The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500  

October 31, 2023  

Dear President Biden,  

We write to you as faith leaders from across America, seeking to express our strong support for proposed rules that the Food and Drug Administration has issued to prohibit the manufacture and sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. The FDA’s proposals will substantially improve public health by reducing youth tobacco use, preventing tobacco-caused disease, and saving lives. It is time to put an end to the tobacco industry’s targeted efforts to use flavored products to lure youth into a lifetime of deadly addiction. These rules can reduce health inequity and promote health justice, as menthol and other flavored tobacco products have a disproportionate impact on low-income and Black communities.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., responsible for nearly one in five deaths and more than $241 billion in health care costs each year. While smoking rates have declined, many communities continue to experience high rates of smoking and smoking-caused disease, including people with lower levels of income and education, individuals living in rural areas, Native Americans, people with a behavioral health condition, and the LGBTQ+ community. Congress gave the FDA tools to reduce the number of people who die of cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and other tobacco-caused diseases. The FDA is now proposing to use one of those tools—the ability to set tobacco product standards—to reduce the public health harms caused by menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.

Menthol cools and numbs the throat, which helps mask the harshness of tobacco smoke and makes it easier for young people to start smoking. Menthol cigarettes are also more addictive and harder to quit than non-menthol cigarettes. As a result, menthol cigarettes have increased the number of youth who smoke and the number of people who die prematurely from smoking. Black communities, which have been the target of menthol cigarette marketing for decades, have been especially harmed by menthol cigarettes. Removing these products from the market would reduce the number of youth who become addicted to tobacco, save hundreds of thousands of lives, and advance health equity. Researchers estimate that removing menthol cigarettes from the market would prevent up to 654,000 smoking-related deaths over time, including over 255,000 smoking-related deaths among Black Americans.
Cigars, which come in hundreds of kid-friendly flavors like Cherry Dynamite and Tropical Fusion, are the second most popular tobacco product among youth. In 2022, half a million youth were current cigar smokers. Every day that passes, more than 800 kids try cigar smoking for the first time, and there is extensive evidence about the role flavors play in attracting youth to cigars. We need to protect kids from flavored cigars because cigar smoke is composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke. According to the National Cancer Institute, cigar smoking can cause cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung.

All flavors except menthol are already prohibited in cigarettes. Removing other flavored tobacco products from the market, including menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, is supported by strong scientific evidence and is long overdue.

Strong FDA action to reduce tobacco use is critical, as tobacco use continues to claim the lives of nearly half a million Americans every year. Doing something is a moral imperative.

Sincerely,

Signatories are grouped by states. States are listed alphabetically, and signatories from each state are listed alphabetically within the state.

Larry Batie
Dean of Chapel and Vice President at
Miles College
Birmingham, AL

Rev. David Frazier
Revelation Missionary Baptist Church
Mobile, AL

Rev. David Frazier
Revelation Missionary Baptist Church
Mobile, AL

Pastor Melvin Owens
Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church
Lafayette, AL

Rev. James A. Platt
Allen Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church
Phenix City, AL

Rev. LaChaune Slater
Payne Chapel AME
Birmingham, AL

Rev. Antonio Thomas
St Mark AME Church
Tuscaloosa, AL

Reverend Dr. Cathy Clardy-Patterson
Fountain of Life Church
Scottsdale, AZ

Pastor Sherman Fort
The Word Church
Mesa, AZ

Rev. Terry Marks
Crosswinds Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)
Phoenix, AZ

Rev. Dr. Staccato K. Powell, Jr.
Fisher AME Zion Church
Phoenix, AZ
Dr. Warren Stewart, Sr.
First Institutional Baptist Church
Phoenix, AZ

Reginald D. Watson
Phillips Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Phoenix, AZ

Rabbi Barry Black
Congregation B’hai Israel
Little Rock, AR

Rev. Charles Dennis Alger
Pastor, First Congregational Church
Santa Barbara, CA

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Black
United Methodist Church
Claremont, CA

Louis Chase
Minister of Community Outreach, Holman United Methodist Church
Los Angeles, CA

