

Interfaith Statement of Opposition to the Death Penalty

Dear Governor Abbott, Members of the 84th Texas Legislature, and Other Elected Officials,

We, the undersigned 556 faith leaders, reflecting the rich diversity of faith traditions observed in this great state, stand together in expressing our deep concerns about the death penalty in Texas. Our concerns are both moral and practical and are rooted in our religious traditions. We write to you today to call for the end of the death penalty in Texas in the belief that this practice is not in the best interest of our State, our justice system, or the safety of our people.

We join with many Texans in questioning our state's death penalty system, which has consistently been shown to be unfair and inaccurate. Texas leads the nation in the number of executions carried out each year. In fact, our state is a significant outlier in this regard, accounting for more than one third of all executions nationwide since 1976. Well-documented evidence suggests that often it has not been the crime itself but rather such factors as race, socioeconomics, geography, or politics that have determined the application of the death penalty. Another grave concern is the number of individuals who have been wrongfully convicted and spent years on death row for crimes they did not commit.

As faith leaders, we are greatly disturbed by the presence of violence in our communities. We believe that instead of allocating scarce resources to fund an irrevocably flawed capital punishment system, the State of Texas should invest in victim support services, effective law enforcement, drug treatment programs, child and family services, and mental healthcare – all measures that hold potential for preventing future acts of violence. We should do all we can to make sure our state's resources are directed towards the improvement of life, not its destruction.

We firmly believe that those who commit terrible crimes should be held accountable for their actions and we advocate for a justice system that is both humane and restorative. It is particularly important to us to support the victims of violent crimes and their family members in their grief and suffering and promote measures that will facilitate their healing. In responding to one of our greatest societal problems, we believe the state must consider solutions to violent crime that address our communities' need for safety and healing, not retribution.

As people of faith, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our opposition to the death penalty and to express our belief in the sacredness of human life and in the human capacity for redemption. It is this respect for all life that prompts us to join the diversity of voices across the state calling for repeal.

We urge you, our elected officials, to take a closer look at the reality of capital punishment in Texas and ask that you seek alternative ways to achieve healing and justice for all those who suffer in the wake of violent crimes. We thank you for your leadership and we pray for the time when our state is led away from this unnecessary, arbitrary, and outmoded form of punishment.

Sincerely,

Bishop Michael McKee
Bishop of the North Texas Conference,
The United Methodist Church
Plano, Texas

Bishop Janice Riggle Huie
United Methodist Bishop
Houston Episcopal Area
Houston, Texas

Archbishop Joseph A. Fiorenza
Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Houston, Texas

Bishop J. Michael Lowry
The Central Texas Conference of the United
Methodist Church
Fort Worth, Texas

Bishop James E. Dorff
Rio Texas Conference
United Methodist Church
San Antonio, Texas

Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez
Bishop of Austin
Austin, Texas

Bishop Earl Bledsoe
New Mexico/Northwest Texas Annual
Conferences, The United Methodist Church
Lubbock, Texas

Bishop Michael Rinehart
Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Houston, Texas

Bishop Ray Tiemann
Southwestern Texas Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. Mike Cole
New Covenant Presbytery
Houston, Texas

