

Baptist Pastors Stand in Solidarity With Muslims at Interfaith Events

Baptist ministers across the U.S. have signed interfaith statements expressing solidarity with their Muslim neighbors and condemning anti-Islamic rhetoric.

In Providence, Rhode Island, Tom Wiles, executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island, along with a dozen Baptist ministers gathered at the Islamic Center of Rhode Island for a Dec. 15 press conference expressing support for the Muslim community in Providence.

“We stand in solidarity with our Muslim neighbors, not so that we can somehow proclaim that we are all the same. We do not dare deny the unique contributions that each of our faith communities and traditions bring to our society,” Wiles said at the press conference.

“Instead, we call on all our communities, our state, our leaders and those who would present themselves to become our leaders to both advocate and celebrate the strength we have found in our religious diversity,” he continued. “Further, we call on every individual of good will to denounce any attempt to separate us as citizens on the basis of religious convictions or practice.”

“I believe the statement will meet with good support by the great majority of our clergy,” Wiles told EthicsDaily.com.

Gregory Magruder, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Gainesville, Florida, signed an interfaith statement on Dec. 14, condemning hateful rhetoric aimed at the Islamic faith and Muslim refugees.

“We invite all concerned citizens, and our elected officials to sign on to our public declaration of unity and welcome,” he said at a press conference. “We reject any ideology that condemns all members of any race or religion to a common and

shared suspicion.”

Magruder added, “We are proud to stand with our Muslim friends and neighbors, and we recognize that as people of faith there is far more that unites us in sacred community than there is that divides us.”

Two Dallas-area Baptist pastors – George Mason of Wilshire Baptist Church and Layne Smith of Royal Lane Baptist Church – [gathered](#) with other Christian, Muslim and Jewish faith leaders at the Islamic Association of North Texas on Dec. 12.

These pastors are part of a task force connected to a Dallas-based interfaith nonprofit, Thanks-Giving Square, which released a statement expressing concern about planned protests outside mosques in the city.

“The current atmosphere of hate and fear of Muslims goes against the deepest teachings of our religions and the common humanity that we share,” the statement read. “We urge our colleagues, congregation members and friends to oppose the harassment of our fellow citizens who are Muslims.”

Mason [commented](#) on his Facebook page: “Proud to stand with these good colleagues of good will. Praying that our peace-loving and God-fearing Muslim neighbors may enjoy the same freedom and security all Americans deserve.”

In North Carolina, the Greensboro Faith Leaders Council, an interfaith organization promoting justice and the common good, expressed solidarity with their Muslim neighbors on Dec. 13.

The [statement](#), signed by Alan Sherouse, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, emphasized that “when any one group of people is targeted by hateful speeches and actions we are all affected.”

“Amidst this intensifying rhetoric and the heightened suspicion you face in these tenuous times, please hear the voices of those of us who call you neighbors with great pride and joy,” the statement read. “Know of our trust. Know that we will

not judge you generally by the actions of extremists who claim your name. Know that we value your contributions to our country and to our local community.”

American Baptist pastor Bill McGill of Imani Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, joined Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders outside the county courthouse to speak out against anti-Muslim bigotry.

McGill led those gathered in singing “We Shall Overcome” at the close of the Dec. 12 rally and [stated](#), “We can’t allow hate to come through our gate. None of us are free until all of us are free.”

A day earlier, Kyle Reese, pastor of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church, joined other faith leaders at an [interfaith gathering](#) in downtown Jacksonville, Florida.

“We believe by interacting with each other that leads to understanding, and hopefully that leads to respect,” said Nancy Broner, executive director of OneJax, a nonprofit interfaith organization that planned the event.

Reese, chairman of the OneJax board, opened the gathering in prayer, then commenced a litany in which attendees stated their name, faith tradition and emphasized their common home with the refrain, “I am Jacksonville.”

Nancy Petty, pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, also gathered on Dec. 11 for an interfaith prayer service to support their Muslim neighbors.

“We will not let hate and fear divide us,” she [asserted](#). “As people of faith, as moral, ethical human beings, we cannot remain silent or invisible at the rise of intolerance, prejudice and hostility toward our Muslim brothers and sisters here in America.”

“The enemy in this country and in our world is not Muslims,” Petty added. “The enemy we face as a humanity is radicalization - and radicalization is not limited to one faith, one people or one religion.”

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Editor's note: A free PDF providing resources for Baptists seeking to engage constructively with their Muslim neighbors is available [here](#).

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