Rabbi Susan Goldberg
Judaism
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Katheren Campbell Hudson
Tapestry Ministries
Berkeley, CA

Rev. Kathy Cooper Ledesma
Hollywood United Methodist Church
Los Angeles, CA

Eva Herschbach Martin
Retired United Methodist Clergy
Sacramento, CA

Mother Tracy Wells Miller
The Episcopal Church
Paso Robles, CA

Rev. Dr. David Moore
Beloved Community Church of Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA

Rabbi Suzanne Singer
Emerita, Temple Beth El
Riverside, CA

Rabbi Ron Stern
Stephen Wise Temple
Los Angeles, CA

Rev. Sandy Williams
Metropolitan Community Church
Covina, CA

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
First Congregational UCC
Grand Junction, CO

Rabbi Deborah Ruth Bronstein
Congregation Har HaShem
Boulder, CO

Rev. Gary Weaver
Presbyterian Church USA
Pueblo, CO

Rev. Eric Markman
Interim Pastor, First Presbyterian Church
Wilmington, DE
Bishop W. James Thomas, II  
Calvary Baptist Church  
Dover, DE

Pastor O. Jermaine Bego  
CenterPoint Baptist Church  
Washington, DC

Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune  
National Council of Churches USA  
Washington, DC

Rev. George C. Gilbert Jr  
Progressive National Baptist Convention  
Washington, DC

Founder, Patrice Lancaster  
Baptist  
Washington, DC

Rev. Patrick Mahoney  
Director, Christian Defense Coalition  
Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Washington, DC

Senior Pastor Melvin M. Maxwell  
East Friendship Baptist Church  
Washington, DC

Dr. LaTayna Purnell  
First Congregational UCC, DC  
Washington, DC

Undertaker Keith Ridley, IV  
National Baptist Convention USA  
Washington, DC

Nikki Toyama-Szeto  
Executive Director, Christians for Social Action  
Washington, DC

Rev. Jason Carson Wilson  
Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative  
Washington, DC

Rev. Dr. Christopher Zacharias  
John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church  
Washington, DC

Rev. Carolyn Biggers  
Mount Gilead AME  
Columbus, GA

Rev. William Blount  
Greater Young Zion Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA

Pastor Willie Boyd, Sr.  
Friendly Church of God-Christ  
Augusta, GA

Pastor Mavis Brown  
New Bethel AME  
Columbus, GA

Sharmaine Brown  
Founder, Jared’s Heart of Success, Inc.  
Atlanta, GA

Todd Bryant, Jr.  
Thomas Chapel AME Zion  
Lyerly, GA
Donna Calix  
New Zion Hill AME  
Thomson, GA

Rev. Racquel Carter  
Bethel AME  
Pelham, GA

Anita D. Cloud  
Spring Hill AME Zion  
Monroe, GA

Tonetta Collins  
Bible Way Ministries, Int'l  
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Karim Currey  
Solid Rock AME Zion  
Snellville, GA

Rev. Dr. Michael Ephraim  
Bethel AME Church  
Albany, GA

Rev. Dale Flucas  
Emmery Chapel A.M.E. Church  
Ashburn, GA

Rev. Connie Gross  
Prospect AME Zion  
Monroe, GA

Rev. Augusta H. Hall, Jr.  
B E T H E L African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Clyde Hill, Sr.  
Pastor Emeritus, Mount Calvary Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Lynn Hill  
Smith Memorial AME Zion  
Monroe, GA

Rev. Lelar Hodges-Johnson  
Mt. Zion AME Zion Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Dr. Jeanette Holt  
Pond Springs AME Zion  
Lyerly, GA

Jerelyn Hudson  
Butler Creek AME  
Augusta, GA

Bishop Reginald Jackson  
Sixth Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church  
Atlanta, GA

Pastor Kathleen Joseph  
St. Luke AME  
Waycross, GA

Pastor Nawanna Lewis Miller  
The Institute for Christian Discipleship, Inc.  
Marietta, GA