**Religious traditions and faith community names listed for identification purposes.*

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Bishop Joel Martinez Retired, The United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas	Rabbi Benjamin Sternman Adat Chaverim Plano, Texas	Pastor Nancy DeStefano St. Stephen United Methodist Little Elm, Texas
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Bishop Ben Chamness Retired, The United Methodist Church Huntsville, Texas	Deacon Art Tiongson St. Gabriel Catholic Church Frisco, Texas	Rev. Woodrow Weilage Retired, The United Methodist Church McKinney, Texas
Bishop Dan Solomon Retired, The United Methodist Church Abilene, Texas	Pastor Charles Harrison Kessler Park United Methodist Church Garland, Texas	Rev. Don Zeiler St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church McKinney, Texas
Bishop D. Max Whitfield Retired, The United Methodist Church Richardson, Texas	Rev. James Minor Axe Memorial United Methodist Church Garland, Texas	Rev. Terry Heislen First United Methodist - Sachse Plano, Texas
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Rev. Jason Redick Holy Covenant United Methodist Church Carrollton, Texas	Rev. Gregory Neal Northgate United Methodist Church Irving, Texas	Rev. Charles Kimble First United Methodist Church Malakoff Malakoff, Texas
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Rev. David Weber First United Methodist - Mesquite Mesquite, Texas	Rev. S. Dianna Masters St. Luke Community United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas	Pastor Alejandro De La Torre Cathedral of Hope Dallas, Texas
Pastor Michael Baughman Union Sunnyvale, Texas	Rev. Wes Magruder Kessler Park United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas	Rev. Shelley A. Hamilton Cathedral of Hope Dallas, Texas
Rev. Larry James CitySquare Dallas, Texas	Rabbi Adam M. Allenberg Temple Emanu-El Dallas, Texas	Rev. Dr. Jo Hudson Extravagance United Church of Christ (UCC) Dallas, Texas
Rev. Terry P. Jones Highland Park United Methodist Dallas, Texas	Rabbi Asher Knight Temple Emanu-El Dallas, Texas	Rev. Dawson B. Taylor Cathedral of Hope Dallas, Texas
Rev. Dr. Timothy McLemore Perkins School of Theology, SMU Dallas, Texas	Deacon Tim Muldoon Christ the King Catholic Church Dallas, Texas	Rev. Robert Cooper Retired, The United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas
Rev. Kerry Smith Greenland Hills United Methodist Church Dallas, Texas	Fr. Tim Gollob Pastor, Holy Cross Catholic Church Dallas, Texas	Rev. Bruce Theunissen Retired, Presbyterian Church USA Dallas, Texas
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Julie Lambert Director of Religious Education Pathways Unitarian Universalist Church Euless, Texas	Rev. Judith W. Stempel Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Fort Worth, Texas	Rev. Phyliss McDougal First United Methodist - Fort Worth Fort Worth, Texas
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	Rev. Lawrence "Larry" Grubb Retired, The United Methodist Church Fort Worth, Texas	

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Rev. Brian Turnbow
Houston Graduate School of Theology,
Evangelical Covenant Church
Houston, Texas

Pastor Stephen Rhoads
Lakeside United Methodist
Houston, Texas

Rev. Mark Edmiston-Lange
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
Houston, Texas

Rev. Dr. Rebecca Edmiston-Lange
Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church
Houston, Texas

Rabbi Steven Gross
Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism
Houston, Texas

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Houston, Texas

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Webster Presbyterian Church
Houston, Texas

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St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church
Houston, Texas

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Northwoods Presbyterian Church
Houston, Texas

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Houston, Texas

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Texas Annual Conference of the United
Methodist Church
Houston, Texas

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Good News Church
Houston, Texas

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Grace United Church of Christ
Houston, Texas

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Krist Samaritan Center
Houston, Texas

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Presbyterian Church USA
Houston, Texas

Rev. Martin Troyer
Houston Mennonite Church
Houston, Texas

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Mission Bend United Methodist
Houston, Texas

Pastor David Meeker-Williams
Mission Bend United Methodist
Houston, Texas

Stephanie Wilkins
Blueridge United Methodist
Houston, Texas

Rev. Glynden Bode
Texas Annual Conference
United Methodist Church
Houston, Texas

Father Gary Brewton
Orthodox Catholic Church
Houston, Texas

Rev. Harvey Clemons
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church
Houston, Texas

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Addicks United Methodist Church
Houston, Texas

Rabbi David Lyon
Congregation Beth Israel
Houston, Texas

Rev. Terry Thompson
Retired, The United Methodist Church
Houston, Texas

Rev. Johnnie Simpson Jr.
Haven Chapel
East Columbia, Texas

Pastor William Llana
First United Methodist - Conroe
Conroe, Texas

Rev. Michael Lindstrom
First United Methodist Church - Conroe
Conroe, Texas

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First United Methodist - Conroe
Conroe, Texas

