

REKINDLING THE FLAME OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

As Shabbat begins this week, the Reform Movement encourages families and congregations to light an additional Shabbat candle – shining light on religious intolerance and reminding Jews across the United States of Hanukkah’s themes of religious freedom.

The candle can be lit between the lighting of the Hanukkah candles and the traditional Shabbat candles and can be followed by this reading:

During Hanukkah, we commemorate the rededication of the ancient Temple, and celebrate the right of the Jewish people to live and observe our faith freely. Religious freedom is a fundamental Jewish and American value. Such freedom protects our ability to light our candles for all the world to see, without fear of persecution.

This evening, as we celebrate the Festival of Light alongside Shabbat, we cannot ignore the symbolism of the holiday that celebrates religious freedom coinciding with our weekly holiday that brings peace and renewal into our lives.

Tonight we light three candles instead of the traditional two. The additional flame shines light where the darkness of xenophobia has taken hold, and illuminates the path to upholding our nation’s history as a place where the religious freedoms of all people are respected and protected.

We light this additional candle too as a sign of commitment to repudiating the hateful words aimed at our Muslim friends, community members, and those we do not know but who seek peace in a haven from violence and intolerance. Words of hatred against one religion pain all people of faith and goodwill. This intolerance stands in direct violation of the very values upon which our nation was founded.

Finally, our additional Shabbat candle is our personal call for peace in place of injustice, and pluralism in place of prejudice. In the glow of our candle, we commit to speaking out against religious hatred, to reaching out to the members of the Muslim community, to loving our neighbors as ourselves, and to repairing the brokenness in our world.