Rev. Lewis Logan  
Gaines Chapel AME  
Waycross, GA
Dr. Edwin Mack  
Unionville Missionary Baptist  
Macon, GA

Rev. Fer-Rell Malone, Sr.  
Senior Pastor, Macedonia Missionary  
Baptist Church  
Waycross, GA

Rev. Kenneth Martin  
Antioch Missionary Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Yvonne McGhee  
Mt. Pullen AME  
Dublin, GA

Pastor James McKenzie  
Allen Temple AME  
Tifton, GA

George Miller  
Elim Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Brandon Moore  
Faith AME Zion Church  
Atlanta, GA

Rev. Clarence Moore  
Good Shepherd Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA

Rev. Gwendolyn Moore  
Pleasant Hill AME Zion  
Covington, GA

Rev. Eldren Morrison  
Shaw Temple AME Zion  
Smyrna, GA

Rev. Terri Patterson  
New Liberty Hill AME  
Thomson, GA

Rev. Tanya Y. Pittman  
Bethel UMC  
Atlanta, GA

Rev. Michelle Rizer-Pool  
Bethel AME  
Gainesville, GA

Arthela T. Ramsey  
Mount Zion AME Zion  
Loganville, GA

Pastor C. D. Roberts  
Christ Fellowship Church Augusta  
Augusta, GA

Joyce Scurry  
Jones Chapel AME Zion  
Blythe, GA

Pastor Sherice Simmons  
Bellview AME Church  
Aragon, GA

Pastor Samuel Thompkins  
Greater Bethel AME Church  
Athens, GA

Rev. Velma Watts  
Coney Chapel AME  
Sparks, GA

Rev. Bettye Williams  
Allen Chapel AME  
Pearson, GA
Pastor Greg Williams  
Good News Community CME Church  
Lithonia, GA  

Rev. Rickey Williams  
St. James AME Zion  
Rome, GA  

Pastor Jerry Wilson  
Oak Grove Baptist Church  
Augusta, GA  

Rev. Ruby Youngblood  
St. John AME  
Richland, GA  

Dr. William E. Crowder, Jr.,  
Pastor, Park Manor Christian Church  
Chicago, IL  

Rev. Dr. Larita Rice-Barnes  
Apostle, Empowerment Of Grace  
East St. Louis, IL  

Pastor John Girton, Jr.  
Baptist  
Indianapolis, IN  

Pastor Philip K. James  
Mount Zion Baptist Church  
Indianapolis, IN  

Pastor Christopher Mundy  
Loving Missionary Baptist Church  
Indianapolis, IN  

Rev. Jessica Petersen-Mutai  
Senior Minister, First United Church  
Bloomington, IN  

Rev. James Wetzstein  
University Pastor, Valparaiso University  
Valparaiso, IN  

Rev. Darline Balm-Demmel  
St. Timothy’s United Methodist  
Cedar Falls, IA  

Dr. Mike Austin  
Professor of Philosophy, Eastern Kentucky University; Evangelical Philosophical Society; Covenant Community Church  
Richmond, KY  

Langston Gaither  
Faith Leader  
Louisville, KY  

Dr. Ansel Augustine  
Director, Office of Black Catholic Ministries, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New Orleans  
New Orleans, LA  

Rev. Faith McClellan  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
New Orleans, LA  

Rev. Carroll Conley  
Christian Civic League of Maine  
Augusta, ME  

Rev. Jane Field, Executive Director  
Maine Council of Churches  
Portland, ME  

Rev. Dr. Heber Brown, III  
Faith Leader  
Baltimore, MD
Rabbi Daniel Cotzin Burg  
Senior Rabbi, Beth Am Synagogue  
Baltimore, MD

Rev. Darryl Burton, Sr.  
Converted Heart CME  
Silver Spring, MD

Principal Dorothy Clowers Ed. D  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Brenda D. Courtney  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Jennifer Cover Payne  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, Maryland, MD

Rev. Dorothy Davis  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Pastor Patricia Degrafenreid  
Mt. Pisgah CME  
Baltimore, MD

