

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Media contacts:

- Rev. Chris Lane, chris@tccentralumc.org, (231) 313 - 4480
- Rabbi Chava Bahle, rabbichava@gmail.com, (231) 357 - 7152
- Rev. Jody Betten, pastor@newwavesucc.org, (616) 706 - 3549

Local faith leaders pen open letter praying for compassion, patience, and peace amidst election season

TRAVERSE CITY --

To our fellow beloved residents,

We are living in troubled times. Our country is afire with political divisiveness. We have family and friends dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 virus. Our communities are fragmented and in pain as we face the question of how to best address systemic oppression. We have all been witness, and perhaps participated in less than ideal reactions and ways of being. Some of us are even at odds with our neighbors, friends, and family. We struggle with a tenuous grasp on civility and common care. But we have choices as well.

We write to you today inviting you to join us in a commitment to hold one another with the respect, care, and civility we once knew so well. As we move to, through, and past Election Day, we call upon you to join us in the discomfort and uncertainty knowing it is in our collective power to do so in mutual respect and care. Together we can achieve what is eluding us in so many parts of our country. As leaders of a diverse family of faiths, we are somewhat accustomed to varying truths and even polar opposites. Our traditions include a wide variety of experiences of the divine, life after death, and even specific positions on societal practices and policies. But what we share is so much more important. Each of our faiths calls us to a valuing of one another. Each of our faiths values civil discourse higher than righteous anger. Each of our faiths believes that we are better together. Each of our faiths has some version of the Golden Rule.

We cannot know the results of the election on November 3, and quite possibly will not know the results for many days to follow. We can know how each of us will choose to move through those days. We choose to do so prayerfully and holding dearest that which brings us closer to healing. We believe in a world in which differing opinions need not equate to enmity, where neighbors need not worry in the night their signs will be vandalized, where violence rooted in disagreement is unthinkable, and where each tomorrow finds us closer to one another rather than further entrenched and apart.

We hope you will join us whether it be in prayer, practice, or perhaps simply breathing. In the words of the Milwaukee Buddhist Peace Fellowship:

Difficult times can be an opportunity to remember our natural connection with each other and all of life. May we take a deep breath and collect the mind in gratitude and compassion. May we be present with those who find themselves in distress and fear, and may our lives be filled with kindness and joy.

Yours on the journey toward a healed nation, safe, free and just for all.

Rabbi Dr. Chava Bahle (Renewal Judaism)

Rev. Jody Betten, New Waves United Church of Christ, Traverse City

Deacon Tom Bousamra, Catholic Jail Minister

Pastor Paul Busekist, Bethlehem Lutheran Church of Traverse City (ELCA)

Rev. Dr. Robin Carden

Rev. Matthew Chapman

Dianne Doten Morrison, retired United Methodist Local Pastor

Rev. Wayne Dziekan

Rev. Patricia A Haas

Rev. Dr. Anne C. Hébert PC(USA)

Pastor Chris Lane, Central United Methodist

Rev. Jane Lippert, Central United Methodist Church Outreach

Pastor Zelfhia Mobley, Old Mission Peninsula UMC of Traverse City

Rev. J Elliot P. Morrison, Retired, PC (USA)

Rev. Dr. Richard Morrison, UMC retired

Rev. Sandra Murray, Retired PCUSA

Rev. Dr. William C. Myers, The Presbyterian Church of Traverse City

Rev. Homer Nye, PC(USA)

Pastor Chad Oyer, First Congregational Church Traverse City

Rev. Dale Ostema, Central UMC, Traverse City

Rev. Jim Perra, Grace Episcopal Church - Traverse City

Rabbi Arnie Sleutelberg

Rev. Eileen Stulak, Senior Minister, Unity of Traverse City

Rev. Daniel Waechter Webb, PC(USA)

Rev. Lucy A. Waechter Webb, PC(USA)

Rev. Dr. Arthur O. Van Eck, RCA

Rev. Dr. Wendy von Courter, Unitarian Universalist