Rev. Scott Dornbush
First United Methodist - Huntsville
Huntsville, Texas

Rev. Ellen Willett
First United Methodist - Huntsville
Huntsville, Texas

Rev. Shelli Williams
First United Methodist - Cleveland
Cleveland, Texas

Rev. Dr. Donald W. Sinclair
Coldspring United Methodist Church
Coldspring, Texas

Scott Atnip
Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church
Huntsville, Texas

William Kleiber
Executive Director, Restorative Justice
Ministries Network
Huntsville, Texas

Rev. Cheryl Smith
Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church
Huntsville, Texas

Rev. Stacy Pever Anzick
Magnolia United Methodist
Magnolia, Texas

Rev. Rhett Ansley
Wildwood United Methodist Church
Magnolia, Texas

Rev. Lindsay Childers Kirkpatrick
Montgomery United Methodist
Montgomery, Texas

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St. Anne Catholic Church
Tomball, Texas

Pastor Robert E. Webb
Rose Hill United Methodist
Tomball, Texas

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Congregation Beth Shalom of
The Woodlands
The Woodlands, Texas

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Faith United Methodist
Spring, Texas

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Faith United Methodist
Spring, Texas

Rev. Carrie Deleon
Klein United Methodist
Spring, Texas

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The United Methodist Church
Bay City, Texas

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Pastor Richard Baker
Retired, Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America
Brenham, Texas

Rev. Phillip Fenton
St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
Brenham, Texas

Rev. Edward Triem
Retired, Presbyterian Church USA
Brenham, Texas

Rev. Richard Nelson
The Episcopal Church
Burton, Texas

Rev. James T. Said
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
College Station, Texas

Rev. Dr. Dan Deleon
Friends Congregational Church
College Station, Texas

Rev. Deacon Mary Lenn Dixon
St Thomas Episcopal Church
College Station, Texas

Elder Theresa Dougherty
United Christian Church
College Station, Texas

Rev. Sandi Mizirl
Texas A&M Episcopal College Mission
College Station, Texas

The Rev. Dr. Rhoda Montgomery
St. Thomas Episcopal Church
College Station, Texas

Rev. Victoria Simons
First United Methodist Church
Somerville, Texas

Rev. Terrance Hayes
Victoria District Superintendent,
The United Methodist Church
Victoria, Texas

Rev. Wanda Ritchea
United Campus Ministry of Victoria
Victoria, Texas

Rev. Charles Stephens
John Wesley United Methodist
Victoria, Texas

Pastor Michael Mumme
First United Methodist Church of Cuero
Cuero, Texas

Sr. Elizabeth Riebschlaeger
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the
Incarnate Word
Cuero, Texas

Rev. Carolyn Stapleton
First United Methodist Church - Ganado
Ganado, Texas

Rev. Carroll Pickett
Retired, Presbyterian Church USA
Kerrville, Texas

Barbara Aziz
Bulverde United Methodist
Bulverde, Texas

Judy Godinez
Comal County Unitarian Universalist Society
New Braunfels, Texas

Deacon Robert Leibrecht
Good Shepherd Catholic Church
New Braunfels, Texas

Rev. Stephen G. Echols
Christ United Methodist Church
Stockdale, Texas

Sr. Teresa Carter
Sisters of St. Brigid
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. Thomas Heger
Retired Presbyterian Pastor
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Tiolinda Marotta
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Pat Crehan
Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Miriam Mitchell, S.H.Sp.
Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Sheila O'Sullivan
Sisters of the Holy Spirit & Mary Immaculate
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. Monte Marshall
Travis Park United Methodist Church
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. Edward Hauf, O.M.I.
St. Mary's Catholic Church
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Anita Brenek, CDP
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Father Martin Elsner, S.J
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Marjorie Filler
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Maria Flores
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Charlotte Kitowski
Congregation of Divine Providence of San
Antonio
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Louise Miksch
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Mary Morkovsky
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Patrice Sullivan
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Oralia Arzola
Cordi-Marian Sisters
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Isabel Ball
Congregation of Divine Providence
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Brenda Baradell
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the
Incarnate Word
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Dorothy Batto
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the
Incarnate Word
San Antonio, Texas

