Rev. Stephanie Lee ministers two churches, Centenary United Methodist and Holy Trinity United Methodist Church in Akron. She said the forum fit right in with they had been studying in church.

By JUDITH LYNN LEE

Staff Reporter

AKRON -- Trying to find out why people hate can be an easy or difficult task. It depends on the

individual. At the same time, knowing the reason can help you respond. It can also help when you feel this emotion swelling inside you.

On Wednesday March 28, 2012, the Akron Area Interfaith Council (AAIC) conducted a forum at the First Congregational Church of Akron. Community churches came together with the intent of advancing understanding among different faith by discussing, "Why Do We Hate?"

Joyce Butlien, director Community Relations of the Akron Jewish Community Board, headlined the program, expressing concern on hate against the Jewish community. She spoke on where she feels hate starts.

"Hate derives from people who see different from most and, unfortunately, we can become examples of the consequences of hate."

She also stated that political, racial and ideological differences are most issues that surround hate. "If you read the news, many of the conflicts in the world arise due to competing ideologies - the most tragic example of this was World War II, where Hitler's hatred of the Jew led to their massacre."

The Ku Klux Klan and other groups are examples of racial discrimination lead by deep-seeded hatred. Now days, racial crimes are still a problem.

Benjamin Nathaniel Smith was a 21-year old white gunman who targeted members of racial and ethnic minorities in random drive-by shootings. Starting on Friday, July 2, 1999, in the West Rogers Park Neighborhood of Chicago, he shot and wounded six Orthodox Jews (returning from Sabbath prayer).

Smith headed to Skokie, a Chicago suburb where he killed former Western University Basketball Coach Ricky Byrdsong as Byrdsong walked with his two children near their home.

On Saturday July 3rd, Smith headed to Decatur, Illinois where he shot and wounded an African-American minister.

July 4th, he then traveled to Bloomington, Indiana where he killed Won-Joon Yoon, a 26-year old Korean doctoral student who was in computer science at Indiana University. Smith committed suicide before being captured.

Cultural differences are other reasons discussed at the forum. Rev. Ronald J. Fowler described an incident that could have embedded hate in his son had he not intervened. While watching the series “Roots,” a documentary written by Alex Haley about his ancestors being slaves, there’s a scene where a slave is being whipped for trying to escape from his slave master.

Fowler’s son, who was a young child when watching the series, made the statement, “Daddy, I hate White people.” The minister, once pastor of Arlington Church of God in Akron, turned off the television and said, “Son, we need to talk about this.”

According to him, the discussion went like this:

“Why did you say that, son?”

“Daddy didn’t you see what White people did to us?

“Yes, I saw that son. It’s a part of history but you said ‘people.’ I just saw one person whipping that boy. He doesn’t represent all white people.”

According to Fowler, we need to learn to interact in order to cut out hate. “We need to come to learn, appreciate, and value one another culture.”

He went on the say, “Whenever people are living in silence, it allows ignorance to spread and that’s when insecurities can arise… a scapegoat is always needed by some groups in order to affirm their own degree of security.”

Ted Bartter said he was pleased with the forum. The member and past minister of the Akron First Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Akron said, “There was good material and the understanding was made clear as to what hate is and why we hate.”

Dr. Martha Banks said she was very impressed with the level of discussion. “I love how examples of people’s personal experience were used.” The Neuro-Psychologist of ABachman DCP, Inc., also agreed that not knowing or wanting to know about one another’s culture, creates and environment for hate.

Rev. Stephanie Lee ministers two churches, Centenary United Methodist and Holy Trinity United Methodist Church in Akron. She said the forum fit right in with they had been studying in church. “We studied about the “Hate Mob” mortality, with the mob being at the foot of the cross of Jesus... this forum was so amazing.”

Humans are wired for both hate and love. In part, this good news can be found in an old, Native American story. An elder was asked how she had become so wise, so happy, and so respected. She answered, “In my heart are two wolves; a wolf of love and a wolf of hate - it depends on which one I feed each day.”

Pay attention to the frequency you categorize someone as “not like me.” Work to focus on what you have in common on what describes “us.” Doing so will begin to feed the good wolf in us each day… the wolf of love.