

# Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice: Submits Amicus Brief in support of 'Safer at Home'

Posted on Thursday, Apr 30, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

On April 29, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice filed an amicus brief with the Wisconsin Supreme Court in support of the governor's Safer at Home order and in opposition to the suit filed by the Republican leadership seeking to block that order. [http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler\\_docs/files/042920wscwfvjbrief.pdf?fbclid=IwAR02N0rMBUiTaC4t9o9AgLrGjq9PqnL\\_t1qNzDsmuDxistNjM1srIH\\_fIIM](http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/042920wscwfvjbrief.pdf?fbclid=IwAR02N0rMBUiTaC4t9o9AgLrGjq9PqnL_t1qNzDsmuDxistNjM1srIH_fIIM)

The brief included letters from twenty-nine clergy and faith leaders—Protestants, Catholics, Quakers, Jews, and Buddhists—all refuting the suit's contention that the Safer at Home order has led to "decreased access to community and religious support." To the contrary, the letters all demonstrated the strength, resiliency, and creativity of these faith communities in quickly moving their worship, pastoral care, religious instruction, and programming online. The statements highlighted how moving online made worship and other activities more rather than less accessible to those who would otherwise have been unable to participate due to age, disability, or geographic distance.

In her letter, Reverend Kerri Parker, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, stressed that Christian faith does not require big face-to-face meetings to endure. The Church, she emphasized, "does not need to gather in buildings in large numbers to be the church." For centuries, Christians "gathered in small numbers in homes, doing ministry as individuals and in small groups. Churches have had many worship, teaching, and ministry patterns over two thousand years of history; the church is profoundly adaptable. There is no reason we cannot continue dispersed practices for some time, for the good of all."

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, Executive Director of Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, wrote how conducting services virtually rather than physically comports with fundamental Jewish values; in the current circumstances, she explained, preserving life takes precedence over congregational worship. “For Jews, *pikuach nefesh*—saving a life—is paramount above all other commandments. Social distancing has been shown in past pandemics to slow the spread of disease, and it seems to be doing the same now. The Safer at Home order is effective, and necessary, to keep us all safe.”

The writers acknowledged the terrible economic fallout resulting from the first Stay at Home order while also noting the toll that the disease has imposed, particularly on exceedingly vulnerable populations. Reviewing data indicating that African Americans are being tested less but dying more than many other groups, Rev. Dr. Marcus Allen, Pastor of Madison’s historic Mt. Zion Baptist Church, expressed astonishment that “people are now pleading to open the state back up.” He closed his church on March 14, nearly two weeks before the governor’s first order. Despite the resulting challenges, Mt. Zion is engaging “so many more people through our online efforts” and continuing “our mission.”

Recognizing that everyone looks forward to the day when congregants can once more embrace each other in their houses of worship, the clergy and faith leaders supporting the brief nevertheless affirmed the continuing vibrancy of their religious communities as they pray together—safely apart.

## **Organizations**

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

Wisconsin Council of Churches

Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin

**Clergy and faith leaders:** (affiliations for identification purposes only)

Rev. Dr. Marcus Allen

Mt. Zion Baptist Church

Madison, WI

Rev. Curt Anderson

United Church of Christ, retired

Rev. Scott D. Anderson

Pastor, Westminster Presbyterian Church

Madison, WI

Bishop James Arends

LaCrosse Area Synod

ELCA

The Rev. Robert W. Ater

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Milwaukee, WI

Pastor Katie Baardseth

Madison, WI

Reverend Joseph B. Baring, Jr.

Pastor/ ST. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church

Madison, WI

Rev. Jonathan W. Barker

Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church ELCA

Kenosha, WI

Rabbi Renée Bauer

Director of Chaplaincy and Outreach

Jewish Social Services of Madison

Rev. Ann Beaty

Associate Minister

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

Rev. Kevin Beebe

Spirit Alive! Church

Kenosha, WI

The Rev. Peter Beeson

Lead Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church

Madison, WI

Rabbi Marc E. Berkson

Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Lindsey Beukelman

Pastor

All Peoples Church

Milwaukee, WI

Rabbi Jonathan Biatch

Temple Beth El

Madison, WI

Pastor John Bischoff

United Lutheran Church

Racine, WI

Rev. Nicole Blanks

Pastor of Delafield Presbyterian Church P.C.(U.S.A.)