Father Larry Christian
St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church
San Antonio, Texas

Sr. Germaine Corbin
Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the
Incarnate Word
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Louise Delisi
Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
San Antonio, Texas

Rev. Rachel Epp Miller
San Antonio Mennonite Church
San Antonio, Texas

Sister Gloria Ann Fiedler, CDP Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Sister Shirley Vaughn Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Chief-Apostle/Bishop Rosa Wilson Greater Faith Institutional Church San Antonio, Texas
Sister Catalina Fresquez Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Sister Grace Walle Daughters of Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Charles Fredrickson Lutheran Church of the Good Shepard San Antonio, Texas
Sister Jane Mary Gawlik, CSSF Felician Franciscan San Antonio, Texas	Sister Mary Winkle Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Joseph Stobaugh Grace Avenue United Methodist Church Frisco, Texas
Rev. Sarah Holden University United Methodist San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Robert Wright Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas	Pastor Alicia Campos Principe De Paz United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas
Sister Carol Ann Jokerst Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Robert L. Clark, II Corredor de Esperanza San Antonio, Texas	Sister Imelda Gonzalez Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas
Sister Martha Ann Kirk, Th.d. Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Kelly Allen University Presbyterian Church San Antonio, Texas	Brother Brian Haldermann, S.M. Marianist Province of U.S. San Antonio, Texas
Sister Charlotte Kitowski, CDP Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Rabbi Mara Nathan Temple Beth-El San Antonio, Texas	Rev. John Manahan Society of Mary (Marianists) San Antonio, Texas
Sister Lourdes Leal Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Gerald Metzger Bethany Congregational United Church of Christ San Antonio, Texas	Brother Gerard Sullivan, SM Marianist Province of U.S. San Antonio, Texas
Sister Sarah Lennon Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Rabbi David Komerofsky Associate Vice President for Advancement at Hillel San Antonio, Texas	Sister Dorothy Jean Young Congregation of the Sisters of St Felix of Cantalice San Antonio, Texas
Sister Cathy Parent Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Rev. David Felps Coker United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas	Sister Marian Sturm, IWBS Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament Victoria, Texas
Rev. Dinah Shelly Alamo Heights United Methodist San Antonio, Texas	Fr. Vincent Louwagie B., OMI Oblate School of Theology San Antonio, Texas	Sister Anna Nguyen Kim Tuyet Daughters of Mary Help of Christians San Antonio, Texas
Elder Hilary Shuford Mission Presbytery San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Roberto Pena, OMI Missionary Oblate of Mary Immaculate San Antonio, Texas	Sister Emma Stefanoni Daughters of Mary Help of Christians San Antonio, Texas
Sister Margaret Snyder Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Sister Virginia Clara Ruiz Guadalupanas Catechists Sisters San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Rashad Berry Canaan Missionary First Baptist Church San Antonio, Texas
Rabbi Samuel M. Stahl Rabbi Emeritus of Temple Beth- El San Antonio, Texas	Sister Neomi Hayes Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Robert Fiser Rio Texas Conference, The United Methodist Church Laredo, Texas
		Rev. Paul Harris Laredo United Methodist Laredo, Texas

