

# Union Theological Seminary to Hold Press Conference and Public Event on International Day Against Homophobia

*Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) to Stand with Evangelicals & National Faith Leaders in Support of Pro-Equality LGBTQ Policies*

NEW YORK, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, May 12, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On Wednesday, May 17th, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York (Union) will convene a press conference in Washington D.C. in partnership with the Offices of Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Chris Coons (D-DE). Senator Coons and a diverse coalition of Evangelical and other faith leaders will join Union to denounce the rise in anti-LGBTQ policies and promote a pro-equality policy agenda for the Trump Administration and Congress. Following the press conference, there will be a facilitated discussion that will further outline how the wider faith community can constructively support LGBTQ people.



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The back-to-back events coincide with International Day Against Homophobia and will raise awareness around the recent spate of national policies aimed specifically at rolling back rights for LGBTQ employees, LGBTQ seniors, and the transgender community. In addition, press conference speakers will highlight why their support of the LGBTQ community is not an act of dissent or defiance but a clear reflection of their faiths and the scriptures that inform them.

“The scriptures tell us to welcome all God’s children into the fold of God’s care, just as the mother hen tends to her brood,” shared Rev. Frederick A. Davie, Executive Vice President at Union. “Officials from the US Justice Department, the state of Texas and other states and localities around the country must stop cherry picking verses from sacred texts and blaspheming the name of Christ with hateful faith-based public policies aimed at dehumanizing the LGBTQ community, immigrants, Muslims, women and other vulnerable people.”

A powerful voice in the emerging ‘religious left’ movement, Union has actively rallied Evangelical and other religious leaders from around the country to express the faith community’s mounting support for LGBTQ rights and equality, including: Kathy Baldock, Board of Directors, The Reformation Project (NV); Rev. Amy Butler, Senior Minister, The Riverside Church (NY); Robert and Susan Cottrell, Founders, FreedHearts (TX); Josh Dickson, Co-Founder and Board Member, Evangelicals for Marriage Equality (CO); Michael Kimpan, Founder, (un)Common Good Collective (IL); Doug Pagitt, Organizer, Convergence (MN); Rev. Adam Phillips, Pastor, Christ Church Portland (OR); Brandan Robertson, Founder and Executive Director, NOMAD Partnerships (CO); and Rod Snyder, Board

Member, Evangelicals for Marriage Equality (WV).\*

“There’s nothing more personal than what an individual believes or whom they love,” said Senator Chris Coons. “We all share in the universal call to honor that individual, regardless of religious preference or sexual orientation. My faith has taught me that we have a moral obligation to stand up for our common humanity. All Americans deserve nothing less than full equality under the law and freedom from discrimination. I’m proud to join this impressive list of organizations and advocates to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ community.”

Despite the recent legislation in Texas and North Carolina, support for LGBTQ rights continues to grow among religious Americans—particularly Christians. “As the culture wars of the past continue to fade, many faithful Americans – even traditionally conservative Christians – are increasingly seeing LGBTQ equality as integral to their religious values and their calling to love their neighbors as they do themselves,” said Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President of the Faculty and Johnston Family Professor for Religion and Democracy at Union. Indeed, support for marriage equality among White Evangelicals has more than doubled since 2001, with Black Protestant support increasing by close to one-third during that time. And, according to the Pew Research Center, 58% of Catholics and 64% of White Mainline Protestants support marriage equality today, compared to 40% and 38% in 2001, respectively.

Moving forward, and in keeping with its 181-year-old mission, Union will continue to work with religious voices across the country to support the full inclusion and equality for the LGBTQ community.

“Faith communities must continue to support and galvanize one another in the fight for equality,” said Rev. Dr. Derrick Harkins, Senior Vice President for Innovation in Public Programs at Union. “We must fully embrace our duty to be a prophetic voice as we work together for the full human dignity of all God’s children.”

The May 17th press conference is co-sponsored by the National LGBTQ Task Force, the Human Rights Campaign, SAGE, Convergence, Incarnation Ministries, Cathedral of Hope United Church of Christ, the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, the Tyler Clementi Foundation, FreedHearts, Nomad Partnerships, Auburn Seminary, the Center for African American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice at Columbia University, the Office of Senator Chris Coons (D-DE) and the Office of Senator Charles E. Schumer (D-NY).

Speakers at the press conference include Senator Chris Coons (D-DE); Rev. Dr. Serene Jones, President of the Faculty and Johnston Family Professor for Religion and Democracy; Rev. Fred Davie, Executive Vice President, Union Theological Seminary; Rev. Dr. Derrick Harkins, Senior Vice President for Innovation in Public Programs, Union Theological Seminary; Jane Clementi, Co-Founder, The Tyler Clementi Foundation; Rev. Naomi Leapheart, Faith Work Director, National LGBTQ Task Force; Susan Cottrell, Co-Founder, FreedHearts; Doug Pagitt, Pastor of Solomon’s Porch and Organizer, Convergence; and Michael Hidalgo, Pastor, Denver Community Church.\*

\* lists in formation

#### About Union Theological Seminary

Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York is a seminary and graduate school of theology established in 1836 by founders “deeply impressed by the claims of the world upon the church.” Union prepares women and men for committed lives of service to the church, academy, and society. A Union education develops practices of mind and body that foster intellectual and academic excellence, social justice, and compassionate wisdom. Grounded in the Christian tradition and responsive to the

needs of God's creation, Union's graduates make a difference wherever they serve.

Union believes that a new interreligious spirituality of radical openness and love is the world's best hope for peace, justice, and the care of God's creation. Empowered by groundbreaking inquiry aligned with practical realism and a bias for action, Union is charting a profound new course for enduring social change. Our graduates make a difference wherever they serve, practicing their vocations with courage and perseverance, and speaking clearly and acting boldly on behalf of social justice in all of its forms.

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