

RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

21 CHARLES STREET, 140 • WESTPORT, CT 06880 • 203-222-0055 • WWW.RELIGIOUSINSTITUTE.ORG

Contact:

J. Michael Cobb
203-222-0055
cobb@religiousinstitute.org

Multifaith Coalition Supports Family Planning For All As A Moral Imperative

September 13, 2012—Today, thirty-eight national religious leaders from across the theological spectrum have joined together in urging universal access to safe, affordable, accessible, and comprehensive family planning services, including increased U.S. support for domestic and global programs.

Participating faith leaders include 7 current and former presidents of national denominations including the Rev. Geoffrey A. Black (United Church of Christ), the Rev. Wes Granberg-Michaelson (Reformed Church in America), and Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins (Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)); 6 seminary presidents including Dr. Philip A. Amerson (Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary), the Rev. Dr. Serene Jones (Union Theological Seminary), and The Very Rev. Katherine Ragsdale (Episcopal Divinity School); 13 heads of national religious organizations, including the New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good (Dr. Richard Cizik), Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (Rev. Harry Knox), and Catholics for Choice (Jon O'Brien); and prominent theologians from diverse perspectives including the Rev. Dr. Tony Campolo, the Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield, and Dr. Mary Hunt.

These 38 religious leaders endorsed the new *Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Family Planning*, published by the Religious Institute, a multi-faith organization dedicated to sexual health, education and justice. It is a multifaith call for religious leaders to support family planning from a faith-based perspective.

“Today, as religious leaders, we are called to support universal access to family planning,” said the Rev. Debra W. Haffner, President of the Religious Institute. “All persons should be free to make personal decisions about their families and reproductive lives that are informed by their culture, faith tradition, religious beliefs, conscience, and community.”

The *Open Letter* is a direct response to political attempts to deny or restrict family planning access. The *Open Letter* states: “The denial of family planning services effectively translates into coercive childbearing and is an insult to human dignity... Hospitals and health services, regardless of religious affiliation, must provide or refer to contraceptive services.”

The *Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Family Planning* was developed at a colloquium of a dozen renowned faith leaders and theologians sponsored by the Religious Institute. Participants included nationally prominent theologians and ordained clergy from Jewish, Roman Catholic, Protestant (evangelical, progressive and mainline denominations), Muslim and Unitarian Universalist traditions.

Today, the Religious Institute begins a campaign to obtain thousands of additional religious leaders’ endorsements of family planning and U.S. financial support.

The Religious Institute (www.religiousinstitute.org), based in Westport, CT, is a nonprofit, multifaith organization dedicated to advocating for sexual health, education and justice in faith communities and society. More than 5,500 clergy, seminary presidents and deans, religious scholars and other religious leaders representing more than 70 faith traditions are part of the Religious Institute’s national network.

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Links to read the full text, endorse the *Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Family Planning*, or read the list of endorsers are available at www.religiousinstitute.org/olfp