

Interfaith Solidarity Network
Ecumenical Interreligious Work Group of the Chicago Presbytery

MISSION: As Presbyterian believers who honor all other humans as children of God, we will stand in solidarity with religious and spiritual communities who are hurt or threatened or being made fearful because of their religious identity. We pledge to stand with and pray with our brothers and sisters in the Chicago area and to respond publicly to incidents where hate is expressed toward a religious or spiritual community.

LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPANTS

The Executive Presbyter, Chair of the Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Work Group, and a Volunteer Coordinator will lead Network efforts. Ten congregations representing all areas of the Presbytery will be recruited to participate in a leadership position. Two members of each lead congregation will be network participants who will be contacted in the case of a needed response and who will enlist other staff or congregation members or nearby congregations as needed. All congregations in the Presbytery are considered members of the Network and may be contacted for help.

TO WHAT WE WILL RESPOND:

1. Vandalism to or destruction of a place of worship or religious practice, or sanctified site, where the action is malicious and intended to assault the community or tradition
2. Defamation of the community or tradition through the malicious public use of hate symbols, written statements
3. Mockery of a religion by countering traditions held sacred to that faith
4. Desecrations of religious symbols or scriptures of the spiritual or religious community
5. Threats, verbal or written, intended to cause harm to a religious or spiritual institution

HOW WE WILL RESPOND

Responses will be different and appropriate as deemed suitable for the incident in question and will be developed in conjunction with leaders of the victimized faith group.

1. For physical acts or public demonstrations of hate, a physical presence or protest by congregation members may be required.
2. At the request of leaders of the victims of the assault, our congregation leaders may appear at press conferences to lend support.
3. Where defamation and threats, but not action, are issued publicly, letters may be sent by our congregation leaders to individuals or to media to protest the language of hate.

STRATEGY

The Executive Presbyter, the Chair of the EIRWG and the volunteer coordinator will judge whether events meet criteria as delineated above. If a public demonstration is appropriate, they will consult with leaders of the victimized faith group to determine the best course of action. When congregation members are required for a physical presence, the Volunteer coordinator will activate the communication network to alert the contact persons at the lead congregations who will then alert other identified congregation members. If written communication to victimized

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faith groups is deemed appropriate, a letter will be sent by the Executive Presbyter, Chair of EIRWG, and Volunteer Coordinator. Lead congregations will be informed of these responses to hate/threats.

RELATIONSHIP OF INDIVIDUAL CONGREGATIONS TO THE NETWORK

Any congregation which does not ally itself with a particular decision made by Network leadership would not be expected to participate in a demonstration, and would let the leadership know in advance, if possible. In a demonstration, only signs reflecting the Presbytery's sponsorship of this event would be suitable.

FOLLOW UP

The Volunteer coordinator will keep correspondence relating to expressions of solidarity. If the response is a public protest, contact members from lead congregations may meet to discuss the efficacy of the effort and any future initiatives. All solidarity efforts will be tailored for and limited to the specific incident. The Network may meet to discuss interfaith hate crime issues from time to time.

WHO ARE WE?

The mission of the Ecumenical and Interreligious Work Group is to foster positive relationships between Presbyterians within the Christian community (ecumenical) and between other faiths or religions (interfaith.) Moderator of the Work Group as of 2011 is Rev. Jay Moses. The Work Group oversees the work of the Interfaith Solidarity Network.

WHY DO WE PRESENT THIS PROPOSAL?

As part of our efforts to create an atmosphere of acceptance of and harmony with other religious and spiritual communities, we wish to communicate our support for those communities when they are hurt, threatened or made to be fearful. Although such incidents will be very low in frequency, we feel it is best to be organized as a Presbytery to be most effective in our response.

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS PROJECT?

The Moderator of the EIRWG will appoint an Volunteer Coordinator for Solidarity who will in conjunction with the Executive Presbyter determine 1) whether the incident constitutes a bona fide threat to a religious community's well-being and 2) the most appropriate response. Dr. Peg Griffiths is currently the Coordinator, and Rev. Bob Reynolds is he Executive Presbyter.

WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPANTS?

Two persons and their contact numbers will be submitted by each lead congregation to the Coordinator and will be contacted when a public presence is required. That person will contact any others who have previously volunteered. and will reach out to additional members/congregations if their geographical area is involved. A timely response will be required (within 24 hours). Network members will contact the Volunteer Coordinator if their contact information changes or if they request replacement.

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WILL ANY SPECIAL TRAINING OF CONGREGATIONAL PARTICIPANTS BE NECESSARY?

No. Those in Presbytery leadership positions will be knowledgeable about appropriate responses, and will direct the action, including the wording of any placards.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF ANY PUBLIC COMMUNICATION?

The Presbytery takes a position to support victims of hate and intolerance and promotes acceptance and positive relations with all religious communities.

HOW CAN CONGREGATIONS PARTICIPATE?

Ten congregations have agreed to be lead congregations and to take major responsibility should an incident occur in their geographical area. Other congregations maybe called on to help in efforts. Two individuals from each congregation have volunteered to be contact members.

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| Edgewater | Chicago -- North |
| Lincoln Park | Chicago -- Mid-North |
| Fourth/ Chicago | Chicago -- Central/West |
| United of Hyde Park | Chicago -- Mid South |
| Pullman | Chicago -- Far South |
| First United Oak Park | Suburbs -- Near West |
| First Chicago Heights | Suburbs -- South |
| Northminster/Evanston | Suburbs -- Near North |
| Deerfield First | Suburbs -- Far North |
| River Glen/Naperville | Suburbs -- Far West |

Contact Information:

Peg Griffiths Volunteer Coordinator	773 327 3713Home 773 975 6656 (Answer. Service)	773 405 4527 cell Page: 312 484 0178	clea2000@comcast.net mgriffiths@chicagopresbytery.org
Rev. Bob Reynolds, Exec. Presbyter	312 243-8300 ext 1304		breynolds@chicagopresbytery.org
Rev. Jay Moses, Moderator, EIRWG	630 668 5147		jmoses@firstpreswheaton.org

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