Delafield

Rev. Dr. Deborah A. Block

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Heidi Borkenhagen

Grace Lutheran Church

Grafton, WI

Ruling Elder Bob Boswell

Stated Clerk

Winnebago Presbytery

The Rev'd Dr. Christian D. Boyd, Stated Clerk,

The Presbytery of Milwaukee of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Carin Bringelson

Intern Minister

First Unitarian Society

Madison, WI

Omega S. Burckhardt

Unitarian Universalist Candidate for Ministry

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Martha Butzier

Interim Minister

Lake Edge Lutheran Church

Madison, WI

Reverend Scott Carlson

District Superintendent

South West District, Wisconsin Annual Conference

Sun Prairie, WI

Rev. Amanda Christensen

Good Shepherd Trinity Church

PCUSA / ELCA

Milwaukee, WI

Adam Clausen, Senior Leader

Life Center Madison

Madison, WI

Dr. Charles Cohen

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice board member

Rabbi David Cohen

Congregation Sinai

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Marty Coons, HR

Member of The Presbytery of Milwaukee

Pastor Marianne Cotter

First United Methodist Church

Baraboo, WI

Pastor Cindy Crane

Lutheran Office for Public Policy in Wisconsin Director

Rev. Kelly J. Crocker

First Unitarian Society

Madison, WI

Pastor Laura Crow

Interim Senior Pastor

Orchard Ridge UCC

Madison, WI

The Rev Dr. Laurie Brubaker Davis

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Marshfield WI

Rev. Michelle Townsend de Lopez

Cross Ev. Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Dr. Teresa Dulyea-Parker

Regional Minister Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Illinois/Wisconsin

Rev. Joseph W. Ellwanger

Retired Minister

Hephatha Lutheran Church

Milwaukee, WI

Bishop Paul Erickson

Greater Milwaukee Synod

ELCA

The Rev. Josh Evans

Pastor, Unity Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Brookfield, WI

Rev. Alissa Kretzmann Farrar

Pastor, Lake Park Lutheran Church

Milwaukee, WI

Rabbi Dena A. Feingold

Beth Hillel Temple

Kenosha, WI

Bishop Katherine Finegan

Northern Great Lakes Synod

ELCA

The Rev. Don Fleischman

Rector

St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Madison, WI

Rev. Dr. Jerry L. Folk

ELCA retired

Madison, WI

Rabbi Betsy Forester

Beth Israel Center

Madison, WI

Rev. Selena Fox

Senior Minister & Chaplaincy Endorser

Circle Sanctuary

Barneveld, Wisconsin

Rev. Ann Gibbs

Associate for Ministry Vitality

Presbytery of Milwaukee

The Rev. Dr. Michael J Goodwin

Pastor

Memorial Presbyterian Church

Appleton WI

Rev. Kris Gorton

Memorial United Church of Christ

Fitchburg, WI

Kat Griffith

Winnebago Worship Group (Quakers)

