

Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform

As our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion—regardless of their place of birth—we call on the new Administration and 111th Congress to enact humane and equitable immigration reform in 2009.

We call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of a broken and outdated system. We see the exploitation of undocumented workers and the plight of separated families, as well as the escalation of community fear due to indiscriminate raids and local police acting as federal immigration agents. Humane immigration reform would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings.

The Hebrew Bible tells us: "The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger, for "what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me" (Matthew 25:40). The Qur'an tells us that we should "do good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet" (4:36). The Hindu Taitiriya Upanishad tells us: "The guest is a representative of God" (1.11.2).

Therefore, we call on the new Administration and 111th Congress to commit to:

Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies

Recognizing the importance of families to the creation of healthy individuals and strong communities, we call on the new Administration and Congress to 1) expeditiously reunite immigrant families separated due to lengthy visa backlogs; 2) revise family preference categories and per-country caps to prioritize family unity; and 3) remove bars to reentry and adjustment of status for individuals seeking to reunite with their family members. Attempts to devalue the family, such as denying birthright citizenship to the children of immigrants or placing family-based and employment-based visa applicants in competition with each other on a point-based or other system, must be rejected in order to maintain and promote family unity.

Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship

We urge the Administration and Congress to enact immigration reform that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency upon the satisfaction of reasonable criteria, with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. Communities and congregations around the country are prepared to provide legal services to those eligible, as people of faith are committed to an effective and humane system that keeps families together and values the dignity of our friends and neighbors.

Protect workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers

We call for an expansion of legal avenues for workers who seek to migrate to the United States to work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner. Their rights must be fully protected, including the ability to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship. As currently structured, electronic employment verification programs have proven detrimental to both employers and employees due to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. All workers benefit, however, from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize.

Facilitate immigrant integration

Many immigrants desire to naturalize but lack the necessary tools. The U.S. immigration system should empower them to this end by providing financial support to state and local governments and community organizations that offer language and civics education, outreach, and naturalization application assistance. Citizenship should be made more affordable by reducing naturalization fees and making fee waivers more easily accessible. Moreover, the processing of application backlogs and security checks should be streamlined to reduce waiting times. Counterproductive laws prohibiting immigrants from accessing social services and mandating that local police act as immigration officials should be revoked. These barriers to integration decrease community safety and discourage immigrants from pursuing education and community involvement. Faith based organizations and congregations around the country will continue to assist in integration efforts by providing social services and helping immigrants learn English, find jobs, and thrive in the United States.

Restore due process protections and reform detention policies

Immigration policies should respect human rights and ensure due process for all persons. We have witnessed how indiscriminate immigration raids have caused trauma and hardship for thousands of individuals. Such raids separate families, destroy communities, and threaten the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike. The suffering caused by the increase and severity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in homes and workplaces underscores the problems with current U.S. immigration policies and the urgent need for reform. Many faith organizations administer services to those impacted by raids, as well as to immigrants in detention facilities. Witnessing the toll of incarceration on detainees, their families and our communities, we urge the new Administration and Congress to reduce the use of detention for immigrants and improve detention conditions by enacting clear, enforceable reforms that include rigorous medical treatment standards and increased access to pastoral care, legal counsel and legal orientation programs. Furthermore, the government should expedite the release of individuals who pose no risk to the community and expand the use of community-based alternatives to detention, which are more humane and cost effective.

Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values

For the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically increased fence construction, border patrol presence, and the deportation of immigrants, which have proven ineffective at decreasing undocumented immigration. During this time, we have witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of environmental and religious freedom laws, as well as the unnecessary suffering of community members whose loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Currently, vast resources are being used for fence construction and the mass arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants who contribute to the U.S. economy and culture. To truly decrease undocumented immigration, the United States should improve access to the legal immigration system by increasing the number of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs to increase processing efficiency. Border policies must be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to implement its immigration laws and identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. All immigration laws must respect the dignity of all persons, prioritize the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognize the economic contributions of immigrants, and uphold our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome the stranger.

Immigration: A matter of human rights

As people of faith, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and recommend reforms that uphold the God-given dignity and rights of every person, each of whom are made in the image of God. We are dedicated to immigration reform because we value family unity, justice, equity, compassion, love, and the humane treatment of all persons. It is our collective prayer that the new Administration and 111th Congress enact just immigration reform based on these tenets.

