

February 15, 2022

Re: Faith Leaders Call for Legislators to Resist Punitive Policies

To the members of the Illinois Legislature,

It is our prayer that this letter finds you well. As faith leaders representing numerous denominations across the state, we write with concern about calls for the Illinois legislature to double down on the failed policies of punishment that brought us mass incarceration. Last year, you advanced righteous reforms with the passage of progressive criminal justice legislation. Despite regressive backlash from some law enforcement and legislators, you have done a great thing by championing justice reform and ought not counteract that progress with policies that expand incarceration.

As the state continues to implement provisions of recent reforms, we know that some voices are seeking to imperil the efficacy of this work and drag us back towards the punitive policies that have failed our communities for decades. On behalf of faith communities throughout Illinois, we urge you to resist calls for regressive, punitive legislation. Rather than taking us backward, we are calling on you to boldly take us further down the road to justice by continuing the work that was spurred and reignited by the nationwide protests in defense of Black lives.

The heart of criminal justice and pretrial reform speaks to the heart of our deeply held beliefs as people of faith: the belief that each person's life is sacred, and everyone should be treated justly and fairly in the systems we allow to govern us. Laws that punish people who are legally presumed innocent and awaiting trial, or that do not protect people from abuse by a legal system with a historical penchant for racial discrimination and inequity, violate those principles. Criminal justice reform honors the truth that no human being is beyond redemption or unworthy of restoration. By passing laws that focus less on punishment and more on preventing and repairing harm in our communities, you help lead us toward a safe, thriving, beloved community in Illinois.

As faith leaders, we commit to move in solidarity with you as you continue to fight for criminal justice reforms that are restorative, redemptive, and that challenge what is comfortable for many in order to advance what is fair for all.

May God bless you and keep you,

Signed:

Aryeh Bernstein, Avodah, National Jewish
Educator
Cantor David Goldstein, North Shore
Congregation Israel

Cantor Michelle Drucker, Friedman
Emanuel Congregation
Fr. K. Edward Copeland, Pastor, New Zion
Baptist Church

Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM, St. Bendice the Black Friary
Fr. Carroll Mizicko, St. Augustine of Hippo Catholic Church
Fr. Philip Maikkula, St. Makarios the Great Orthodox Mission
Imam Abdul Malik Mujahid, Justice For All
Imam Bader Hafeez, Masjid Dawah
Imam Tariq I. El-Amin, Masjid Al-Taqwa
Jason Dewey, Pastor, The Sign of the Dove Church, Waukegan
Jia Johnson, Project Manager, McCormick Theological Seminary
Kai Lawrence, Pastor, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Ken Webster, President, St. Paul UCC, Pekin, Ill. Congregation
Kevin J McLemore, Pastor, Epiphany United Church of Christ
Kristan Veenbaas, Co-Director of Older Adult Ministries, Community Presbyterian Church Clarendon Hills
Lindsey Ann Long Joyce, Pastor, United Church of Rogers Park and Grace Church of Logan Square
Luther Mason, Pastor, SOUL
Martha Daniels, Pastor, Holy Covenant MCV
Marvin E. Wickware, Jr., Assistant Professor of Church and Society and Ethics, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Matthew Krings, Pastor, Berry United Methodist Church
Minister Attorney M. Michelle Day, Nehemiah Trinity Rising
Minister Kim Marie Grice, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ
Minister Robert Bushey, Central Christian Church (Bourbonnais, IL)
Misbahudeen Ahmed Rufai, Lamp of Faith Institute