Rev. Dean Evans  
United Missionary Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rabbi John Franken  
President, Baltimore Board of Rabbis  
Baltimore, MD

Mattie Gantz  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Brenda Girton-Mitchell  
Grace and Race Ministries LLC  
Silver Spring, MD

Rev. Dr. Michael Green  
St. Matthew CME  
Cedar Heights, MD

Rev. Dr. Alvin C. Hathaway, Sr.,  
Pastor Emeritus, Union Baptist Church  
Baltimore, MD

Dr. Demetra Hutchinson,  
Comm School Coordinator, Metropolitan  
Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Bryan O. Jones  
Harvest Church & Ministries C.O.G.I.C.  
Baltimore, MD

Pastor Stephen Jones  
Greater Hope Church of God in Christ  
Baltimore, MD

William Kelly  
Faith Leader  
Silver Spring, MD

Rev. E. Terri LaVelle  
Associate Minister, Metropolitan Baptist  
Church,  
Largo, MD

Pastor Cleveland T.A. Mason, II  
Perkins Square Baptist  
Baltimore, MD
Ms. C.J. Robinson  
Holy Trinity United Baptist Church  
Bowie, MD

Associate Minister Darlene Stevens  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Larry Thomas  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Bishop Tony W. Torain  
Good Shepherd C.O.G.I.C.  
Baltimore, MD

Rev. Dr. Robert Turner  
St. John Baptist  
Columbia, MD

Rev. Dr. Cynthia Turner Wood  
Dayspring Community Church  
Lanham, MD

Janet Vernon  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Coordinator, Church Women United  
Bowie, MD

Rev. Barbara Walker  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Bishop Lisa Weah  
The New Bethlehem Baptist Church  
Baltimore, MD

Rev. Tanai White  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rev. Adriane Blair Wise  
Assistant Minister, Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rev. Ryan Wise  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rev. Dr. Jesse L. Wood, Executive Pastor  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rev Pam Porter Wright  
Metropolitan Baptist Church  
Largo, MD

Rabbi David Lerner  
Temple Emunah, Conservative Judaism  
Lexington, MA

Pastor Jeffrey Baker  
St. Paul AME  
Detroit, MI

Danielle Bibbs  
Burning Bush International Ministries  
Westland, MI

Patricia Blake-Smith  
Program Manager, AME Church  
Detroit, MI

Rev. Dr. Steve C. Bland  
Liberty Temple Baptist  
Detroit, MI

Mauree Bowman  
Nondenominational  
Romulus, MI
Joyce Brooks  
Licensed Lay Minister, Lutheran Church  
Detroit, MI

Dr. Edith Carter  
Bray Temple CME  
Pontiac, MI

Rev. Dr. Thelma Caruthers  
St. Luke AME  
Southfield, MI

Tracy Coleman  
COGIC  
Ypsilanti, MI

Jeremy D. Cornelius  
Church of God In Christ  
Saginaw, MI

Cornelius Crosby, Jr.  
COGIC  
Detroit, MI

Bishop Dwight Dobbins  
New Way Christian Center,  
Farmington Hills, MI

Pastor Princess Dobbins  
New Way Christian Center,  
Farmington Hills, MI

Ardayrell Dottery  
Pentecostal  
Ypsilanti, MI

Pastor Carol Ervin  
Acclaim Ministries International  
Harper Woods, MI

Pastor Gerald Ervin  
Senior Pastor, Acclaim Ministries International  
Harper Woods, MI

Joseph Gillespie  
Burning Bush International Ministries  
COGIC  
Westland, MI

Rev. Dr. Willie Gholston, II  
St. Luke AME  
Grand Rapids, MI

Deon Gray  
COGIC  
Saginaw, MI

Ryan D. Guillen  
Church of God in Christ  
Saginaw, MI

Pastor Julian Jaye Hayes  
iLive Church Detroit  
Detroit, MI

Maria Heard  
Christian  
Detroit, MI

Pastor Ronald P. Hopkins, III  
The Life Center Church  
Detroit, MI

Bishop Alvernis Johnson  
Kingdom Life Ministries  
Saginaw, MI
Lady Shantelle Johnson  
Kingdom Life Ministries  
Saginaw, MI