National Organizations and Denominations:

American Friends Service Committee
American Jewish Committee
American Society for Muslim Advancement
Anti-Defamation League
Blauvelt Dominican Sisters Justice Ministry
B'nai B'rith International
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Relief Services
Catholic Scholars for Worker Justice
Center of Concern
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Refugee and Immigration Ministries
Christian Reformed Church in North America, Office of Social Justice
Church Communities International
Church of the Brethren
Church of the Brethren Witness
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program (CWS/IRP)
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, USA-E
Daughters of Wisdom, U.S. Province
Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ)
Dominican Leadership Conference, Executive Committee
Franciscan Action Network
Franciscan Friars (OFM), English Speaking Conference, JPIC Council
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
Hindu American Foundation
Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform
Interfaith Worker Justice
Irish Apostolate USA
Islamic Circle of North America
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Reconstructionist Federation
Jubilee Campaign USA
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
Marianist Province of the US, Office of Peace and Justice
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee, Washington Office
Mennonite Church USA
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Missionary Oblates Justice and Peace, Integrity of Creation Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC)
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference
National Ministries, American Baptist Churches USA

NETWORK, A National Catholic Social Justice Lobby
North American Dominican Justice Promoters
Pax Christi USA: National Catholic Peace Movement
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Progressive Jewish Alliance
Rabbis for Human Rights, North America
School Sisters of Notre Dame Global Justice & Peace Commission
School Sisters of Notre Dame, Office of Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation
Sikh Council on Religion and Education
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, U.S.-Ontario Province Leadership Team
Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, U.S./Caribbean Province
Standing For Truth Foundation
Sojourners
The Episcopal Church
The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
U.S. Daughters of Charity Advocacy and Social Justice Committee
Union for Reform Judaism
Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Jewish Communities
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church, General Commission on Religion and Race
Uri L'Tzedek: Awaken To Justice
Ursuline Sisters of the Eastern Province, USA, Leadership Council
Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, Western Province
Women of Reform Judaism
World Relief

Local Organizations, Congregations, Diocese, and Religious Orders:

Adrian Dominican Sisters, Adrian, MI
Advocacy for Peace and Justice Committee of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA
Am Kolel Sanctuary and Renewal Center, Rockville, MD/ Beallsville, MD
Andrea Likovich, O.S.F., Aston, PA
Arbeter Ring (Workmen's Circle) Southern California District, CA
Arlington Street Church, Boston, MA
Beatitudes Society of Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge MA
Benedictine Sisters of Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS
Benedictine Sisters of Mt. Angel, OR
Benedictine Sisters of Yankton, SD
Benedictine Women of Madison, WI at Holy Wisdom Monastery, WI
Bernardine Franciscan Sisters, Reading, PA
Bethany United Church of Christ, Chicago, IL
Brooklyn Council of Churches, Brooklyn, NY
California Council of Churches IMPACT, CA

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, TX
Central Presbyterian Church, Eugene, OR
Church World Service, Immigration and Refugee Program, Lancaster, PA Office
Colorado Council of Churches
Community of St. Francis, Episcopal Diocese of California, San Francisco CA
Congregation Chaverim, Tucson, AZ
Congregation Justice Committee, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, IN
Congregation of St. Joseph Peace and Justice Facilitating Team
Congregation of the Holy Spirit, USA, West Province
Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Faith, Downey, CA
Dominican Sisters of Great Bend, KS
Dominican Sisters of Houston, TX
Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose, CA
Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, NY
Dominican Sisters, Grand Rapids, MI
Dominicans of Sinsinawa, WI
East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, Berkeley, CA
East Bay Interfaith Immigration Coalition (EBIIC), CA
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
El Buen Pastor Episcopal Church, Redwood City, CA
Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, Silver Spring, MD
Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, NH
Episcopal Diocese of Oregon, OR
Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA
Executive Committee of the Racine Dominicans, WI
Faith Mennonite Church, Minneapolis, MN
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Daytona Beach, FL
First Unitarian Church, Los Angeles, CA
Fort Collins Mennonite Fellowship, Fort Collins, CO
Franciscan Friars (OFM), St. John the Baptist Province, JPIC Office, Cincinnati OH
Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, MN
Gloria Dei Step Up Center, Providence, RI
Indiantown Education Coalition, Indiantown, FL
Indiantown Neighborhood Association, Indiantown, FL
InDios Inc. Indiantown, FL
Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska, NE
Interfaith Community Engagement Center at Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH
Irish Pastoral Centre, Quincy, MA
Jewish Community Action, St. Paul, MN
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, DC
Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Southern Arizona, AZ
Jewish Family & Career Services of Atlanta, GA
Jewish Family & Children's Service of Pittsburgh, PA
Jewish Family and Children's Service of Minneapolis, MN
Jewish Family Services of Greater Charlotte, Inc., NC
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley, CA
Judson Memorial Church, New York, NY
Just Faith, Painesville, OH

