Holocaust
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in order to memorialize all those Jews who perished because of their religion and all those Christians who died because they helped rescue Jewish people or because they were somehow different from the German mythical Aryan race.

Rabbi Karl Richter, the keynote speaker and a native German whose synagogue was destroyed by the Nazis in the 1930s, carried on the theme of remembering.

There are those who advise us that 40 years after the event it is time to forgive and forget," he said. "As an individual, I am able to forgive someone who has wronged me, but how can there be collective forgiveness for the crime of genocide...

He quoted poet and essayist Elie Wiesel on why it is important to remember.

"We must remember, not only because of the dead, but also because of the living. Not only because of the survivors; it may even be to save them. Our remembering is an act of generosity, aimed at saving men and women from apathy and evil.

He also recalled his days in Germany and Hitler's attacks on Jews.

"He dared his pledge in 1933 that in case of a general war he would destroy the Jewish people wherever his power would reach. The world heard but did not believe."

"He kept his pledge. We witnessed the ring drawn ever more tightly around the Jews of Germany — beginning with economic boycott, the loss of citizenship rights and the denial of education, to ever greater humiliation and deprivation of human dignity, to the destruction of all synagogues and Jewish institutions, to confiscation, expulsion and ultimate deportation to concentration camps.

"The noise was drawn ever so slowly and ever so tightly, and the world stood by. With a shrug of the shoulder, the great democracies opened their doors ever so slightly," Richter said.

"Should I forget the dark days of November 1938, when I stood in the Ansbach Synagogue, which I was looking at a gaping hole in the wall where the holy ark used to be?" Richter said. "Should I forget the terror of the Terrors, and the hundreds of prayer books, torn to pieces and burned, into which the young Jews poured their blood?"

Richter also asked if he should forget the events, the crying women and children, the coffins stripped from Dachau and Buchenwald, or his grandmother and friends who died in the concentration camps.

Yet, he said, the exhortation "do not forget" also applies to remembering.

"Therefore I remember with love and admiration the true Christian souls who helped and rescued Jews, and particularly Jewish children, at the risk of their own lives," he said.

Richter spoke of writers who deny the Holocaust occurred.

"There are only two possible motives for such publications: the writer is either naive, so locked up in his ivory tower of limited knowledge that he does not see the real world outside; or he is so malevolent that he sells his scholarly soul to evil powers, which for their own reasons want to revise the truth of historic fact.

"The destruction of the Jewish community of Europe is one of the best-documented events in recent history," Richter said.

The service's ecumenical array of guest speakers included:

Rabbi Robert E. Ostrach of Liberal Synagogue; the Rev. John Carville, Vicar General of the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge; the Rev. Jerry M. Green, chaplain of Baton Rouge General Medical Center and representative of the Baton Rouge Area Ministerial Association; Congressman W. Hemme Moor; Mayor-President Pat Scren, former parish assistant superintendent of schools Lorin Smiley, who was among the Allied Liberators; Goudchaux executive Hanu Sternberg, president of Nasi Israel; Harvey Hoffman, president of Liberal Synagogue; and Susan Lipsey, vice president of B'nai Israel.

Michael Abadi, a Christian guitarist and singer, performed "O Israel," a song he composed after seeing the closing minutes of a television interview with an Auschwitz survivor. Cantor H. Richard Brown of Florida Avenue Congregation conducted the service.

After more readings, Brown sang "El Maleh Rachamim" as the lights were dimmed. Then the worshipers, dropped flower petals into a Star of David as a symbol of grief and prayers.