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Over 100 Congregations Celebrate National Weekend of Prayer for LGBTQ Justice Before Supreme Court Case

Faith Communities Across U.S. Gather to Pray for LGBTQ Justice Before Masterpiece Case

WASHINGTON -- This weekend, more than 100 congregations across 31 states and the District of Columbia are participating in [the National Weekend of Prayer for LGBTQ Justice](#) ahead of oral arguments in *Masterpiece vs. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, a key case being heard at the Supreme Court on December 5.

At the heart of the *Masterpiece* case is whether nondiscrimination laws can continue to be enforced without sweeping and dangerous exemptions. The case involves a Colorado bakery that refused to sell a cake to a same-sex couple celebrating their civil marriage. This action was in direct violation of Colorado's nondiscrimination law, and the Colorado Civil Rights Commission and the state appellate court ruled in favor of the couple. The bakery is now appealing to the Supreme Court for a constitutional right to discriminate on the basis of the owner's religious beliefs.

"Freedom of religion is critical, not just to Methodists, but for all people in this country," said Rev. Laura Ann Gilbert Rossbert, a United Methodist pastor based in Denver, CO. "But no business has the right to discriminate against LGBTQ people or anyone else because of the owner's religious beliefs. This weekend of prayer is about praying for and working toward social justice in our communities. That means creating communities where LGBTQ people are treated fairly and their rights are safeguarded."

Throughout the weekend of prayer, faith leaders, congregations, and clergy are dedicating their services, sermons, and prayers to LGBTQ nondiscrimination and the importance of equal treatment for all. In addition to the more than 100 services happening across the country, specific faith-rooted events are occurring in several places. In Denver, CO, the home of the *Masterpiece* case, there will be an interfaith service among faith leaders of various denominations. In North Carolina, there will be a press conference hosted by 30 faith leaders and business owners alongside NC Faith Forward, an LGBTQ-affirming faith coalition. A list of congregations participating in the National Weekend of Prayer can be found at <http://religiousinstitute.org/nwop>.

"Jesus Christ stood against using the law to oppress or to cut anyone off from being fully included in the community," said Rev. Dr. Dan De Leon, Senior Pastor at Friends Congregational

Church, UCC in College Station, TX. "In witness to our Christian faith, we are participating in the National Weekend of Prayer for LGBTQ Justice to affirm that our religious freedom does not give us or anyone a right to discriminate."

In October, nearly [1,300 clergy and faith leaders representing 500,000 congregants from approximately 50 unique faith traditions](#) signed onto a friend-of-the-court brief in the case in support of the equal treatment for LGBTQ people, highlighting the dangers of the exemptions being sought in the case.

"Over the last 10 years, the movement of people of faith in support of justice and equal treatment for LGBTQ people has continued to grow, strengthen, and diversify," said Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey, President and CEO of the Religious Institute. "When nearly 1,300 colleagues and I submitted our brief to the Supreme Court, we joined a long American history of people of faith advocating for justice in the civic and political arena. This weekend of prayer is a continuation of that tradition. Through our prayers, we are seeking justice and countering the voices of those who would misuse religion to advocate for discrimination. We are praying for and working toward a world where all people are valued and their dignity is honored, and where no one suffers the humiliation or danger of being turned away from a public business."

For more information about the *Masterpiece* case, visit <https://www.aclu.org/cases/masterpiece-cakeshop-v-colorado-civil-rights-commission>.

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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.