Justice and Peace Committee of St. Norbert Abbey, De Pere, WI
La Iglesia Episcopal de Nuestra Senora de las Americas, Chicago, IL
Lane Center for Catholic Studies and Social Thought, University of San Francisco, CA
Leadership Team of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross, Green Bay, WI
Leadership Team, Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, O'Fallon, MO
Let Justice Roll Lead Team of the West Ohio United Methodist Conference, OH
Little White Chapel Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Burbank, CA
Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Chicago, IL
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, Colorado
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry, New Mexico
Lutheran Advocacy, Illinois
Lutheran Community Services Northwest
Lutheran Office of Governmental Ministry in New Jersey
Lutheran Social Services of Illinois
Lutheran Social Services of New England
Lutheran Social Services of the National Capital Area
Lutheran Statewide Advocacy, New York, NY
Marycrest Franciscans, Denver CO
Methodist Federation for Social Action, New York Chapter
Miami Baptist Association, Miami, FL
Migration and Immigration Task Force, Episcopal Diocese of California
Ministerio Latino, Iglesia Episcopal, Diocesis de Washington
Mother of God Monastery, Watertown, SD
Mount St. Scholastica, Atchison, KS
New Jersey Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Immigration Task Group
New York Chapter, American Jewish Committee, NY
New York State Council of Churches, NY
North Carolina Council of Churches, NC
Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Marty, SD
Pennsylvania Council of Churches, PA
Presentation Sisters, New York, New England
Refugee Immigration Ministry, Malden, MA
Religious of Jesus and Mary, Washington, DC Province Offices
River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Bethesda, MD, Latin America Taskforce Network
River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Bethesda, MD, Social Justice Council
San Andres Episcopal Church, Yonkers, NY
School Sisters of St. Francis, International Leadership Team, Milwaukee, WI
Servants of Mary (Servite Sisters), Ladysmith, WI
Shir Tikvah Congregation, Minneapolis, MN
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Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership, Roman Catholic, Nazareth, KY
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in the Western Province
Sisters of Charity of New York, Leadership Team
Sisters of Mercy U.S. Province, Redlands, CA
Sisters of Mercy, South Central Community, Baltimore, Cincinnati, North Carolina, St. Louis
Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, Renton WA – Inland Northwest, Idaho and
Montana, West Coast – Washington, Oregon, Montana
Sisters of Social Service of Buffalo, NY

Sisters of St Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, WI
Sisters of St. Anne, St. Marie Province
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of St. Francis, Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes, Rochester, MN
Sisters of St. Francis, Leadership Team, Clinton, Iowa
Sisters of St. Francis, Savannah, MO
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Associates, St. Louis Province, MO
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Los Angeles Province, CA
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, CA
Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, Western Province
Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis Leadership Team, Stevens Point, WI
Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, San Antonio, TX
Sisters of the Living Word, Arlington Heights, IL
Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, New Windsor, NY
Sisters of the Presentation, San Francisco, CA
Skagit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Mount Vernon, WA
Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Phoenix, AZ
Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, CT
Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Laguna Beach, CA
Social Justice Outreach Committee, Saint Jude's Episcopal Church, Cupertino, Ca
Society of St. Ursula, Rhinebeck, NY
St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, Arlington, VA
St. Louis Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America
St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Lyons, KS
St. Michael & All Angels Episcopal Church, Portland, OR
St. Pius V Parish, Chicago, IL
The Board of Directors of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles, CA
The Clinton, Iowa Associates of the Sisters of St. Francis
The Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, Fond du Lac, WI
The Dominican Sisters of Great Bend Kansas
The Episcopal Church of the Advent, Chicago, IL
The Episcopal Church of the Advent; La Iglesia Episcopal de Nuestra Senora de las Americas,
Chicago, IL
The Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles Interfaith Refugee and Immigration Service (IRIS)
The Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida, Immigration and Social Justice Ministries
The General Council of the Adrian Dominican Sisters
The Interfaith Council on Religion, Race, Economic and Social Justice of Silicon Valley, CA
The Leadership Council of the IHM Sisters of Monroe, Michigan
The Leadership Team, Sisters of Providence, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN
The New Mexico Conference of Churches
The Provincial Council of the Daughters of Charity of the Evansville Province, Evansville, IN
The Provincial Council of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Mankato Province, MN
The Sisters of Saint Benedict of Crookston, MN
The Sisters of the Holy Family, Fremont, CA
The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, New Jersey Region
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Danbury, CT
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Las Vegas, NV
United in Faith Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL

