

[REDACTED]

Actions

To:

[REDACTED]

Cc:

Steven DeLay

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 12:55 PM

Dear all,

I am sending you a statement concerning the incident in Peck on February 9th. I will attach it as a word document as well.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Statement re: Steven DeLay

On the day of the 'incident' (February 9th 2016) I was walking back from getting a coffee to the library. As I entered Peck Quad I saw 3 students in a small huddle talking to a person whom I now know to be Mr DeLay. They were located just in front of the grass patch nearest to the entrance from Fell Tower (not beneath or particularly close to the flag). The conversation was not audible from the library steps but a friend I was with became curious at the dynamics of the discussion, that is to say 3 people facing one. He wandered over and I followed. From what I recall, Mr DeLay was discussing the concept of sin. I left the discussion and on the steps told another person what they were talking about. At which point it became apparent some LGBTQIA+ members were unhappy with Mr DeLay's presence and seeing that some of them were friends of mine I went over again to ask him to leave. My thinking at the time was that this was our home and that Mr DeLay was not a member. Throughout this time, several more people came out of the library, and the situation got more tense. Some custodians were fetched and then left. Mr DeLay was asked by another member to prove he was a member of college by showing his bod card and did so willingly and politely. I again asked Mr DeLay to leave but he correctly pointed out there was no need for him to leave while people were engaging with him. In the end, it became apparent that people were interested in discussing what he had to say, albeit mocking him somewhat while doing so. I went back into the library and did not see the end of the 'incident'.

I have sent this statement to you not because I support Mr DeLay's interpretation of the bible but because having read a Cherwell article and seen comments on our JCR page I felt it a deep injustice that Mr DeLay was misrepresented as accosting people and/or being aggressive towards them. During the 10 to 15 minute period I was there, he was calm and restrained despite being heavily outnumbered by

increasingly agitated members of college. Nor was it related to me by any of the three people he was originally talking to that he'd done anything to attract their attention other than to say hello and begin to talk about his interpretation of sin. It seems to me that the words 'upset' and 'unsafe' have become synonymous in discussions of what happened afterwards and I wish to be clear that at no point whilst I was there was Mr Delay threatening or abusive to anyone and certainly wasn't harassing people. Everyone present was free to leave and he did not follow or continue to address them after they had done so.

This was meant to be a purely factual statement but I also wish to add some thoughts of my own. Firstly, the vehement reaction to Mr DeLay's mere presence in Peck has meant that it is difficult for myself and for others to speak out about the truth of what we saw. It seems some sort of group-think exercise has occurred whereby Mr DeLay has been assumed to be some fundamentalist, aggressive and homophobic preacher and that anyone who even remotely tries to say what actually happened is also labelled a homophobe. This narrative has even been promoted by people who certainly weren't present when the discussion started nor during the period I was there. Comments describing Mr DeLay as committing a hate crime are based on a very poor grasp of the law – even in laymen's terms his words were not hateful. Further, the rainbow flag in Peck is not a neutral statement, if it were there would be absolutely no point in having it. Since it is not neutral, it surely must be open to criticism by those who disagree with it. It is a source of profound disappointment that in an academic institution like Christ Church that this right is not respected. Yes, the House is our home but the political/liberation message the prominently placed flag is designed to send renders that space public.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]