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Suburban interfaith leaders decry Muslim discrimination



Kerry Lester

Priests, pastors and rabbis from 11 suburban congregations gathered together Thursday to condemn what they described as "singling out the Muslim faith in response to fear."

While GOP presidential bidder Donald Trump's name wasn't specifically mentioned, the faith leaders noted strong opposition to any sort of religious-based discrimination, including the business tycoon's controversial suggestion to ban the entrance of Muslims to the United States after a mass shooting in California by an Islamic couple.

"Any time a society gives its blessing to discrimination against people based on their religion, it opens the door to frightening possibilities," said the Rev. Eric Schlicting, of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd in Prospect Heights said.

The gathering comes on the heels of an interfaith prayer service held earlier this week in Chicago led by Archbishop Blase Cupich, in response to violence and racial turmoil both nationally and in Chicago.

But the leaders of the Northwest Suburban Interfaith Council -- formed nearly 25 years ago in response to anti-Semitic vandalism in the suburbs -- say they were called to action by conversations with local Muslims.

The Viatorian Rev. Corey Brost, one of the founders of the Children of Abraham Coalition -- an effort to bring suburban teens and adults of Christian, Muslim and Jewish faiths together through their shared lineage in Abraham -- said he was motivated by his concern for the Muslim friends he's formed over the years.

"What motivated me at this time was fear that my Muslim friends -- faithful good Americans -- could be in danger unless people of faith like us spoke up," Brost said.

Council members said they intend to work on expanding their role to reach out to Muslim communities both in the suburbs and beyond in the coming weeks.

"We hope to make connections and deepen the existing connection some of us already have with Muslim communities," Brost said.

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