

McLean Area Clergy Association

February of 2024

Dear Fellow Members of the McLean Area Faith Communities,

As a group of religious leaders, we feel moved at this time to communicate a message of our shared humanity and common values, encompassing our response to events happening in our world as well as our relationships at home.

We are dismayed by the violence occurring all over the world, including the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, and more. We stand with so many members of our congregations who grieve for lost loved ones in Gaza, Israel and Lebanon, in addition to those struggling to help Palestinians and Israelis displaced and threatened by war, held as hostages in captivity, and Palestinians in Gaza facing lack of housing, food and medicine. We mourn these horrific and tragic events.

We are diverse communities whose individuals hold different views on the causes and solutions for these conflicts. We come together as religious leaders to affirm the sacred value of each life and the rights of all people to safety and well-being.

We are also shocked and deeply concerned by the ways these conflicts have contributed to divisions at home in our local community. We are aware that in our community, people's safety and security have been threatened. People have felt targeted or judged simply for being who they are. We affirm our commitment to live out our highest human values in our interactions with each other, to treat every person with dignity and respect, to love God and love our neighbor. These values can be challenging to live up to in the face of deep division, which only makes them more essential.

Each of us who has signed this letter recommits to working for a world we can all share. And, when that goal feels unreachable because of events happening around the world, we redouble our dedication to pursuing it where we live, uniting our community around caring for each other, supporting one another and striving for increased empathy and understanding.

With Prayers for Peace and Goodwill,

William T. Chaney Jr, Pastor at Chesterbrook United Methodist Church

Robert F. Cheeks, Jr., Pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church

William Drosos, Assistant Rector at St. Thomas Episcopal Church

Aaron Fulp-Eickstaedt, Pastor at Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Fran Gardner-Smith, Rector at St. Thomas Episcopal Church

James Gibson, Pastor at First Baptist Church Chesterbrook

Trish Hall, Minister at Center for Spiritual Living, Metro

Sandra J. Kessinger, Senior Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church

Allen Leider, Cantor at Temple Rodef Shalom

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Sydney Michael, Cantor at Temple Rodef Shalom
Chris Miller, Priest-Locum-Tenes at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
Andrew Y. Moore, Assistant Rector at St. John's Episcopal Church
Scott Ramsey, Pastor at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church
Jeffrey Saxe, Rabbi at Temple Rodef Shalom
Anna Scherer, Assistant Rector at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church
Amy Schwartzman, Senior Rabbi at Temple Rodef Shalom
Michael A. Shochet, Senior Cantor at Temple Rodef Shalom
Barbara Sipe, Executive Board Chair at First Church of Christ, Scientist
Jim Stansel, McLean Stake President, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Alexandra Stein, Rabbi at Temple Rodef Shalom
Robert E. Wallace, Senior Pastor at McLean Baptist Church
Joshua D. Walters, Rector at St. John's Episcopal Church
Joshua A. Wullenweber, Associate Pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church