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Church Leaders' letter against anti-semitism

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A church leaders' letter against anti-Semitism to the churches of Canada, the Jewish community in Canada, and to all people of good will...

We, the leaders of nine Christian churches in Canada, speak to you together through the facilitation of the Canadian Council of Churches, of which we all are members.

In this letter, we are addressing one situation only, which is a Canadian one. While we recognize that there are other serious situations here in Canada and throughout the world, which demand the faithful attention of all people of good will, we have become profoundly concerned and deeply dismayed by the alarming increase of anti-Semitism in Canada.

This anti-Semitism has taken many forms, including violence against Jewish persons – simply because of their ethnic or religious background, and the desecration of Holy places and cemeteries. We have become alerted to this resurgent evil through our own witness, through the media, and through the concern of others, including members of the Court of Appeal for Ontario and the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

We, the undersigned, representing many of the Christian churches in Canada, are fully aware of and deeply grateful for the Jewish roots of our faith traditions. In the Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 11, verses 17 and 18, St. Paul wrote,

“You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be a part of a cultivated olive tree . . . you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree . . . Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting you.” (Contemporary English Version)

Therefore we would declare our unqualified gratitude for the gifts of the Jewish people to world civilization in general and Canadian society in particular. We acknowledge with sadness and regret, and with no little shame, the historic burden of persecution, which Jews have borne throughout western history; a burden all too often inflicted by Christians, who have maligned Jesus' own people in Jesus' name. We challenge all churches, parishes, congregations and people of good will to find ways and means to expose and eradicate anti-Semitism within and from Canadian society. We must not be silent.

We urge all within our church communities and indeed, all Canadians, to exercise the greatest diligence on behalf of our Jewish friends and neighbours, that when they come under attack, and their sacred places desecrated, that they find true solidarity in establishing security and in redressing wrong.

We invite all our people, where the opportunity exists, to become acquainted with our Jewish brothers and sisters and with their places of worship in communities from coast to coast to coast, celebrating all that we share with our Jewish friends and neighbours, and respecting our differences.

We commit ourselves to demonstrating not only through words but through united action, our determination to confront anti-Semitism on every front. This we pledge in the unwavering conviction of the eternal love of Almighty God for all peoples and nations, in the unwavering conviction that we are, Jews and Christians alike, brothers and sisters, children of one God, heirs in faith of Abraham and Sarah.

Signed by:

The Most Rev. Michael G. Peers The Primate Anglican Church of Canada

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth Bellous Executive Minister Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec

The Rev. F. Thomas Rutherford Regional Minister Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

The Most Rev. Brendan M. O'Brien Archbishop of St. John's President Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Rev. Raymond Schultz National Bishop Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

The Rev. P.A. (Sandy) McDonald Moderator The Presbyterian Church in Canada

The Rev. Siebrand Wilts Stated Clerk Regional Synod of Canada Reformed Church in America

M. Christine MacMillan, Commissioner Territorial Commander The Salvation Army Canada & Bermuda Territory

The Right Rev. Peter Short Moderator The United Church of Canada

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47 Queen's Park Crescent East
Toronto, ON
M5S 2CS

www.councilofchurches.ca

T: 416.972.9494
F: 416.927.0405
TF: 1.866.822.7645

info@councilofchurches.ca

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