



Temple Israel

An Engaging, Diverse Jewish Community
Portsmouth, New Hampshire

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Temple Israel Statement on Vandalism

Portsmouth, NH, April 12, 2024. On Monday night, April 8, 2024, an unknown individual intentionally smashed two antique light sconces on the front of our synagogue. These light fixtures have stained-glass panels on three sides that feature a Jewish star design. The perpetrator struck the glass directly on the Stars of David in a deliberate desecration of our sacred space and a bigoted attack on our faith community.

The lights themselves were installed in 1921 and represent the legacy of generations of Jews who have worshiped here. Temple Israel was founded in 1912. In 1921, the founders undertook a major renovation and beautification project that included the installation of these light fixtures, along with the construction of the permanent Ark that holds our Torah scrolls. Temple Israel's founders put all their resources into creating a sacred home for the Jewish community with the intention that it would last into perpetuity, reflecting their love and care.

Temple Israel has always experienced tremendous support from the wider Portsmouth community. However, as we know, hate is on the rise throughout our land. In February 2023, Temple Israel and other local houses of worship and businesses experienced malicious acts of vandalism. Clearly, there is more work to be done to build the kind of loving and inclusive society we all long for.

We are grateful for the support offered by the Portsmouth Police Department. Detectives are investigating this crime and seeking the public's assistance to identify the individual involved. Should you have any information, please contact Dave Keaveny, Investigative Division Captain, at 603 610-7511. Anonymous tips can be made through Seacoast Crime Stoppers by calling

(603) 431-1199, online at www.seacoastcrimestoppers.com and through the “P3” phone app available as a free download.

While we are a diverse city, encompassing many traditions, we are one neighborly community. We ask for everyone’s vigilance in combatting hatred in all forms. Together, we can stand up to bigotry and create a community in which such acts are unimaginable.

Rabba Kaya Stern Kaufman, Rabbi

Jared Nabel, President

Temple Israel is a diverse, Conservative-affiliated, egalitarian congregation located in the historic seaport city of Portsmouth, NH, about an hour north of Boston. Our members live in the seacoast area of New Hampshire and southern Maine.

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