Reirin Gumbel

Resident Priest

Milwaukee Zen Center

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter

Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac

Rev. Karen Hagen

Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church

Milwaukee, WI

Rev. Timothy Hansen

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Sun Prairie, WI

The Rev. Dr. Paula Harris

St John ELCA

Reedsburg, WI

The Rev. Jack Harrison

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Fond du Lac WI

Rev. Phil Haslanger

United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

Rev. Eldonna Hazen

Senior Minister

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

The Rev. Carol J. Hegland

ELCA

Ravenna A. Helson

Presiding Clerk

Milwaukee Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Rev. John A. Holm

Interim/Transition Pastor

Advent Lutheran Church, ELCA

Cedarburg, WI

The Rev. Dr. Andrew E. Holmes

Pastor, Jerusalem Presbyterian Church

Wales, WI

Pastor Maren Hooper, ELCA,

St. Stephen the Martyr Lutheran Church

Greendale, WI

Rev. James Iliff

Middleton, WI

United Church of Christ

Rev. Sonja L. Ingebritsen

Community of Hope United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

Pastor Elizabeth Jaeger

St. Luke ELCA

Sheboygan Falls, WI

Pastor Greg Jewison

Bethany United Methodist Church

Madison, Wisconsin

Khyati Penney Johns

Priest at Still Point Zen Center

Random Lake, WI

The Rev. Kimbrel Johnson

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Neenah WI

Rev. Dr. Bruce Jones

Interim Pastor, PCUSA

Hee Soo Jung, Bishop

Wisconsin Conference United Methodist Church

Pastor Mary Martha Kannass

Hephatha Lutheran Church

Milwaukee, WI

Barbara Kehrein

Madison, WI

Revs. David and Barbara Kell

Retired United Methodist Clergy

Rev. Robert Koepcke

United Church of Christ

Rev. David Kraemer

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Waukesha, WI

Rev. Tina S. Lang

Executive Associate Pastor

First United Methodist Church

Madison, WI

Rev. Gregory Lewis

Pastor

St. Gabriel Church of God in Christ

President, Souls to the Polls

Milwaukee, WI

The Rev. Cynthia Little

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Sheboygan, WI

Rev. Erica Liu

Pastor

Pres House

Madison, WI

The Rev. Melodie Long

Transitional Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Oshkosh, WI

Sr. Marie Lucek, OP

Madison, WI

The Rev. Suzelle Lynch, Minister

Unitarian Universalist Church West

Brookfield, WI

Dr. Laiman Mai

Meditation teacher

Chinese Buddhist students group teacher

Madison, WI

Bishop Gerald Mansholt

East Central Synod of Wisconsin

ELCA

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

Executive Director

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

The Rev. Staci Marrese-Wheeler

Lakeview & Glenwood Moravian Congregations

Madison, WI

Deborah Martin

Cantor/Spiritual Leader

Congregation Emanu-El of Waukesha

Waukesha, Wisconsin

The Rev. Dan McCurdy

Moderator

Winnebago Presbytery

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Weyauwega WI

The Rev. Ruth A. "Rose" McCurdy

Pastor

First Presbyterian Church

Winneconne, WI

Maureen McDonnell, O.P.

Catholic Dominican Sister of Sinsinawa

The Rt. Rev. Steven Andrew Miller Bishop

The Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee

Milwaukee, WI

The Rev. Sarah Moore-Nokes

General Presbyter

Winnebago Presbytery

Rev. Dr. Michael Willett Newheart

Transitional Minister

First Baptist Church

Madison WI

Cantor Jacob Niemi

Temple Beth El

Madison, WI

Rev. Diane M. Olson,

Milwaukee, WI

ELCA

Rev. Jennifer L. Olson

ELCA

Rev. Dr. Marie Onwubuariri

Regional Executive Minister

American Baptist Churches of WI

Reverend Gail O'Neal

United Church of Christ

Rev. Kerri Parker

Executive Director

Wisconsin Council of Churches

Rev. Beth A. Patton

Presbytery of Milwaukee

PC (USA)

Rev. Kenneth L. Pennings

Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

Pastor Kevan Penvose

Unity Lutheran Church

Milwaukee

Rev. Dr. Rich Pleva

Zwingli United Church of Christ

Paoli, WI

The Rev. Dr. James M. Rand

Presbytery of Milwaukee, Honorably Retired

Rev. Ellen Rasmussen

Brown Deer United Methodist Church

Rev. Franz Rigert

Conference Minister

WI Conference United Church of Christ

Interim Bishop Peter Rogness

South-Central Synod of Wisconsin

ELCA

Rev. Blake Rohrer

Madison, WI

Rev. Chaz Ruark

Executive Presbyter

John Knox Presbytery

Rev. Tanya Sadagopan

Minister

First Congregational UCC

Janesville, WI

Dr. Ibrahim Saeed

Imam

Islamic Center of Madison

The Rev Dr Matthew L Sauer

Pastor

Manitowoc Cooperative Ministry

PCUSA/UCC

Manitowoc, Wisconsin

Rev. Leslie M. Schenk

Pastor

Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ

Madison, WI

Rev. Karla Schmidt

Campus Minister

The Crossing Campus Ministry

Madison, WI