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150 Congregations to Participate in National Weekend of Prayer for Transgender Justice

*Sermons, services, and prayers in support of transgender justice will take place across the country
ahead of Transgender Day of Visibility*

WASHINGTON -- This weekend, religious leaders, clergy, and people of faith from more than 150 congregations in more than 35 states will participate in the [National Weekend of Prayer for Transgender Justice](#), dedicating their weekly services and/or holding special events to support transgender people across America who continue to lack full legal protection, face unequal treatment, and experience disproportionate levels of violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Throughout the weekend, participating faith communities will engage in prayer, education, and action for transgender justice. In addition, faith communities are honoring the gifts of transgender people and committing to working toward a society where transgender people can live and flourish in all aspects of life. For a full list of congregations and more information, visit <https://www.nationalweekendofprayer.org>.

"As people of faith and conscience, we oppose the use of religion to harm transgender people, and we recognize our responsibility to articulate a different moral vision," said Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey, President and CEO of the Religious Institute, the organization coordinating the National Weekend of Prayer. "We believe that 'religious freedom' means the freedom to practice our faith, not deny other people their rights or impose our beliefs on others. We know that gender is a complex and sacred gift, and that the breathtaking diversity of Creation is to be honored, not questioned or denied. We know that gender diversity has played a role in faith traditions and religious texts dating back centuries, and that transgender people serve as faith leaders in many traditions and bring forward powerful spiritual gifts."

The Weekend of Prayer began as a response to the Supreme Court's decision to hear *G.G. v. Gloucester County School Board*, the historic transgender equality case on behalf of a Virginia transgender boy named Gavin Grimm whose school prohibits him from using the boys' restroom. Earlier this month, [more than 1,800 clergy and religious leaders belonging to 50 unique religious traditions expressed support for transgender rights](#) signing a friend-of-the-court brief in support of Gavin, acknowledging the diversity of faith traditions that honor the inherent dignity and worth of transgender people and the long-standing presence of transgender people in faith communities.

When the court announced it no longer planned to hear Gavin's case, the organizers of the weekend of prayer decided that the weekend was even more necessary than before. "This is neither the first, nor the last time the needs of trans and gender non-conforming people will be dismissed, and far too often religion gets used as justification," said Teo Drake of the Transforming Hearts Collective, the trans- and queer-led organization that collaborated with the Religious Institute in creating the resources for the weekend of prayer. "At a time when violence against transgender people is on the rise, particularly against transgender women of color and transgender youth, and a record number of anti-transgender bills are being filed at the state level, faith communities have a unique responsibility and opportunity in this moment not only to direct their

energies toward creating spaces that honor the fullness of trans people's lives, but also to refuse to fall in line with religious rhetoric that seeks to do harm to people for living into the truths of who they are.”

This weekend's events are taking place ahead of the international [Transgender Day of Visibility](#), observed on March 31 and dedicated to building understanding about the transgender community. In 32 states, transgender people continue to suffer a lack of comprehensive protections from discrimination in employment, housing, and public services.

The Weekend of Prayer was created by the Religious Institute in collaboration with the Transforming Hearts Collective and more than 25 co-sponsoring organizations. The events and participants are being coordinated by the Religious Institute with support from Freedom for All Americans. For media inquiries, email angela@freedomforallamericans.org.

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The [Religious Institute](#) is a nonprofit, multifaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education, and justice in faith communities and society. More than 8,500 clergy, seminary presidents and deans, religious scholars and other religious leaders representing more than 50 faith traditions are part of the Religious Institute's national religious leaders network.