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Finding Strength in Community: The Mission and Impact of Shalom Baker Donelson

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Winter 2024

In the not-so-distant past, a group like Shalom Baker Donelson might have felt unnecessary to many in the Jewish community. Then October 7 happened. For many members of the Baker Donelson community with family and friends in Israel, this attack hit close to home. Yet this was only the beginning.

Over the past year, there has been an unprecedented rise in antisemitism worldwide, including in our own communities. Our temples and synagogues had noticeably increased security, and events such as religious services, school attendance, and even mommy-and-me classes were moved, canceled, or skipped, as our places of worship faced increased vandalism and bomb threats following the October 7 attack. Across the country, we have witnessed countless university protests go far beyond criticism of Israel's government and into violent and hateful rhetoric. Jewish businesses have been vandalized in the U.S., and abroad, mobs have stormed airport runways and city streets to hunt for Jews, and Jews have been assaulted in broad daylight in places like New York City.

We are fortunate to work at Baker Donelson. This Firm has been incredibly supportive as we navigated these crises. And still, surrounded by loud, hateful voices on social media and in the news, many of our Jewish colleagues felt isolated, unsure how or whether to broach this subject with colleagues at work. This is why Shalom Baker Donelson exists. At its core, its goal is to ensure that Jewish people within the Baker Donelson community feel supported and know that they have a group (and individuals) that they can lean on and talk to when they are struggling.

One of the most incredible parts of Shalom Baker Donelson's young existence has been the involvement of its Jewish allies. We have been touched by non-Jewish colleagues who reached out to us individually after October 7. It has been meaningful to all of us to attend introductory meetings and hear from many who are not Jewish but who wanted to join the group to offer support and learn about our culture. We have had the pleasure of speaking individually with some of these allies, discussing what it meant to grow up in a Jewish household, the traditions we still participate in today, and our connection to the State of Israel. In a year that has often felt isolating, it has been refreshing and powerful to hear from allies who are genuinely interested in learning more about Jewish culture and supporting their Jewish colleagues.

We formed this group to facilitate love and support. It has been such a blessing to be able to hear the experiences of our colleagues and to be present for one another. We are grateful that Baker Donelson has provided this forum, and we are hopeful to continue spreading a positive message throughout our Firm and into our respective communities.