Rev. Llwewllyn V. Jones  
St. Peters CME  
Flint, MI

Sister Ann Kasparek  
Sisters of Mary Reparatrix  
Social Justice Coordinator for SMR  
Investments in USA  
Allen Park, MI

Rev. Maurice McAfee  
New Bethel Baptist  
Benton Harbor, MI

Lady Angela Moore  
Rivers of Living Water International Ministries  
Ann Arbor, MI

Elder Andrew Moore  
Rivers of Living Water International Ministries  
Ann Arbor, MI

Pastor Timothy Reese  
Amazing Grace Int.  
Detroit, MI

Rev. Cindy Carr Rudolph  
Oak Grove AME  
Detroit, MI

Dr. Michael Scott  
Galilee Baptist  
Kalamazoo, MI

Rev. Horace L. Sheffield  
CEO, Detroit Association of Black Organizations  
Detroit, MI

Bishop Don W. Shelby, Jr.  
Burning Bush International Ministries, Westland, MI

Lady Bonita A. Shelby  
Burning Bush International Ministries, Westland, MI

Apostle Ellis L. Smith  
Jubilee City Church  
Canton, MI

Bishop Hugh Daniel Smith  
Embassy Covenant Church  
Commerce, MI

Lady Letha Smith  
Embassy Covenant Church  
Commerce, MI

Rev. Joelynn T. Stokes  
Pastor of Community Engagement & Development, 4th Episcopal District, AME Church  
Detroit, MI

Dexter Sullivan  
Dexter Sullivan Ministries  
Farmington Hills, MI

Sayyid Jihad H. Taleb  
Executive Manager, Imam Mahdi Association of Marajeya  
Detroit, MI
Rev. Dr. Phillip Washington  
Dozier Memorial CME  
Flint, MI

Rev. Melvin G. Miller  
Progressive Baptist Church  
St. Paul, MN

Pastor Alena Zachery-Ross  
Lane Memorial CME  
Jackson, MI

Rev. Pamela Ngunjiri  
St. James AME Church  
St. Paul, MN

Rev. Ian D. Bethel  
New Beginnings Baptist Tabernacle  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Runney D. Patterson, Sr.  
New Hope Baptist Church  
St. Paul, MN

Rev. John L. Bowen  
Greater Mt. Vernon Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Gaither Robinson  
Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Alma Faith Crawford  
United Church of Christ  
Minneapolis, MN

Dr. B. Charvez Russell  
Pastor, Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Chad Edwards  
Mother St. James AME Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker  
Mount Zion Temple  
St. Paul, MN

Rev. Charles L. Gill  
Pilgrim Baptist Church  
St. Paul, MN

Rev. Herbert Thomas  
Macedonia Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Bishop Richard D. Howell, Jr.  
Shiloh Temple International Ministries  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. James Thomas  
Mount Olivet Baptist Church  
St. Paul, MN

Bishop Divar Kemp, Jr.  
New Mt. Calvary Missionary Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Kendah Ward  
St. James AME Church  
St. Paul, MN

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New Salem Missionary Baptist Church  
Minneapolis, MN
Rev. Irene K. Weaver
Camphor Memorial United Methodist Church
St. Paul, MN

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NuWay Missionary Baptist Church
Minneapolis, MN

Rev. Charles Yates
Greater Mt. Nebo Baptist Church
Minneapolis, MN

Pastor S.V. Adolph
Faith Leader
Gulfport, MS

Rev. Antoine T. Colvin
Missionary Union Baptist Church
Columbus, MS

Rev. John Davis
Faith Missionary Baptist Church
Gulfport, MS

Rev. Eric Dickey
First Missionary Baptist Church
Biloxi, MS

Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray, III
Retired Bishop, The Episcopal Church
Oxford, MS

