

We must speak out against bullying and harassment

As clergy of Christian and Jewish houses of worship in Rye Brook and Port Chester, we are saddened by the rash of suicides of gay and lesbian youth across our country that was brought to national attention by the death of Tyler Clementi. According to a recent survey, nearly nine of 10 gay and lesbian middle and high school students suffered physical or verbal harassment in 2009, ranging from taunts to outright beatings. At the memorial for Seth Walsh, who was one of these teens, a classmate and friend said Seth had been teased for years: "But this year it got much worse.... People would say, 'You should kill yourself,' 'You should go away,' 'You're gay, who cares about you?'"

Our shared and our distinct religious traditions both affirm the divine image of the human being and the call to be inclusive of different peoples. God cares for gay and lesbian people no less than anyone else. God's image is not seen in one gender or race but in the infinite diversity of humanity. God does not hate or condemn people in their created differences. Our traditions' most sacred writings call for us to help the

oppressed and despised.

As people of faith, we must rise to the challenge of stressful times and help bridge differences with understanding and compassion. People of all beliefs should speak out for the humanity and prudence of working together for the common good. Parents and others need to watch for and correct disparaging comments, and discriminatory attitudes, and even more, to monitor ourselves and our example for how we act towards people who are different. We speak from our traditions and from our faith practices to say these deaths must be responded to with a renewed effort to teach our children respect for differences and to encourage the gifts of rich diversity to their full flowering. As a community, it is incumbent upon us to speak out against bullying and harassment and to remember that, indeed, each of us is created in God's image.

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Rev. Bruce Baker
Pastor Jim O'Hanlon
Rev. Hilario Albert
Rev. Stephen Schenk

Westmore News

Nov. 4 2010

OPINION

From Our Readers

Local clergy challenge bias hatred

As clergy of Jewish and Christian houses of worship in Rye Brook and Port Chester, we are concerned about the rise in bias attacks against gays and lesbians. Often this intolerance is said to be justified by religious beliefs. In response to NBA basketball player Jason Collins' remarks about his sexuality, some media commentators declared that he could not be a Christian and that the Bible condemned any such sexual identity. Among the recent tragedies was the shooting of 32-year-old Mark Carson in Manhattan by a man who was ranting about his hatred of gays.

Our shared and distinct religious traditions affirm both the divine image of the human being and the call to love all neighbors. God cares for gay and lesbian people no less than anyone else and we reject any use of our

religions to tarnish their humanity and dignity. God's image is not seen in one gender or race but in every human person and therefore in the very diversity of humanity. God does not hate or condemn people in their created differences.

As people of faith, we must rise to the challenge of bias hatred and help bridge differences with understanding and compassion. We speak from what we perceive to be the revealed truth of sacred scripture, from our traditions, and from our lived faith experiences to state that these attacks must stop. We call for a response that includes a renewed effort to teach compassion and understanding, not only to those members of our particular houses of worship, but to all citizens. We pledge to speak out and encourage others

to speak out about our universal human dignity: every human person is created in God's image and likeness; therefore, such unjust and violent attacks against anyone who differs from our religion, race, gender, or sexual orientation rejects the principles of basic humanity as well as the beauty of God's diverse creation.

Pastor Jim O'Hanlon

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Rye Brook

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Congregation KTI

Port Chester

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Port Chester

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All Souls Parish
Port Chester

Fr. Hilario Albert
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
Port Chester

Flying Nazi flag a horrible offense

7/25/14

We were saddened to see a report in the Westmore News that a resident flew a Nazi SS flag in Port Chester. Fans of German soccer are not and would in no way be associated with such imagery. The World Cup, like the Olympics, is a shining example of cooperation, fellowship and celebration among the nations of the world in a time of deepening mistrust and increasingly complex and interconnected relationships. Flying this flag is a horrible offense to the good people of Port Chester and insults the memory of the victims of that horrible regime. Our elected officials and our schools must make prejudice and bullying top priorities as problems they can so vitally address.

