injured, that is your share!”

Mayor Tim Keller, former mayor of Richard J. Berry, and many other government officials, political candidates, and community leaders were there. Local TV stations KOAT and KRQE came and broadcast news reports later that evening. Representatives of every local Jewish congregation and organization attended. Clergy of many faith groups came. Those who were invited to speak included representatives of the Catholic, Muslim, Christian Conference of Churches, Sikh, Baha’i, Ignatian, Ecumenical, Redemptorist, and a former director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, now known as HIAS. Their statements and quotes are printed here.

The New Mexico Jewish Link

TORAH SCROLL continued from page 1

on the NahalatShalom.org website. “One day, Gloria Hale told her friend, Kathryn Karmowsky, about the problems with our (trail Holoc- ocast) Torah. Kathryn, one of our members, then told her about the Torah that belonged to the Roswell synagogue that was bequeathed to them by her uncle. The Jewish community in Roswell had dwindled. They had sold the building that housed their synagogue. It was reported by Reuters. “Over 2,000 people, including many from the local Jewish community, protested against Trump’s presence, chanting ‘Walls have ears,’” and carrying signs with such slogans as “We build bridges not walls.” The following night at a rally in Florida, Trump described the protests, which were well-documented, as “staged” and “fake news.”

And finally, an organized request went out across the country from the Jewish Women’s Committee to ShowUpForShabbat on Friday at a congregation, as a show of strength and love against hate.

This was held at Congregation Albert in Albuquerque on Friday evening, November 2nd, led by Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld. It was standing room only, and one of the largest gatherings seen in the synagogues’ history. “About 1,100 people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs, and others, all came together in solidarity Friday night at Congregational Albert or watched on our live stream,” said Rabbi Rosenfeld. (The feed included numbers based on the number of chairs that were set out.) The link to watch the service in its entirety on the rabbi’s Facebook and also will be found on the Congregation Albert website and on YouTube.

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If tikkan olam, the Jewish ethical and religious mitzvot to repair the world, has an angelic representa- tion of love. Where there is harmony, there is love to conquer the hatred and the insanity that snuffed out the eleven precious lives at the Tree of Life Synagogue. We commit ourselves to stay that path of love. Shabbat Shalom.”

Krishna Khalsa, Sikh community of Espanola: “The Sikh tradi-
tion is both a tradition of saintliness and a tradition of spiritual warrior. If you’re only a saint, people can kick you around. If you’re only a warrior, in the words of my teacher, Akhilesh, you have to be wholly ourselves and allow our love to conquer the hatred and the insanity that snuffed out the eleven precious lives at the Tree of Life Synagogue. We commit ourselves to stay that path of love. Shabbat Shalom.”

Rabbi Harry Rosenfeld spoke: “It is so powerful and comforting to see my clergy brothers and sisters as well as people from other congregations here. And our young people, that’s so powerful to me. Growing up, my father told me I had to be Jewish ‘so that it didn’t give Hitler a posthumous victory.’ That weighed on me. Later in life, I heard a lecture by Leibel Fein (founder editor of Moment Magazine) in which he talked about two ways to look at Jewish histo-
ry: as a tapestry, and as a shroud. I vowed that I would look at our history as a tapestry. Yes, there’s some tears, some holes, some burn marks, and you fix them, you find a way to make it whole again. For almost 4,000 years Jews had to repair the tapestry on their own. It was just us. But for the last 70 years, we no longer have to re- pair the tapestry on our own. With us tonight, we’re not alone, we’re not alone. And with that comes a responsibility, we need to stand up and be there for you as well. Go out and take this spirit with you. Intro- duce yourselves to each other, and wish each other a Shabbat Shalom.”

Min Kantronwitz who “contacted some of the remaining members of the synagogue and they have agreed to loan, indefinitely, their Torah to Nahalat Shalom.”

As Carolyn and Rick Sidd arrived at Nahalat Shalom on August 30 from Roswell, a tallis was held aloft by members of the Karmowsky family and Nahalat Shalom welcomed the Torah. Carolyn gave an emotional tribute, as she told the bittersweet story of the history of the Roswell congregation and the loss of the building in Roswell, and their decision to now share the scroll with Nahalat Shalom.

The Roswell Torah was put to use immediately at High Holiday services, and on Simchat Torah, Monday, October 1, Rabbi Min Kantronwitz dedicated it, sharing the story with the congregation at a joyous celebration. She explained that the journey of this Torah scroll “weaves history and geography.”

Carolyn Sidd entering Nahalat Shalom with B’nai Israel’s Torah scroll. Husband Richard Sidd follows in the picture. Kathryn Karmowsky family hold the tallit aloft as a chuppah.