Pastor Willie Holt
First Missionary Baptist Church
Pass Christian, MS

Dr. Bartholomew Orr
Brown Missionary Baptist Church
Southhaven, MS

Rev. Susan Meadors
Associate Pastor, Northside Baptist Church
Clinton, MS

Dr. Jonathan Phillips, Jr.
United Baptist Church
Pearl, MS

Chris Charles Scott
Churches of Southern Nevada
Las Vegas, Nevada

Fran Chvala, MSW
Faith Leader and Social Worker
Cherry Hill, NJ

Rev. Ritney A. Castine
Pastor, Mt. Pisgah AME Church
Jersey City, NJ

Rev. Phillip A. Gilmore
St. John's Community Baptist Church
Newark, NJ

Rev. Charles E. Wilkins, Sr., Senior Pastor
Grant Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church
Trenton, NJ

Latoya L. Best
TFAM
Brooklyn, NY

Hon. Min. Michael A. Blake
Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church
The Bronx, NY

Pastor Edward-Richard Hinds
67th Precinct Council
Brooklyn, NY
Chaplain Alonzo Jordan  
Pastor, Divine Faith Alliance  
Greenlawn, NY

Dr. Tony Barr  
General Baptist State Convention of NC, Inc  
High Point, NC

Dr. Carl Brinkley  
Mt. Olive Baptist Church  
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Cardes Brown  
New Light Missionary Baptist Church  
Greensboro, NC

Rev. Jerry Christian, Jr.  
Russell Memorial CME Church  
Durham, NC

Rabbi Robin Damsky  
Director, Limitless Judaism  
Efland, NC

Dr. Dietrich Danner  
Faith Leader  
Durham, NC

Senior Pastor Arlee Griffin  
Berean Baptist  
Raleigh, NC

Pastor Deumas Harshaw  
First Baptist Church, Raleigh  
Raleigh, NC

Rev. Robert Hodges  
St. Paul AME Church  
Raleigh, NC

Rabbi Batsheva Meiri  
Reform Jewish  
Asheville, NC

Senior Pastor David Mitchell  
Mt. Gilead Baptist Church  
Durham, NC

Greg Moss  
President, General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Julian Pridgen  
St. Mark AME Zion Church  
Durham, NC

Rev. Dr. Robert Scott  
St. Paul Baptist Church  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Toma Shaw  
United Church of Christ  
Franklinton, NC

Rev. Sheldon Shipman  
Greenville AME Zion Church  
Charlotte, NC

Rabbi Matthew Soffer  
Senior Rabbi, Judea Reform Congregation  
Durham, NC

Pastor Christopher Stackhouse  
Lewis Chapel Baptist Church  
Fayetteville, NC
Dr. J. Vincent Terry  
Mt. Peace Baptist Church  
Raleigh, NC

Bishop Brian Thompson  
Simon Temple AME Zion Church  
Fayetteville, NC

Rev. Dr. Dwayne Walker  
Little Rock AME Zion Church  
Charlotte, NC

Dr. Peter Wherry  
Mayfield Memorial Baptist Church  
Charlotte, NC

Rev. Robert J. Williams, Jr.  
Williams Memorial CME Church  
High Point, NC

Rev. Talitha Arnold  
Senior Minister, The United Church of Santa Fe (United Church of Christ)  
Santa Fe, NM

Dorothy M. Martin  
Roman Catholic Church  
Cleveland, OH

Rev. Ryan Baker-Fones  
Assistant Rector, St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
Eugene, OR

Rev. Jesse W. Brown, Jr.  
Pastor, Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Philadelphia, PA

Rabbi David Teutsch  
Professor Emeritus, Reconstructionist Rabbinical College  
Philadelphia, PA

Rev. Effie McAvoy  
Lead Pastor, Shepherd of the Valley UMC  
Hope, RI

Rev. Gerry McCord  
Deacon, Anglican Church in North America  
Charleston, SC

Rev. Shaneeqa Brokenleg  
The Episcopal Church  
Sioux Falls, SD

Rev. Michael Newago, C.F.C.  
The Episcopal Church  
Yankton, SD

Rev. Scott Walters  
Rector, Calvary Episcopal Church  
Memphis, TN

Minister Sammie Berry  
Senior Minister, Dallas West Church of Christ  
Dallas, TX

