

Everyone in Croton has the right to attend their chosen places of worship in freedom and safety.

We are sad and angry to say that since the summer, many Jewish communities in the area have experienced harassment and bigotry. The Croton clergy and Village Board have been in conversation with Rabbi Jaech and Temple Israel of Northern Westchester to ensure they can worship safely. Religious harassment is against the right of religious freedom enshrined in our laws and constitution. This bigotry and harassment is heinous and wrong. In the face of this heinous harassment, Rabbi Jaech's message has been consistent - let there be peace, continue to promote love, and don't lose your humanity. We wish all could live these words, but there are some who hold anger and want violence, especially against our Jewish siblings.

We, members of the Village Trustees and clergy of the Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist Churches and Unitarian Universalist Congregation in Croton, side with and support our Jewish siblings at Temple Israel of Northern Westchester and Rabbi Jaech in the face of this harassment.

We unequivocally denounce the alarming rise in hate crimes- anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and harassment against individual believers, private businesses, and houses of faith - which have been increasing across New York State. This harassment against Jewish and Muslim communities has increased disturbingly over the last several years, and most particularly and viciously since the War in Israel and Gaza began on October 7th.

In response to the rapid spike in hate crimes, honoring our varied religious and civic roles, we strongly affirm a vision of New York and Croton with safety, freedom and opportunity for all. We pledge to do our part to work for such an inclusive community.

We condemn any hatred that leads to Anti-Semitism or Islamophobia, and call on our neighbors to speak up in support of our Muslim and Jewish neighbors here in Croton. This is a time of support. We ask that if you hear someone making threats against area synagogues, rabbis, or the Jewish community to take it seriously and confront it and or report it. We ask that if you hear someone making threats against area mosques, imams, or the Muslim community to take it

seriously and confront it and or report it. We can work in community and solidarity for a safe, inclusive Croton, together.

Honoring the best in our civic life, Croton can and should be a place where all can come and feel free, be who they are, and worship in peace. In this time of increasing hate crimes, we are committed to working for a Croton of freedom, safety and justice.

Rev. Dr. Justin Johnson, Our Saviour Lutheran Church

The Rev. Jennifer M. Owen, Rector, St. Augustine's Episcopal Church

Rev. Daniel Lawlor, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Hudson Valley

Rev. Bette Sohm, Asbury United Methodist Church