Sister Rose Kruppa Congregation of Divine Providence San Antonio, Texas	Pastor Marcy Garza Bethel United Methodist Raymondville, Texas	Rev. Jeanette Heart First United Methodist San Marcos San Marcos, Texas
Rev. Roy C Ricker Chaplain, Methodist Hospital San Antonio, Texas	Deacon Dan Wright St. Thomas More Catholic Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Sandra Londa Retired, The United Methodist Church Wimberley, Texas
Rev. Lorenza Andrade Smith Westlawn United Methodist San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Dr. Guston Browning Retired, The United Methodist Church Cedar Park, Texas	Brother Richard Daly, CSL Brothers of the Holy Cross Austin, Texas
Rev. Aaron Gonzalez El Divino Salvador United Methodist Church San Antonio, Texas	Rev. Norman Roe Retired, The United Methodist Church Cedar Park, Texas	Rev. Barbara Ruth First United Methodist Church - Austin Austin, Texas
Rev. Isidro Pina Kelsey Memorial United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Mary Wilson Church of the Savior Cedar Park, Texas	Rev. John Wright First United Methodist Church - Austin Austin, Texas
Congregational Care Minister Tina Trimble The United Methodist Church San Marcos, Texas	Rev. Anamae Storbeck Everyone's Call Del Valle, Texas	Rev. Helen P. Almanza Tarrytown United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Beth Tatum First United Methodist Church Mathis Mathis, Texas	Rev. Jason Fry First United Methodist Church Fredericksburg, Texas	Rev. Lynn Barton Westlake United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Mother Superior Michelle Marie Kuntscher Sisters of the Incarnate Word Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Yvonne Coon First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Dr. Larry Bethune University Baptist Church Austin, Texas
Pastor Kristine Bair 1st Presbyterian Church Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Amy Forsythe First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Darlene Boaz St. Luke United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Eradio Valverde Corpus Christi District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church Corpus Christi, Texas	Rev. Fredda Horton Minick Retired, The United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. John Elford University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Father Armand Mathew, OMI Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate - Oblate Fathers and Brothers (OMI) Brownsville, Texas	Rev. Milton S. Jordan Retired, The United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. Victoria Bailey, Retired University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Deaconess Cindy Johnson El Buen Pastor Brownsville, Texas	Rev. Steve Langford First United Methodist Church Georgetown, Texas	Rev. John Reynolds St Luke United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Laura K. Merrill McAllen District Superintendent, The United Methodist Church Harlingen, Texas	Rev. Mark Skrabacz San Gabriel Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Georgetown, Texas	Rev. George Ricker University United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Jerimey Wicke First United Methodist Church of Weslaco Weslaco, Texas	Rev. Mary Powell, Adjunct Spiritual Director St. Philip's United Methodist Church Round Rock, Texas	Rev. Stephanie True University Baptist Church Austin, Texas
Pastor Daniel Cruz Longoria La Trinidad United Methodist Pharr, Texas	Rev. Nancy McDougall First United Methodist-Burnet Kingsland, Texas	Rev. Bob Breihan United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
	Terry Cortes-Vega Dharma Teacher - Plum Blossom Sangha Manor, Texas	Rev. Katy Fitzhugh Oak Hill United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

Rev. Bobbi Kaye Jones Tarrytown United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Carol Tate University Presbyterian Austin, Texas	Rev. Sidney G. Hall, III Trinity United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. W.B. Sandberg Pastor for Senior Ministries & Congregational Care, University United Methodist Austin, Texas	Rev. Rusty Teeter Director, Wesley Foundation of Austin Austin, Texas	Rev. David H. Jensen Presbyterian Church USA Austin, Texas
Rev. Bill Wack, CSC St. Ignatius Martyr Parish and School Austin, Texas	Rev. John Yeaman University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. David Gilliam Tarrytown United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Cecile Adam Congregational Church of Austin, UCC Austin, Texas	Rev. Ken White United Christian Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Beverly Lawson Disciples of Christ Austin, Texas
Rev. Sarah Bentley Congregational Church of Austin, UCC Austin, Texas	Rev. George Holcombe Retired, The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Paul L. Escamilla St. John's United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. Whitney Bodman Congregational Church of Austin Austin, Texas	Rev. Joel Salas The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Dr. Orval Strong Retired, The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Dr. John Elford University United Methodist Austin, Texas	Rabbi Rick Brody Congregation Kol Halev Austin, Texas	Rev. Ralph L. Underwood The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rev. Glenn Noblin The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rabbi Amy B. Cohen Temple Beth Shalom Austin, Texas	Rev. Sue Abold Northwest Hills United Methodist Austin, Texas
Rev. Arun W. Jones Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Austin, Texas	Rev. Dr. William M. Harris St. John's United Methodist Austin, Texas	Phillip Baker Plum Blossom Sangha Austin, Texas
Father Charles Kullmann St. Austin Catholic Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Rudy England Unity Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Suzanne Field Rabb University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rabbi Susan Elizabeth Lippe Bible-Student, Rabbi-Educator Austin, Texas	Rev. Dr. Kristina Carter Parker Lane United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Matthew Iwuji, JUD St. Albert the Great Catholic church Austin, Texas
Rev. D. Bruce Nieli, CSP St. Austin Catholic Church Austin, Texas	Dr. Mike Renquist The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Deacon Jose Mendez St. Albert the Great Catholic church Austin, Texas
Rev. K.C. Ptomey, Jr. Professor, Austin Presbyterian Seminary Austin, Texas	Pastor John Reynolds, Retired The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Susan Sprague University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
Rabbi Samuel Rose Congregation Beth Israel Austin, Texas	Rev. Judy Baskin Retired, The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas	Rev. Vincent Thanh Nguyen, CSsR St. Albert the Great Catholic church Austin, Texas
Rabbi Daniel Septimus Executive Director, Texas Hillel at The University of Texas at Austin Austin, Texas	Rabbi Rebecca Epstein Congregation Beth Israel Austin, Texas	Rev. Richard Bates, Retired University United Methodist Church Austin, Texas
	Rabbi Kerry Baker Beth Shalom Austin, Texas	Rev. Cheryl Broome The United Methodist Church Austin, Texas