United in Faith Lutheran Church, Justice Ministry, Chicago, IL
Unity in the Community, Manassas, VA
Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy
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Mary E. Anderson, Lutheran Church of the Atonement, Barrington, IL,
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Mary Lou Sullivan, Catholic, Plainfield, Illinois
Mary Schlehuber, O.P. Santa Monica, CA
Mary Sharon Sullivan, Milwaukee WI
Maryann Lucy, O.P., Sinsinawa, WI
Melanie Maczka, Society of Sisters for the Church, Wisconsin Region & St. Willebrord Parish, Green Bay
Melissa Waters, O.P., River Forest, IL
Myrna Andersen, Lutheran Advocacy Illinois, IL
Norman Nelson, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois group, Lutheran Advocacy
Pastor Jen Rude, Resurrection Lutheran Church, Chicago, IL
Pastor Mathew Swora, Emmanuel Mennonite Church, St. Paul, MN
Pastor Todd Stange, Emanuel Lutheran Church, West Warwick, RI
Pat Waltermire, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Boulder, CO
Pat Yosha, Coordinator, Social Justice Committee, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Exeter, Exeter, NH
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Polly Fredrichs, First Unitarian Universalist Society of Exeter, Exeter, NH
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Rabbi Barry H. D. Block, Temple Beth-El, San Antonio, TX
Rabbi Bernard H. Mehlman, Senior Scholar, Temple Israel, Boston, MA
Rabbi David Holtz, Temple Beth Abraham, Tarrytown, NY
Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Rabbi David Shneyer, Tikkun Olam Chair, Ohalah, Rockville, MD/ Beallsville, MD
Rabbi Elias J. Lieberman, Falmouth Jewish Congregation, Falmouth, MA
Rabbi Eric M. Solomon, Beth Meyer Synagogue, Raleigh, NC
Rabbi Gerald Serotta, Chair, Rabbis for Human Rights-North America
Rabbi Helaine Ettinger, Jewish Congregation of Kinnelon, Kinnelon, NJ
Rabbi Joel N. Abraham, Temple Sholom of Scotch Plains/Fanwood, NJ, and President, New Jersey-
West Hudson Valley Association of Reform Rabbis
Rabbi Joshua M. Davidson, Chappaqua, New York
Rabbi Lewis H. Kamrass, Cincinnati, Ohio
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Rabbi Mark Kiel, Congregation B'nai Israel, Emerson NJ
Rabbi Martin Weiner, San Francisco, CA
Rabbi Neal Katz, Tyler, TX
Rabbi Richard J. Shapiro, Temple Beth-El of Great Neck
Rabbi Robert Levine, D.D., Congregation Rodeph Sholom, New York, NY
Rabbi Sharon Stiefel, Shir Tikvah, A Reform Congregation serving the Twin Cities, Minneapolis, MN
Rabbi Shelley Kovar Becker, Temple Sholom, Floral Park, NY
Rabbi Shoshana M. Perry, Congregation Shalom, Chelmsford, MA

Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs, Founder Progressive Faith Foundation, Los Angeles CA
Rafael Graciano Baldez Neves, Director, U.S.A. Brazil Family Values Institute, Orlando, FL
Rev Dana Reardon, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Warwick, RI
Rev. Amy R. Stapleton, National Organizer, Methodist Federation for Social Action
Rev. Bryce Miller, Pastor, Shalom Mennonite Fellowship, Tucson, AZ
Rev. Canon Raymond P. Dugan Trinity Episcopal Cathedral (ret.), Valley Interfaith Project
Rev. Carol Rose, Co-Director, Christian Peacemaker Teams
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Rev. Denver Bitner, Zion Lutheran Church, Rockford, IL
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Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston, Director of the Disciples Justice Action Network and Coordinator
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Rev. Dr. Mari E. Castellanos, UCC, College Park MD
Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser, Executive Director, CCCI
Rev. Elizabeth Eide, Barrington, RI, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
Rev. Elyse Nelson Winger, St. John's Lutheran Church, Bloomington, IL
Rev. Enrique Cadena Iglesia Episcopal San Pablo Phoenix AZ
Rev. Garry J. Cappleman, O.P., Western Dominican Province, Blessed Sacrament Parish and Prince
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Rev. Glen W. Bays, Member, Presbytery of Cimarron, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Rev. Jose Luis Casal, General Missioner, The Presbytery of Tres Rios, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
Rev. Joseph and Joyce Ellwanger, Milwaukee, WI
Rev. Kim K. Crawford Harvie, Senior Minister, Arlington Street Church (Unitarian Universalist),
Boston, Massachusetts
Rev. Linnea B. Wilson, St. Mark Evangelical Lutheran Church, Mt. Prospect, IL
Rev. Mark Gonzales, President, Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform, Vice President,
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Rev. Marlin H. Otte, Marion, IL
Rev. Meg A. Riley, Director, Advocacy and Witness, Unitarian Universalist Association
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Robert M Rothstein, President Shir Tikvah Congregation, Minneapolis, MN
Rod Patterson, Executive Director, Mosaic at Pontiac & Dwight, Pontiac, IL
Rodney A. Brown, Vice President, Family Services, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota
Ronald W. Henning, Crystal Lake, IL

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Charity, Redwood City, CA
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