

Temple Solel Hosts Inter-faith Community Discussion on Antisemitism

One of our members noticed some Antisemitic trope coming from a local pastor's sermon while switching channels on television. She described how uncomfortable the words made her feel to a group of Jewish friends, and how not knowing what to do about it made it a worse experience. We are encouraged when we "see something say something."

In this particular example the sermon was available online to review in more depth and after further investigation, suggested follow-up. A quote, "Those people in the synagogue behaved the way most people when the majority do when we perceive a threat to our most favored status. They lashed out and tried to make an example out of someone (Jesus). They flexed their muscle. They exercised their power. The reason ... they weren't ready to accept the version of the world that he came to embrace and to save. They wanted a smaller, simpler version where they were still at the center. It is amazing to me how the Word of God stands up after all these years and still speaks into our reality." Our congregant reached out to the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte

and clergy at Shalom Park to ask for their help. They followed up and we always hope for closer understanding and relationships, especially with our Christian friends. Education and communication is key.

During the same timeframe *The Washington Post* headline read, "Nazi salutes and a swastika made of red cups: Newport Beach students condemned for 'abhorrent Antisemitic activity.'" We might not even know this happened if it weren't for two Jewish students in this high school who spoke up. Good for them. They have more courage than many adults. There was an overwhelming response from the community condemning the activity and efforts began to "... develop comprehensive programming so that students can empathize with people different than themselves." We have so much work to do; patience to exercise - intolerance to hate combined with tolerance to communicate when there is hope for change once a bad actor realizes history and corrects their behavior.

We recently celebrated Purim, remembering our deliverance from Haman's evil plot to destroy the Jewish people. Our role models appropriately represented both genders in Esther and Mordecai, the heroes of the story. Lay Leader, Russ Cobe, read the Megillah to the congregation. We ate hamantashen cookies and looked at each other's costumes - realizing that knights, cowboys and even the pirate family were all friends. It also included a flower child,

farmer, football fan, Hawaiian princess, beautifully dressed ladies wearing Asian attire, a gem miner, and tailor to the king. If only our differences could be accounted in such a joyful way every day within and outside of our borders whether physical or emotional.

We are very grateful for the 2018 Impact and Innovation Grant awarded to us by the Jewish Federation of Greater Charlotte, which has made it possible to grow our efforts around education, community support, and social action. We are partnering with local leaders to strengthen our relationships which included hosting special guest lecturer, Rabbi Ana Bonnheim who led a powerful inter-faith community discussion on Antisemitism.

She began with its very definition - "Antisemitism refers to prejudice and/or discrimination against Jews as individuals and as a group. Antisemitism is based on stereotypes and myths that target Jews as a people, their religious practices and beliefs, and the Jewish State of Israel. Historically, what began as a conflict over religious beliefs evolved into a systematic policy of political, economic, and social isolations; exclusion, degradation and attempted annihilation. It did not begin in the Nazi era, nor did it end with the close of World War II. Its continuance over the millennia speaks to the power of scapegoating a group that is defined as the "other." She went on to teach how Antisemitism took place in Biblical times,



Temple Solel members celebrate Purim

a new anti-Judaism evolved, we see it in the middle ages, the Holocaust, and today. Today using modern technology, did you realize the new form of a yellow Star of David "Jude" - comes in the form of a triple parentheses or triple brackets also known as an (((echo)))? Started by the alt-right blog, this is an Antisemitic symbol used to "mark" Jewish individuals, groups or even our businesses online. Education goes both ways. We have to educate ourselves.

During the discussion a local Christian Bible Study Leader and Veteran described a disturbing experience he witnessed. He was surprised to learn other countries view the term "nationality" on our passports differently than we do. An official in Eastern Europe told his fellow soldier who was African American his nationality was not listed correctly because "he was part of the Black Nation" not "America." It is shocking for us to think of someone making such a comment; and even hearing such an example is offensive. However, it pushes us to think

about our social contracts - "Are we really part of particular groups we think we are? What is an appropriate description we use for ourselves and other people? Do we ignore what is said or do we stand up and take action to lessen racism and hate?"

Rabbi Bonnheim shared, "The Torah's word for faith is *emunah*, which means trust and commitment we show to each other as human beings - especially when we tell each other, 'I believe you.' Judaism teaches us that our judgments and choices deeply matter - our actions shape not only our lives, but the life and future of the world." Following the discussion we felt more equipped to be part of the solution. Many thanks to all who attended such a wonderfully guided difficult topic.

For more information write us at info@templesolel.org or call 803-619-9707. Temple Solel holds regular Shabbat services at 7 PM on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. We hope to see you soon in the Community Room at St. Philip Neri Church, 292 Munn Road, Fort Mill, SC. ✨