

A Joint Statement by Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic and United Methodist Leaders in North Carolina

*As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.*

Matthew 25:4

We speak as bishops and Christian leaders in North Carolina about the moral issues highlighted by the Moral Monday events. Our call to speak grows out of these words that we prayed together at our meeting on June 6: "May we be a more vivid symbol of unity to all the faithful. May the witness of our lives proclaim the Kingdom of God."

As you may know, people have been gathering on Monday evenings to offer vigilant witness on moral issues being considered by our elected state officials. We share their concern for many of the issues they are bringing forth.

The Rev. Dr. Rodney Sadler of Union Seminary (Charlotte) recently summarized the effect of pending and enacted legislation especially on the poor, the aging and children.

"As you read this letter, the North Carolina General Assembly is passing bills that will remove 500,000 people from the Medicaid rolls leaving them without health insurance; that will remove 170,000 people from unemployment when unemployment rates remain at historically high levels; that threaten to replace the graduated state income tax with a consumption tax that will adversely impact the poorest North Carolinians who will face increased prices on basic goods; that will force college students to return to their often distant homes to vote or cost their parents their \$2,500 dependency deduction.... These and many other bills will adversely impact those who can least afford it and therefore demand a fervent response from people of faith! "

Our concern about the legislative actions cited by Rev. Dr. Sadler is not an act of political partisanship. Rather it is a matter of faith with respect to our understanding of the biblical teachings and imperatives to protect the poor, respect the stranger, care for widows and children and love our neighbors (Isaiah 10:1-2, Hebrews 13:2, James 1:27, Matthew 22:39, Galatians 5:14). We recognize and respect other Christian brothers and sisters who may seek to apply these biblical teachings in different ways and through different means.

We speak and act in love and through our understanding that our first citizenship is in the Kingdom of God, and we do so always as faithful citizens of the democratic process. We urge all Christians to witness to their faith in seeking justice and mercy for all.

The Right Reverend Michael Bruce Curry, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
The Reverend Dr. Leonard Bolick, Bishop, Synod of North Carolina, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
The Reverend Ted Churn, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of New Hope, Presbyterian Church (USA)  
The Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge, Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Raleigh  
Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, North Carolina Conference, United Methodist Church  
Bishop Larry Goodpaster, Western North Carolina Conference, United Methodist Church  
The Right Reverend Alfred "Chip" Marble, Assisting Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
The Reverend Anne Hodges-Copple, Bishop Suffragan-elect, Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina  
The Right Reverend Porter Taylor, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina  
The Reverend Betty Meadows, Transitional Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of Charlotte, Presbyterian Church (USA)

June 10, 2013

We, the undersigned Jewish clergy of North Carolina, join with fellow members of the faith community across our state in supporting the Moral Monday protest movement. We are deeply troubled by a flood of regressive laws, emerging from our General Assembly, that targets the poor and the vulnerable of our state. Our legislators must change course.

As Jews, we are obligated to keep or perform specific commandments pertaining to our communal political space. Among these are:

- Exodus 22:21--You shall not oppress the widow, the orphan, or the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; and
- Deuteronomy 16:18--Justice, justice shall you pursue

It is our view that the current General Assembly has failed in its pursuit of justice. It has purposelessly prevented 500,000 North Carolinians from obtaining health care; slashed education funding for the poorest children in the state; proposed a tax policy that will further burden poor families, while offering tax breaks to the wealthy; singled out immigrants for special legal harassment; and attempted to restrict the voting rights of thousands of North Carolinians.

Many of us have previously attempted to reach out to Assembly leaders for dialogue, and we have been ignored. We therefore endorse the use of nonviolent civil disobedience to draw attention to the reckless and heartless policies currently passing into law in Raleigh. We sign this letter as individuals, not on behalf of our congregations.

We recognize the need for solidarity at this time in North Carolina. The Jewish vision of social justice is broadly shared by all people of faith who are mobilizing this Monday, and now is the time to speak out.

The Jewish theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel described Judaism not as a leap of faith, but a leap of action. Rabbi Heschel was a member of the civil rights coalition led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and he lived his beliefs as a practitioner of civil disobedience in his own time.

We call upon Jews of conscience to take a leap of action and lend their support to Moral Mondays, either by attending with intent to be arrested, or by attending as supporters. We remind our fellow citizens of Rabbi Hillel's timeless question: "If not now, when?"

Rabbi Lucy Dinner, Temple Beth Or, Raleigh  
Rabbi Ariel Edery, Temple Beth Shalom, Cary  
Rabbi Jen Feldman, Kehillah Synagogue, Chapel Hill  
Rabbi Frank Fischer, Chapel Hill  
Rabbi John Friedman, Judea Reform Congregation, Durham

Rabbi Raachel Jurovics, Yavneh, Raleigh  
Rabbi Eric Solomon, Beth Meyer Synagogue, Raleigh