

Obama mourns Kansas gun violence, anti-Semitism: 'We're all children of God'

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [May 14, 2014](#) issue

President Obama called for people of all faiths to deter gun violence and anti-Semitism one day after a gunman killed three people at Jewish centers in suburban Kansas City.

"That this occurred now—as Jews were preparing to celebrate Passover, as Christians were observing Palm Sunday—makes this tragedy all the more painful," the president said April 14 in Washington, D.C., at his annual Easter prayer breakfast.

The president noted that synagogues and Jewish community centers are now taking precautions by adding security measures.

"We're all children of God. We're all made in his image, all worthy of his love and dignity," he said. "We see what happens around the world when this kind of religious-based or -tinged violence can rear its ugly head. It's got no place in our society."

Obama noted that the two dead at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Kansas City, a grandfather and his teenaged grandson, attended the Church of the Resurrection, a United Methodist megachurch in nearby Leawood, Kansas. The church's pastor, Adam Hamilton, preached at Obama's inaugural prayer service in 2013.

The third person, a woman, was killed at a Jewish assisted-living facility in Overland Park. Frazier Glenn Cross, a white supremacist and former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, was formally charged with murder April 15.

At the Easter prayer breakfast, which has become an annual high-profile expression of his Christian faith, Catholic, Protestant, and Eastern Orthodox leaders listened to Obama's remarks about sin and grace and Christians' belief in Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

“We’re also overwhelmed by the grace of an awesome God,” Obama said. “In our Christian religious tradition we celebrate the glory of the resurrection—all so that we might be forgiven of our sins and granted everlasting life.”

Obama mentioned his recent visit with Pope Francis and how Christians “regardless of our denomination” have been moved by the pope’s message of justice and caring for the outcast.

“He reminds us that all of us, no matter what our station, have an obligation to live righteously and that we all have an obligation to live humbly because that’s, in fact, the example that we profess to follow,” Obama said, adding he hoped the pontiff will visit the United States.

The president noted that young men who are being mentored by faith leaders were attending the breakfast, and he encouraged others to join in his focus on aiding young African-American and Latino boys through his My Brother’s Keeper initiative.

Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter, who lost a son to suicide and a granddaughter to brain cancer, led a prayer and thanked the president for his friendship during those losses.

“Death, where is your sting?” he prayed, quoting from 1 Corinthians. “God, use this time to renew in us hope that outlasts disappointment and despair, and faith that cannot be crucified.” —RNS

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