

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A Statement from Trinity Episcopal Church and the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey

on a recent incident being investigated as possible bias attack



As reported in a statement released by the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, the "Asbury Park Police were advised of a possible bias incident that took place at the Trinity Episcopal Church, located on Asbury Avenue...sometime between 9 and 10:30 p.m. Friday night, January 27, during an anti-racism event."

According to Trinity Church's Rector, The Reverend Chase Danford, "an unidentified person attempted to pepper-spray a group of people outside Trinity Church's community building on Friday night following a concert being held to benefit a New Jersey-based anti-racist organization.

The unknown person or persons also threw smoke bombs outside the venue. Thankfully, no one was injured. We are incredibly grateful for the support we have received from the Asbury Park Police Department, the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, State Senator Vin Gopal, and Governor Phil Murphy." The church's LGBTQ+ Pride flag was also vandalized on the same evening, something that has occurred twice previously in recent months. While the motivation for this assault is unknown, Asbury Park police are investigating it as a possible hate crime. The Right Reverend William Stokes, Bishop of New Jersey, has been made aware of the incident. The Diocese of New Jersey and the leadership of Trinity Episcopal Church, Asbury Park support this investigation and are cooperating fully with police and the Office of the Monmouth County Prosecutor.

We are also aware of a violent attack against Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield, N.J., this weekend, as well as a significant uptick in acts of bias and hatred in New Jersey, especially those driven by antisemitism. The leadership of the Diocese of New Jersey and of Trinity Church affirm The Episcopal Church's baptismal commitment to love one's neighbors as one's self and to respect the dignity of every human being. We condemn hatred and violence in all its forms. (See ["A Pastoral Letter from the Bishop of the Diocese of New Jersey to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of New Jersey on the Commemoration of Kristallnacht in light of Current Threats Against the Jewish Community"](#) issued in November.)

Trinity Episcopal Church is committed to fulfilling God's command "to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly" with God (Micah 6:8). Our [active social justice ministries](#) will continue to serve and be in solidarity with the under-represented in the Asbury Park community despite incidents such as this. We invite you to learn more and to [support our ministries](#) in:

- [Racial Justice](#), dedicated to advancing racial equity through education and justice work
- [Housing Justice](#), which recognizes that housing is a human right and that all people should have safe, stable housing
- [Food Justice](#), striving to help meet the immediate needs of hunger in Asbury Park and to organize within our community to prevent hunger and injustice in the future
- [LGBTQ+ Community](#), Trinity and the Diocese of New Jersey welcome you!

This is not just social justice; it is Gospel justice.

We continually review our security procedures to help ensure that all members of the community can safely worship and gather at our historic facilities, and we will be evaluating if any changes in security are advisable in light of these incidents.

What will *not* change is our commitment to share God's unconditional love in all that we do. We invite you to join in our commitment to Gospel justice by [getting involved](#) or through your [financial support](#).

About Trinity Church Asbury Park

Trinity Church, an Episcopal parish, is a house of prayer and sanctuary for all people. At Trinity, we strive to share God's unconditional love with our entire community through spirituality, social justice, and the arts. Founded in 1875, our church is historic and many of our traditions are timeless, but we also embrace an inclusive vision of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for today's world.

In addition to worship and religious education, we offer a weekly Tuesday Food Pantry with healthy, fresh groceries; a warm, balanced lunch at our Saturday Soup Community Meal; a 24/7 emergency food pantry in the parking lot; the Racial Justice Project, which advances equity through education and advocacy in the church and community; the Pride Committee, which organizes special programs to celebrate LGBTQ+ people; the Women's Hospitality Network, in which we partner with neighboring churches to support women experiencing homelessness; and our new Radical Well-being Program, a holistic model of affordable housing support and advocacy, social service case work, financial literacy and empowerment resources, job and interview skills training, and recovery mentorship. Increasingly, we are also becoming a center for the arts, from our permanent installation of contemporary Stations of the Cross by local artists to our collaboration with the Asbury-based Light Brigade Collective to host shows by local and regional performing and visual artists. These events are alcohol-free, all-ages, and donation-based, with proceeds benefiting local community organizations. We also look forward to introducing an artist-in-residence program in the spring.