Omar A Karim, Executive Director, Ephraim Bahar Cultural Center
Pastor Adam Dowd, Lord of Life Lutheran Church Darien
Pastor Elle Dowd, South Loop Campus Ministry
Pastor Marissa Drake, Zion Temple, O'Fallon IL
Pastor Patrick Fish, St Marks Lutheran Church
Rabbi Amy L. Memis-Foler, Beth Emet The Free Synagogue, Evanston
Rabbi Brant Rosen, Tzedek Chicago
Rabbi Daniel Kirzane, Oak Park Temple
Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg, Scholar in Residence, National Council of Jewish Women
Rabbi Dr. Rachel S. Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary
Rabbi Isaac Serotta, Makom Solel Lakeside
Rabbi Jason Fenster, Congregation BJBE
Rabbi Jessica Wainer, Congregation Etz Chaim
Rabbi Lisa Sari Bellows, Senior Rabbi Congregation Beth Am
Rabbi Rachel Kaplan Marks, Temple Beth Israel
Rabbi Rebecca L. Dubowe, Moses Montefiore Congregation
Rabbi Shoshanah Conover, Temple Sholom of Chicago
Rev. Alexander E. Sharp, Clergy for A New Drug Policy
Rev. Alice Harper-Jones, Associate Pastor, Kenwood United Church of Christ
Rev. Alka Lyall, Broadway United Methodist Church
Rev. Allen Harden, Beverly Unitarian Church
Rev. Amity Carrubba, Grace Episcopal Church
Rev. Angela Fleming, Illinois Great Rivers West Side Parish

Rev. Beth Freese Dammers, Community
Presbyterian Church of Clarendon
Hills

Rev. Beverly Wilkes-Null, Center for Faith
and Spirituality

Rev. Catherine R Watkins, Chicago
Metropolitan Assn, UCC

Rev. Charing Wei-Jen Chen, Minister of
Media, United Church of Hyde Park

Rev. Charles Burton, Unity Fellowship Alton

Rev. Charles Straight, Faith United
Methodist Church

Rev. Colleen Vahey, Minister, Third
Unitarian Church

Rev. Craig T. Robinson, Jr., St. James
African Methodist Episcopal Church

Rev. Darice Wright, Life Church in Chicago
Heights

Rev. Darrick Jackson, Affiliated Community
Minister of Second Unitarian Church
of Chicago

Rev. Dawn Cooley, Unity Temple Unitarian
Universalist Congregation

Rev. Dee Evans, Abraham Lincoln Unitarian
Universalist

Rev. Derek Elmi-Buursma, Pastor, Loop
Church Chicago

Rev. Donald Cameron, First Unitarian
Church of Chicago

Rev. Dr. Benjamin Squires, Pastor, Bethel
Lutheran Church

Rev. Dr. Beth Brown, Lincoln Park
Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Christina Berry, First Presbyterian
Church

Rev. Dr. Ebony D. Only, First Baptist Church
of University Park

Rev. Dr. Mark Barclay, Trinity United Church
of Christ

Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks, San Lucas
UCC

Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson, The Unitarian
Universalist Church, Rockford

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III Senior Pastor, Trinity
United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Timothy S. Stevens, Interim Senior
Minister, First Congregational church
of Evanston (UCC)

Rev. Elizabeth A. Harding, AM, MDiv, LCSW
Affiliated Community Minister at
Second Unitarian Church of Chicago

Rev. Elizabeth Jones St. Luke's Christian
Community Church (UCC)

Rev. Emily Gage, Unity Temple Unitarian
Universalist Congregation , Minister
of Faith Development

Rev. Erik Christensen, Lutheran School of
Theology at Chicago

Rev. Frank Coens, Franciscan Friars of
East St. Louis

Rev. Grant Swanson, Urban Village Church,
Chicago

Rev. Harriet Cavanah Dart, Pilgrim
Congregational UCC

Rev. Hilary Krivchenia, Countryside Church
Unitarian Universalist

Rev. Jacob Gawlik, St. John's Lutheran
Church - Sterling

Rev. Jaime L. Fluker, SOUL

Rev. Jason Coulter, Ravenswood UCC

Rev. Jason Lydon, Second Unitarian Church
of Chicago

Rev. Jeffrey Phillips, United Church of Christ

Rev. Jennifer Warren Hauser, First United
Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jesse Knox III, Congregational Church
of the Good Shepherd

