

Church of Israel is not a 'hate church'

Pastor Dan Gayman

In your Sunday, Jan. 28, editorial you targeted the Church of Israel for special and critical remarks. As pastor of this church, I want to challenge the conclusions you reached in your editorial. I believe your conclusions are very misleading, and while the obvious intent was to prejudice your readers against this church, you may have achieved the opposite for many of your readers.

The apparent intent of your editorial was to suggest that the Church of Israel has no right to exist under First Amendment status of the United States Constitution. Moreover, to suggest that this church cloaks its religious beliefs in lies is not only reprehensible, but represents yellow journalism at its worst.

Most of the readers of your editorial and the 24-page smear on the Church of Israel clearly see that the overall intent was to link this church to the violence of the far right in this country. The goal of your 24-page publication clearly was to portray us as violent and hateful. Your attempt to do this will be believed by only a small percentage of your newspaper audience. There are hundreds of readers who know that the allegations you make are patently false, half-truths, distortions, and sometimes outright lies.

May I also take this liberty to respond to your interview with my son and his wife, Timothy and Sarah Gayman. I find it interesting that you did not bother to interview any of my other five children. They were all more accessible than Tim and Sarah, who live in Phoenix. All five of my other children live near the well-traveled road on which Max McCoy drove on his many trips to Vernon County. An interview with any one or all of these grown and very responsible citizens would have given your readers a balanced view of the Gayman family. That you chose to interview the one dissident and ignore the other five is clear evidence that you were seeking to prejudice your readers against the Gayman family as well as the church itself.

All of the people of this congregation and the several hundred people who are associated with them vigorously protest your assertion that this is a "hate church." I believe that there is probably more love for African Americans, Hispanics and other racial groups from this pastor and congregation than may exist in many mainstream churches. We ask nothing for ourselves that we would not want for every other race.

We harbor no hate toward any racial group. For you to define our choice of "separatism" as representing hatred toward other races is reprehensible. There has never been a single racial incident in the 60-year history of this church. This is not a hate church! Your brazen assertion that we are clearly cheapens and clouds your definition of journalism.

Existing right along side of the Church of Israel in Vernon County are a multitude of Mennonites. The last time I checked, the Mennonite Church was a congregation of European Caucasians, just like the Church of Israel. Like the Mennonites, our people are honest, hard working, love God, and treat everyone, including all other races, with courtesy and honor.

Our people work beside other races, they serve in the Armed Forces with other races, attend college and university classes with them, and do so without any compunction. It is only in worship, marriage and family social settings that we practice separatism. What we practice at the Church of Israel is openly practiced by many racial groups in America, including the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Mennonites, Black Muslims, many Orthodox Jews and other groups. Why is it right for so many groups to practice separatism, but wrong for us? We quietly, peacefully, and without rancor or harm to anyone, fulfill the desires of our religious conscience in practicing separatism.

I truly believe that you owe a retraction in your newspaper to the congregation of the Church of Israel. You have used a major area newspaper to portray a peaceful, rural, hard working, honest congregation of people as a violent hate group that sows seeds of racism in the farm fields of Southwest Missouri. Shame on you! Our people know that this is a blatant lie. Moreover, hundreds of your readers know that your form of journalism is not only libelous and slanderous, but the personification of everything that a good newspaper should not be.

May I suggest that you consider that all of the multiple interviews made in your 24-page report were all dissident witnesses or adversarial in nature. You did not bother to interview a single member of the Church of Israel beyond Pastor Dan Gayman and the dissident minister. You used a full page to report your interview with Tim and Sarah Gayman while ignoring all the other five children of the Gayman family.

In our humble opinion, The Joplin Globe, its publisher, its editor and its reporters collectively conspired to link the Church of Israel to crimes of violence and racism that have nothing whatsoever to do with us! May God bless your readers with eyes to discern the truth.

Pastor Dan Gayman - Schell City, Mo.