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Congregation KTI, Port Chester

Fr. Jim O'Hanlon
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Rye Brook

Rev. Bruce Baker
All Souls Parish, Port Chester

Joan Thomas
Port Chester-Rye NAACP

Fr. Hilario Albert
St Peter's Church, Port Chester

Fr. Tim Zak
Holy Rosary Church, Port Chester

Fr. Timothy S. Wiggins
Our Lady of Mercy Church, Port Chester

Flying the SS flag was ignorant or racist

I am writing in response to the ignorant comments offered by the "spokesperson" for 549 Irving Ave. This person felt it was appropriate to fly an SS flag in celebration of Germany's victory at the World Cup. In my opinion, the person who chose to fly this flag of ignominy is either a racist or a fool.

The Westmore News reported that this "spokesperson" compared flying an SS flag to flying a Mexican flag during Cinco de Mayo or an Irish flag on St. Patrick's Day. This individual apparently is clueless to the fact that while the Mexican flag represents Mexico, and the Irish flag represents Ireland, the SS flag does not represent Germany. In fact, most Germans are themselves deeply offended by the SS flag which represents the racist Nazi war machine which committed unspeakable crimes against humanity and

was crushed by the Allied forces. The SS flag can be construed in no other way.

To compare the SS flag to the flag of any legitimate nation shows a lack of knowledge and intelligence. To suggest that people took his SS flag waving "the wrong way" suggests a lack of sensitivity. We did not take it "the wrong way." Flying the SS flag was either the ignorant and foolish act of an imbecile or a racist hate crime.

Never again!

Name withheld upon request
Port Chester

Editor's Note: The writer calls himself a "spokesperson for sanity, diversity, unity and tolerance." He asked that his name be withheld because "I don't particularly want to invite the skinheads or Nazis to my house."

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1-Year Subscription - \$47⁰⁰
Back issues over 4 weeks old,
if available, are \$1.75 each.

Periodical Postage Paid
at Port Chester, NY 10573
(USPS 680-660)

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:

→ Westmore News - 7/25/14
38 Broad Street
Port Chester, NY 10573-4197



Member

5/20/16

Local clergy speak out on issues

As leaders of religious communities, we have deep concerns about not only the spiritual health and welfare of our congregations, but also the health and welfare of our whole village. Will our families be safe? Will they be able to prosper and grow? Will they be able to live in safe housing they can afford? Will our children continue to find the quality educational opportunities they should be guaranteed?

Two concerns put these issues into question. The termination of the professional firefighters puts all of our homes and businesses in jeopardy. Plus it eliminates good, middle class jobs which are at the heart of what is needed in our community. These firefighters help protect our property, but more importantly our lives. The projected savings are hardly worth that cost, not to mention the cost of certain litigation. We are concerned about the impact of this upon our congregants and our whole community.

Likewise we are concerned about the Starwood development at the United Hospital site. This development will most assuredly impact the health and welfare of our community. The Sustainable Port Chester Alliance (SPCA) has been seeking to work out a Community Benefits Agreement with Starwood which would guarantee workforce housing (to replace the units that would be lost with the destruction of 999 High St.), local jobs with living wages, responsible environmental clean-up, a Payment

In Lieu of Taxes that would give Port Chester its fair share while still making the project profitable, and increased school funding.

Community Benefits Agreements are a growing resource for communities. They can help to address the large outside developers who come into our communities to make their profits and leave. We and our congregations live in Port Chester and are here to stay. Our concerns for the health and welfare of Port Chester are not new. We stand for that which will improve our Village and stand against that which diminishes the values of welcome and fellowship, of true community. Therefore we support the reinstatement of our professional firefighters and the efforts of the Sustainable Port Chester Alliance to develop a Community Benefits Agreement for the United Hospital site.

