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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOAH and Sussex Pride Respond to Inflammatory Sermon Groups call upon all members of our community to practice empathy and understanding.

In light of the recent sermon delivered by Minister Mike Mitchell, Sussex Pride and Speak Out Against Hate feel compelled to address the alarming language surrounding both the 'Liberalism' and LGBTQ+ community that was utilized. Mitchell gave the sermon at the Dagsboro Church of Christ, also known as the Gathering Place. He is the host of A Christian Viewpoint, which airs on WMDT 47ABC. It is important to express concern regarding the inflammatory rhetoric that not only vilifies a segment of our community but also perpetuates a cycle of hate and division during a time when unity and compassion are essential.

The portrayal of 'Liberalism' and LGBTQ+ individuals as 'evil' and 'murderous' directly contradicts the values of love and acceptance that many faith traditions espouse. As Delawareans, it is important to recognize that the majority of hate violence observed in our state is directed towards Black, Jewish, and LGBTQ+ communities. In a time when safety should be our priority, the focus on any marginalized group in a derogatory manner only serves to heighten the risk and fear they face in their everyday lives. We now are only too aware of the fact that inflammatory speech is both calculated to and does, in fact, lead to violence.

People of all backgrounds deserve to live without fear of violence or discrimination, and it is essential for all community leaders to promote words and actions that uplift rather than tear down. The rhetoric we choose can either heal divisions or exacerbate them. We implore leaders to tone down inflammatory speech and remember that as Delawareans, there is far more that unites us than divides us.

It is crucial to highlight that support is available for LGBTQ+ individuals of faith through organizations like Sussex Pride Faith (sussexpride.org/faith), which affirms the value of every person regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Many congregations across our state are committed to inclusivity and acceptance, welcoming all individuals into their communities.

We call upon all members of our community to practice empathy and understanding. Let us reaffirm our commitment to ensuring safety, acceptance, and love for everyone, irrespective of their identity.

Resources

- Excerpts from the sermon can be viewed on our [youtube page](#)
- The entire sermon can be viewed on the [Gathering Place facebook page](#)
- Both Rev. Kathryn Andonian and Rev. Jeffrey Austin Ross of St. Peter's Church of Lewes support this message and may be available to speak with you.

About SOAH:

Speak Out Against Hate (SOAH) has been formed for the express purpose. Of confronting and countering the rising tide of hate wherever and whenever it exists in a direct, focused and ongoing manner.

About Sussex Pride:

Sussex Pride works to celebrate, strengthen, and support the LGBTQ+ community in Sussex County and the state of Delaware, working through a social justice lens. We focus on arts & culture, health & wellness, social and support groups, and advocacy for our community.