Rev. Jessica Cain  
Pastor, Living Word Lutheran Church  
Buda, TX

Dr. Mark Cunningham, Jr.  
Baptist  
Fort Worth, TX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>City, State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Douglas Darnell</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Bruce Datcher</td>
<td>Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<td>David Ellison</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
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<td>Pastor Holomon</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
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<td>Pastor J.D. Hunter</td>
<td>Toliver Chapel Missionary Baptist Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
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<td>Pastor Dr. Edward Justice</td>
<td>Christ- Centered Missionary Baptist Church</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<td>Rev. Dr. Becky Edmiston-Lange</td>
<td>Minister Emeritus, Emerson Unitarian Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. F.D. Lawson</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alvin Lee</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
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<td>Pastor Steve Miller</td>
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<td>Rev. F.S. Moody</td>
<td>Mount Horum Missionary Baptist Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan Morrison</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
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<td>Bishop Kenneth Murray</td>
<td>The R.E.A.C.H. Center</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
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<td>Rabbi Mara Nathan</td>
<td>Senior Rabbi, Temple Beth-El</td>
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<td>Pastor Joshua Okpara</td>
<td>Faith Filled Church</td>
<td>Lewisville, TX</td>
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<td>Raymond Oliver</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Reed</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Fort Worth, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. Markus T. Sallie</td>
<td>Friendship Missionary Baptist Church of Dallas</td>
<td>Dallas, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>G.V. Sharks</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
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Dr. Sandra Sullivan  
Social Action Committee, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Galveston  
Galveston, TX

Dr. Barnard Tate  
Heavenly Vision Baptist Church  
Fort Worth, TX

Pastor Kyev Tatum  
New Mount Rose Missionary Baptist Church  
Fort Worth, TX

Harold Turner  
Baptist  
Fort Worth, TX

Pastor Erik Vance  
Southside Community Church  
Fort Worth, TX

Pastor Ezekiel Walter  
Baptist  
Fort Worth, TX

Darnell Ward  
Baptist  
Fort Worth, TX

K. Woods  
Baptist  
Fort Worth, TX

Pastor Kennedy Young  
East Gate Missionary Baptist Church  
Dallas, TX

Pastor Betty Blue  
Allen-Ebenezer CME  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Commernita Bradby  
Living Word House of Praise  
Milwaukee, WI

Minister Tonni Causey  
Meet the Need Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Donna Childs  
Tabernacle Community Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Martin Childs Jr.  
Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Dr. Kelly Coleman  
SEEK Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Apostle Kelly Coleman  
Still Waters Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Dr. Bashir Easter  
Melanin Minded LLC  
Milwaukee, WI

Carolyn Hawk  
Unitarian Universalist  
Green Bay, WI

Rev. A. Ivy  
New Hope Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI
Director Darryl Jackson  
MPS School Board  
Milwaukee, WI

Rev Carl B. Slocum  
Matters of the Heart Christian Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Joe Jackson Jr.  
Friendship Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Marvin Spence  
Ascension Fellowship Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Rev/Dr. Fred Jones  
Canaan Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Wendale Spivery  
New Life Miracle Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Dr. Fred E. Jones  
General Baptist State Convention  
Milwaukee, WI

Apostle Wendale Spivery  
Jesus International Ministries Foundation  
Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Mary Martha Kannass  
Hephatha Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Teresa Thomas-Boyd  
Matters of the Heart Christian Ministries  
Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Jonathan Eric Kirkegaard  
Pastor, Peace United Church of Christ  
Kewaskum, WI

Pastor Dr. John White  
Greater Galilee Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Walter Lanier  
Progressive Baptist Church  
Milwaukee, WI

Dr. Trinette McCray  
American Baptist National Black Caucus  
Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Curt Rohland  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Chippewa Falls, WI

Dr. Pastor Richard Shaw  
St. Matthew CME  
Milwaukee, WI