

Interfaith & Community Leaders Standing Against Hate

On a rainy Tuesday night, April 25th, several hundred people gathered from the surrounding Somerset County area at Temple Beth-El in Hillsborough to participate in an interfaith vigil that aimed to raise awareness of the many acts of violence directed at a variety of houses of worship, religious community centers and day schools (60 Jewish Community Center's and 29 Jewish Day Schools around the country, for example), and to take a stand against prejudice, racism and hate.

The evening was marked by religious and political leaders offering words of peace, love and understanding. Prayers were offered from the Christian, Buddhist, Islamic, Jain, Jewish and Sikh traditions. Senator Kip Bateman and Assemblyman Andrew Zwicker offered supportive words of encouragement as well as a Joint Resolution of the New Jersey Legislature. Assistant Attorney General Philip Aronow offered a message from the New Jersey Attorney General, as well as reassuring words about how his office works closely with state and federal officials. People mentioned over and over again how moving and humbling it was to be a part of a community event marked by so many words of love and support.

The evening highlighted musical offerings, fellowship and a call to action. Dr. Ali Chaudry, from the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge invited people gathered there, if they felt comfortable, to take the: "Stand Up For The Other" Pledge. The pledge is:

"While interesting with members of my own faith, or ethnic, or gender community, or with others, if I hear hateful comments from anyone about members of any other community, I pledge to stand up for the other and speak up to challenge bigotry in any form."

One may find this pledge at:

www.standupfortheother.org

www.facebook.com/standupfortheother

www.njifc.org

If you would feel comfortable enough to take the pledge I encourage you to do so. Please know that I am always available to have a conversation and provide you with a more thorough background and understanding of how our interfaith and community vigil came to be and how I strongly support this effort. I am proud of the fact that over 15 people from St. John's were in attendance at this vigil.

God bless you.

Fr. Ron