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RELIGIOUS LEADERS FROM WISCONSIN, MICHIGAN U.P. ISSUE STATEMENT ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

“Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias” Executive Order violates religious freedom, corrupts separation of Church and State, asserts power that belongs to the Church

MADISON, WI – Today, the Wisconsin Council of Churches released a statement, *“For Religious Liberty and Against Christian Nationalism,”* signed by 27 Christian leaders in Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in response to the Trump Administration’s “Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias” Executive Order that aligns the government with Christian Nationalism, a dangerous ideology that demands a particular brand of Christianity be privileged by the state. In the statement, the authors write, “Christian Nationalism...distorts the Gospel and turns Jesus and Christianity into a weapon for power and division instead of a movement toward love and justice.”

“This Executive Order only protects the rights of certain Christians,” said the Rev. Felix Malpica, Bishop of the La Crosse Area Synod ELCA. In giving itself the mandate to define ‘anti-Christian,’ the government wrongfully asserts the power to define what is Christian. Many of the Council’s member traditions arose from deep concerns about the influence of the state over the church and conscientious reflection about religious freedom. These historical threads and continuing values remind members of the importance of protecting the rights of all. Christian unity, which is the basis of the ecumenical movement, does not demand uniformity. It respects the religious freedom of those who believe differently and enters into dialogue toward better understanding.

For Religious Liberty and Against Christian Nationalism originated with the six bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America serving synods – regional church bodies – in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Wisconsin Council of Churches Executive Director Rev. Kerri Parker said, “This statement came from a grassroots process in which members developed their own responses to the rising tide of Christian Nationalism and invited their colleagues to join them. We are always glad to facilitate the movement of religious leaders to foster religious freedom and work together for the common good.”

The Statement can be read in full on the Wisconsin Council of Churches website at wichurches.org. Other Christian leaders can now add their names as co-signers on the same website.

About the Wisconsin Council of Churches

The Wisconsin Council of Churches (WCC) is a network of Christian churches and faith-based organizations committed to working together across our many differences to promote our common good. We connect 23 Christian traditions, which have within them about 2000 congregations and over one million church members. Exercising holy imagination, we help one another make courageous choices that lead toward peacemaking, social and economic justice for Wisconsin’s most vulnerable residents, the vitality of the church, and the well-being of our neighbors.