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More than 60 National Religious Leaders Speak Out in Support of LGBTQI United Methodist Clergy

Statement of support celebrates 111 United Methodist LGBTQI clergy, affirms the call of LGBTQI people to ministry, and prays for a world where sexual and gender diversity are understood as a blessing.

May 16, 2016—A week ago, 111 United Methodist clergy and candidates released a “love letter” in which they came out to their denomination as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and intersex people. Despite the fact that the United Methodist Church’s (UMC) Book of Discipline bans the ordination of “self-avowed practicing homosexuals, they released their letter on the eve of the UMC’s quadrennial General Conference, placing their ministry and livelihood at risk.

Today, responding to their coming out letter, a broad coalition of national faith leaders outside of the United Methodist Church released a statement in support of these clergy and candidates. The statement celebrates the 111 United Methodist clergy who “risked their own security in order to share the fullness of their gifts with their faith communities and the United Methodist Church.”

Signed by more than 60 national faith leaders across multiple religious traditions, the statement calls the decision of these LGBTQI clergy to come out “an example for all people of faith of what it means to embody one’s faith and sexuality with wholeness and integrity.” The statement affirms the call of LGBTQI people to ministry and embraces the gifts that LGBTQI people bring to faith communities. The statement also notes “the long history of LGBTQI people answering the call to serve in faith communities, including as religious leaders,” recognizing that “this service has furthered justice, transformation, and flourishing in both faith communities and society.” The statement of support concludes in a prayer that “the United Methodist Church will stop harming LGBTQI persons” and for a “world where sexual and gender diversity are understood as a blessing.

The Religious Institute organized the statement in partnership with the 111 United Methodist LGBTQI clergy, and, beginning today, the statement of support will be open for all clergy and religious leaders outside of United Methodist Church to sign.

Endorsers include the heads of five religious denominations, top denominational officials, leaders of national faith organizations, eleven seminary presidents or divinity school deans, theologians, and activists working at the intersection of religion and LGBTQI justice.

Among the signers are Rev. Dr. Michael D. Castle (Alliance of Baptists), Eliel Cruz (Faith in America), Rev. Ronald Degges (Disciples Home Missions), Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer (United Church of Christ), Marriane Duddy-Burke (DignityUSA), Rabbi Denise Eger (Central Conference of American Rabbis), Bishop Yvette Flunder (The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries), Rev. Francis Fornaro (Integrity USA), Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield (Parliament of the World’s Religions), Rev. Cedric Harmon (Many Voices), Rev. Dr. Trace Haythorn (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education), Rev. Dr. Katharine Henderson (Auburn

Seminary), Rev. Dr. Alice W. Hunt (Chicago Theological Seminary), Mary E. Hunt (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual), Rev. Dr. Serene Jones (Union Theological Seminary), Sapreet Kaur (Sikh Coalition), Idit Klein (Keshet), The Rev. Dr. Jacqui Lewis (Middle Collegiate Church), Rev. Rodney McKenzie (National LGBTQ Task Force), Rev. Rosemary Bray McNatt (Starr King School for the Ministry), Alex Patchin McNeill (More Light Presbyterians), Jon O'Brien (Catholics for Choice), Bishop Tonyia Rawls (The Freedom Center for Social Justice), The Rt. Rev. Bishop Gene Robinson (The Episcopal Church), James Rowe (Believe Out Loud), Gregory E. Sterling (Yale Divinity School), Dr. Justin Tanis (Center for LGBTQ and Gender Studies in Religion), Rev. Dr. Emilie Townes (Vanderbilt Divinity School), Rev. Dr. David Vazquez-Levy (Pacific School of Religion), Rev. Dr. Nancy Wilson (Metropolitan Community Churches), and Ani Zonnevald (Muslims for Progressive Values).

View the complete statement at www.religiousinstitute.org/support-statement-umc-lgbtqi-clergy/.