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St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Rev. Kristen Saylor
St. Peter's Episcopal Church

12/23/16

Not in Our Town: United Against Hate

This nation always has incidents of hate, bias and discrimination. Mostly these are isolated and often they are anonymous like the swastika painted on a Rye Brook street in 2010. Sometimes they are not anonymous like the Port Chester homeowner who flew a Nazi SS flag to celebrate a soccer victory in 2014. Rye Brook's menorahs have been vandalized on occasion. There are incidents like the local high school football team that called out "Stalin" for players to run left or "Hitler" for players to run right this past year which are lapses in judgement.

Over the past 12 months we have seen something much worse. Incidents have been more frequent, less anonymous, less responsive to reason and moral exhortation. Incidents have been against Muslims, Jews, Gays and Lesbians, people of color and immigrants.

As faith leaders, we stand together to

denounce all acts of intolerance and all efforts to malign a whole group as not deserving respect and full inclusion in our nation's life.

We are participating in a countrywide initiative: Not In Our Town: United Against Hate. Many communities around the country have seen a frightening rise in hateful vandalism and bias attacks and responded with this campaign. You can find ours on social media or contact us for more information.

Fr. Hilario Albert
St. Peter's Episcopal Church

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Congregation KTI

Fr. Pat Angelucci
Corpus Christi-Holy Rosary Church

Pastor Jim O'Hanlon
St. Paul's Lutheran Church

6/3/16

Local clergy urge understanding & compassion during Pride Month

As clergy of Jewish and Christian houses of worship in Rye Brook and Port Chester, we join our voices to affirm both the divine image of the human being and the call to love all neighbors. With LGBTQ Pride Month upon us, let us be mindful that God cares for gay and lesbian people no less than anyone else and we reject any use of our religions to tarnish their humanity and dignity. God's image is not seen in one gender or race, but in the infinite diversity of humanity. God does not hate or condemn people in their created differences.

As people of faith, we must rise to the challenge of bias hatred and help bridge differences with understanding and compassion. People of all beliefs should speak out for the humanity and prudence of working together for the common good. Parents, teachers, leaders and com-

munity members must watch for and correct disparaging comments and discriminatory attitudes. Moreover, we must monitor ourselves and our example of how we act towards people who are different.

We speak from our traditions and from our faith practices to call for an effort to teach our children respect for differences. As a community, it is incumbent upon us to speak out against bullying and harassment and to remember that indeed, each of us is created in God's image.

Reverend Hilario Albert
Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Reverend Bruce Baker
Pastor Jim O'Hanlon
Reverend Kristin Saylor

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OPINION

From Our Readers

Interfaith Pride Weekend

As clergy of Jewish and Christian houses of worship in Rye Brook and Port Chester, we join our voices to affirm both the divine image of the human being and the call to love all neighbors. With June being LGBTQ Pride Month, we see a need to proclaim that God cares for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer people no less than anyone else, and we reject any use of our religions to degrade their humanity and dignity. God's image is not seen in one gender or race, but in the infinite diversity of humanity. God does not hate or condemn people in their created differences.

As people of faith, we rise against bias hatred and seek to bridge differences with understanding and compassion. We must engage in honest discussion to make ourselves aware of our example in how we act towards people who are different.

We invite the community to join us on June 10 & 11 for an Interfaith Pride Weekend. We will be joining to share in each other's worship as we have annually for six years to speak from our traditions and from our faith practices to call for respect for differences. This year we will focus on bias hatred based on differences of gender, gender identity and sexuality.

The events for our Interfaith Weekend are Saturday, June 10 at 9:30 a.m. at Congregation KTI (575 King St. in Port Chester, 939-1004) and Sunday 9:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m. at St. Paul's (761 King St., Rye Brook, 939-8170).

Pastor Jim O'Hanlon
St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Congregation KTI
Rev. Kristin Saylor
St. Peter's Episcopal Church

3/24/17

We stand together: A clergy statement against anti-Semitism and racism

Committed to the idea that each person is created in the Divine Image, we, the undersigned Rye, Port Chester, Harrison and Rye Brook religious leaders, stand united against the recent spate of anti-Semitic acts carried out locally and around the nation.

