

Faith Leaders Decry Recent Attacks as the Worst Form of Terrorism

In the last four months, terrorists have struck countless places of worship, including churches, synagogues and mosques.

On Saturday, a woman died protecting her longtime friend and rabbi as he attempted to evacuate children while a gunman fired shots in the Chabad of Poway. Three others were injured.

"Your final good deed was taking the bullets for Rabbi Mendel Goldstein to save his life," said Audrey Jacobs of Lori Gilbert-Kaye, the lone death in Saturday's attack. "Tragically, the rabbi was still shot in the hand and he gave a sermon telling everyone to stay strong."

Police arrested suspect John T. Earnest shortly after the synagogue attack.

The gunman unleashed on the Jewish synagogue less than a week after terrorists blew up churches and hotels on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka.

Earnest appears to have written a viral note that praised other religious massacres around the globe.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*:

Earnest appears to have left behind a nine-page manifesto filled with racist rants and details of his personal life. The Rancho Penasquitos resident wrote that he is a nursing student from the "depths" of California.

In the document, titled "an open letter," Earnest said he was inspired by Brenton Tarrant, the Australian white nationalist who killed 50 people in attacks on mosques in Christchurch,

New Zealand, on March 15. It was the worst mass shooting in the country's modern history.

That shooting, Earnest wrote, led to his decision four weeks ago to attack the Chabad.

"How long did it take you to plan the attack? Four weeks. Four weeks ago, I decided I was doing this. Four weeks later, I did it," he wrote.

His anti-Semitic letter revealed his "disgust" for Jews and a desire to kill them. The writer, who is white, said he was willing to sacrifice his future "for the sake of my people."

The suspect also championed Robert Bowers—who killed 11 people and wounded six more in the Tree of Life shooting in Pittsburgh six months ago—as well as Adolf Hitler.

The writer identifies himself as a man of European descent. He does not claim any political labels, but asserts that Jews seek to "doom" the white race.

His screed, which is filled with quotes from the Bible, also appears to take credit for arson at an Escondido mosque the week after the New Zealand shootings.

Faith leaders around the globe decry Earnest's alleged acts, as well as the other attacks, as the worst form of terrorism.

"There is no worse form of terrorist extremism than an attack on a place of worship – whether it be arson at churches in Louisiana, mass shootings at mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, or this weekend's attack on a synagogue in Poway, California," says Bishop Joseph D'Souza, founder and international president of Dignity Freedom Network. "This evil must be confronted by all of us, especially faith leaders who at times have to overcome threats from within their own community to speak up against extremism. We cannot be bystanders in this war against the right of any community to

worship in peace. Enough is enough.”

Other prominent Christians also decried the violence.

Here’s what they’re saying:

David Jeremiah, senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California, and founder and host of “Turning Point”:

Today we mourn with those directly impacted by today’s tragic synagogue shooting at the Chabad of Poway. Poway is a community close to “Turning Point” and Shadow Mountain Community Church. Our prayers are with the victims and their families and for all the Jewish people throughout this city, this country and the world. The Christian community stands firmly and compassionately behind our Jewish brothers and sisters, and we condemn hatred against anyone, especially those with their heads bowed in prayer, as those in Poway were, celebrating the last day of Passover. May God be close to those who have suffered this terrible tragedy.

Jentezen Franklin, senior pastor of Free Chapel, a multi-campus church:

It seems a week doesn’t go by before we hear of yet another attack against those peacefully exercising their right to worship. I’m grieving for the people of Poway, California, tonight and the Jewish community around the world after such a senseless synagogue shooting. I so desperately want the world to know that the God who made us and loves us does not call us to act in violence towards anyone. In a time of increasing hostility towards nearly every faith, I pray we all take a moment to remind our children that a bullet, a bomb or a clenched fist is never the answer to our troubles. Loving your neighbor—no matter their race, religion or creed—is always the better choice.

Charisma News will continue to update this story.

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