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Retired, University United Methodist Church
Austin, Texas

Sarah Macias
Sanctuary
Austin, Texas

Rev. Kathryn LeVine
Carrizo Springs United Methodist
Carrizo Springs, Texas

Rev. Kent Kepler
First United Methodist Uvalde
Utopia, Texas

Rev. Michael Peschke
Lexington United Methodist Church
Lexington, Texas

Pastor Glenn Hohlt
St. John Lutheran Church New Ulm/Trinity
Lutheran Church Frelsburg
New Ulm, Texas

Rev. Karen Boehk
First United Methodist Church - Smithville
Smithville, Texas

Rev. Murray Travis
Retired, Presbyterian Church USA
Amarillo, Texas

Rev. Kevin Young
St. John's United Methodist
Lubbock, Texas

Rev. Bobby McMillan
Retired, The United Methodist Church
Lubbock, Texas

Rev. Herb Tavenner
Retired, The United Methodist Church
Lubbock, Texas

Rev. Mary Glover
St Mark's Episcopal Church
Abilene, Texas

Rev. Ross Whiteaker
Branch United Methodist Church
Abilene, Texas

Father James Plagens
St. Ann's Catholic Church
Midland, Texas

Monsignor Bernard Gully
Roman Catholic
Big Spring, Texas

Rev. David Mossbarger
St. Barnabas' Episcopal Church
Odessa, Texas

Father Joseph H. Uecker
Retired, St. Joseph Catholic Church
Odessa, Texas

Father Mark Woodruff
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church
Odessa, Texas

Rev. Tom Ramsay
Desert Lotus Buddhist Community
Terlingua, Texas

Father William Morton
Columbian Mission Center
El Paso, Texas

Rev. Edward Carpenter Jr.
St. Joseph Parish
El Paso, Texas

Monsignor Arturo Jose Bañuelas
St. Mark Catholic Church
El Paso, Texas

Rev. Miguel Briseno
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
El Paso, Texas

Fr. Robert F. Dueweke, O.S. A
Order of St. Augustine
El Paso, Texas

Sr. S. Kathleen Braun, OSF
School Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Sr. Nancy Hansen
School Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Sr. Frances Hicks
School Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Pastor Antonio Lasheras
St. Therese of the Little Flower
Catholic Church
El Paso, Texas

Father Pablo Matta
St. Jude Catholic Church
El Paso, Texas

Sr. Joan McCoy
School Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Rev. David Fierro
St. Matthew Catholic Church
El Paso, Texas

Sister Mary Kay Mahowald
Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Sister Phyllis Nolan
Daughters of Charity
El Paso, Texas

Sister Priscilla Joy Ritchey
Sisters of St. Francis
El Paso, Texas

Rev. Carlos Clugy-Soto
Desert View UCC
El Paso, Texas

Rev. Deborah Clugy-Soto
United Church of Christ
El Paso, Texas

Sister Emile Morgan
Daughters of Charity
El Paso, Texas