Harassment through bomb-threats to Jewish Community Centers, intimidation through swastika graffiti, and the horrifying desecration of Jewish cemeteries all run counter to the religious values that we all share. We commit to remaining vigilant in opposing anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination, prejudice and intimidation against any of God's children.

Rather than succumb to fear, rather than close ourselves off, we will continue to build bridges of cooperation, understanding, and holiness among our congregations and all people of goodwill. In doing so, we will demonstrate to the world that Westchester County remains a place that, in the words of President George Washington, "gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

Rev. Hilario Albert
St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Port Chester

Rabbi Jaymee Alpert
Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel, Port Chester

Fr. Patrick Angelucci, SDB
Corpus Christi-Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Port Chester

The Rev. Dorothee R. Caulfield
Christ's Episcopal Church, Rye

Cantor Melanie Cooperman
Community Synagogue of Rye

Rev. Monsignor Donald M. Dwyer
Church of the Resurrection, Rye

Rev. Robert D. Flanagan
Christ's Episcopal Church, Rye

Rabbi Leora Frankel
Community Synagogue of Rye

Rabbi Howard J. Goldsmith
Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester, Rye

Rev. Dr. Jane Ann Groom
All Souls Parish Presbyterian Church, Port Chester

Rabbi Daniel Gropper
Community Synagogue of Rye

Fr. Richard Guarnerie
St. Gregory the Great of Harrison

Rabbi Eytan Hammerman
Jewish Community Center of Harrison

The Rev. Dr. Craig Higgins, Senior Pastor
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Rye

The Rev. Sanford A. Key
Christ's Episcopal Church, Rye

The Rev. Daniel Love
Rye Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Steve Magneson, Associate Pastor
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Rye

The Rev. Dr. John Miller
Rye Presbyterian Church

Pastor Jim O'Hanlon
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Rye Brook

The Rev. Kristin Saylor
St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Port Chester

Cantor Alexis Sklar
Congregation Kneses Tifereth Israel; Port Chester

Cantor Meredith Stone
Congregation Emanu-El of Westchester, Rye

Father Elias G. Villis
The Greek Orthodox Church of Our Saviour, Rye

Westmore News

Family separation policy is inhumane

The recent Zero Tolerance policy with regard to immigrants and asylum seekers shows our government's willingness to be cruel and uncaring for those who are among our neediest neighbors. The Bible, which is so often cited to justify hatred and exclusion, actually calls for us to love and care for everyone regardless of boundaries and citizenship. We read, for example, in Leviticus: "The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (19:34).

Our nation needs to have immigration laws and policies for good order and national security. But the Zero Tolerance policy separates families and criminalizes people in a way that should shock our conscience. President Trump has steadily eroded our nation's concern for people south of us by calling them criminals and rapists and by speaking of them as an infestation. Instead, our religious traditions command us to see all people as human beings entitled to the same dignity and rights that we expect

for ourselves. The Bible calls for us to do even more: to love and assist with compassion and commitment.

As local clergy of various traditions, we join the many other moral voices in our nation demanding that all children be reunited with their families and that our government treat immigrants and asylum seekers in a humane and dignified manner.

Rev. Hilario Albert,
St. Peter's Church

Rev. Dr. Jane Ann Groom,
Interim Pastor, All Souls Parish

Rabbi Ben Goldberg,
Congregation KTI

Rabbi Howard Goldsmith,
Congregation Emanu-El
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Pastor Jim O'Hanlon,
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Rev. Kate Malin,
Christ Church, Rye

The Westmore News encourages letters to the editor expressing your opinion on any local, regional or international issues or events that concern you. Letters must include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. Letters are due by Tuesday at noon. All letters related to an election are limited to 500 words starting four issues prior to the election. We do not accept letters relating to an election the week before that elec-

Westmore News 8/31/18