



## STATEMENT ON HATE CRIMES

July 22, 1999

St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church, Skokie

My name is Paul Rutgers. I was until recently the EP for the Presbyterian Church in this metropolitan region, and I now serve as Executive Director of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago -- an organization of the heads of Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Jewish communities in the Chicago area. I speak today on behalf of that organization, and also for the Illinois Conference of Churches, a statewide sister organization.

The horrible acts of violence which bring us together today were perpetrated in an effort to fracture and destroy our life together. They have, instead, united us and compelled us to reaffirm our oneness in community, and our oneness as children of one creating God.

The obscenity which we decry today is a deeply religious matter, a confrontation between irreconcilable differences of darkness and light. We affirm that the God who created each one of us, created us as an act of love and, that being so, no human being should ever be an object of hate. We decry, therefore, that most abject of heresies: that others -- created by God, as we all have been -- should become objects of hateful violence.

And just as light drives out the darkness, we say to all who might still be lurking in the shadows, "Give up that dark and evil way. We will give you no credence, we will give you no support, we will give you no encouragement. We are children of God together, or we are nothing."

Rev. Paul Rutgers, Executive Director, CRLMC