Rev. John Bell Wesley, United Methodist
Church

Rev. John Dillon, Ridgefield-Crystal Lake
Presbyterian Church

Rev. Jon Gilbert Martinez, Christ Church
UCC - Des Plaines

Rev. Josh Ebener, Pastor, St Andrew
Lutheran Church, West Chicago IL

Rev. Joyce Palmer, Unitarian Universalist
Church Rockford

Rev. Julian DeShazier, University Church
Rev. Julie Taylor, Meadville Lombard
Theological School
Rev. Karen Mooney, Exec. Co-Director
UUANI Unitarian Universalist
Advocacy Network of IL (UUANI)
Rev. Lauren Patrus-Betzel, Willow Creek
Presbyterian Church
Rev. Lawrence R Dowling, St. Agatha
Catholic Church
Rev. Linda S. Slabon, Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of DeKalb, IL. Minister
Emerita.
Rev. Lindsey Hammond, Policy Director,
Restore Justice
Rev. Linny Hartzell, St. Andrew United
Methodist Church
Rev. Lisa Telomen, Associate Pastor, United
Methodist Church of Geneva
Rev. Lisa Noel Zook, Chicago Theological
Seminary
Rev. Luis F. Reyes, First United Methodist
Church of Lombard
Rev. Marcus M. Guerra Jr., Ezekiel's Heart
Ministry,
Rev. Mark Winters, First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Rev. Michael B. Crosby, Pastor, First
Mennonite Church of
Champaign-Urbana
Rev. Michael D. Jones, St. John United
Church of Christ
Rev. Michael Russell, Metropolitan Chicago
Synod of the ELCA
Rev. Nicolette Marie Penaranda,
Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America
Rev. Norma Patterson Good Shepherd of
Faith United Church of Christ
Rev. Pamela Rumancik, Unitarian Church of
Hinsdale
Rev. Paula Cripps-Vallejo, Humboldt Park
UMC

Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger,
Northern IL Conference of the
United Methodist Church
Rev. Randall K. Blakey, LaSalle Street
Church
Rev. Rebecca Gant, Unitarian Universalist
Church of Bloomington-Normal
Rev. Richard Lanford Pastor, St. Peter's
United Church of Christ
Rev. Ryan Wallace, First Presbyterian
Church of Libertyville
Rev. Sally Iberg, United Church of Christ
Rev. Samuel Paul Jr, Founder/CEO of
Praise House Anti-Racism Institute,
Inc.
Rev. Scott Aaseng, Unitarian Universalist
Advocacy Network of IL
Rev. Scott Hodge, The Orchard Community
Rev. Scot Hull, Unitarian Universalist
Society of Geneva, IL
Rev. Sem. Liz Kuster, SOUL
Rev. Sem. Melissa Dailey, SOUL
Rev. Stephanie E. Anthony, Fox Valley
Presbyterian Church
Rev. Stephen Loch Bowie, Third
Presbyterian Church of Rockford, IL
Rev. Susan Frances, Assistant Minister,
Unitarian Church of Evanston
Rev. Susan Martersteck, Retired Hospice
Chaplain
Rev. Thomas Robert Gaulke, Gethsemane
Lutheran Church of Cicero
Rev. Timothy S. Stevens, First
Congregational Church of Evanston
(UCC)
Rev. Troy Underwood, Covenant United
Church of Christ
Rev. Veronica M Johnson, Hyde Park Union
Church
Rev. Vilius Rudra Dundzila, Peoples Church
of Chicago (UUA/UCC)
Rev. Violet Johnicker, Brooke Road United
Methodist Church

Rev. William C. Sasso, Minister Emeritus,
Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship
Sally Scheib, Associate Pastor, Bethel
United Church of Christ
Seamus Enright, Pastor, Reynolds United
Methodist Church
Sem. Olivia Riddle, SOUL
Seth M. Limmer, Senior Rabbi, Chicago
Sinai Congregation
Shawna M Bowman, Friendship
Presbyterian Church
The Rev. Allison Bengfort, Pastor, St. John's
Lutheran Church of Wilmette, IL
The Rev. Dr. Eric Lemonholm, Lutheran
Church of the Good Shepherd
The Rev. Makayla Dahleen, St. Paul
Lutheran Church
Waltrina Middleton, Executive Director,
Community Renewal Society