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Members include Religious Leaders from the:

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Catholic Theological Union

Chicago Theological Seminary

Lutheran School of Theology

McCormick Theological Seminary

Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Chicago Center for Cultural Connections

Community Renewal Society



September 7, 2010

CRLMC STATEMENT ON THE CURRENT CHALLENGE TO THE WELL BEING OF OUR NATION

GROUND ZERO AND BEYOND

We are deeply concerned about what is happening in the life of our nation.

Conflict centered on the establishment of an Islamic Community Center and Mosque in close proximity to Ground Zero in New York City has spread across the nation. While in many instances, the complex and difficult issues that have emerged are being debated in constructive and respectful ways, opposition to the building of the Islamic Center has revealed levels of hostility and prejudice that threaten the very ground of our living together as Americans and people of religious faith and commitment.

We decry such offensive acts as the invitation to join in a “Burn the Koran Day” on September 11, the arson fire in Murfreesboro, Tennessee that destroyed a mosque under construction, the stabbing of a Muslim Taxi driver in New York, and the many instances in which this controversy has revealed a deep vein of hostility toward Muslim Americans and ignorance of the faith and values of the Islamic faith.

These acts extend to many others in our communities. Deeply troubled are the Greek Orthodox who as of this date have been denied, seemingly without legitimate cause, the right to rebuild their sanctuary on the site which the church owns, their historic St. Nicholas Church, the only religious structure destroyed in the attacks of September 11, 2001.

Most disturbing are those leaders who, for reasons of religious prejudice, misplaced patriot fervor, or political advantage seek to arouse the wider public in divisive and dishonest ways. Rather than appealing to the core

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teachings of their religious traditions, or to the highest ideals of the patriot, or the best principles of the political processes of democracy, these antagonists are reflecting the least desirable dimensions of our religious and civic life.

We, therefore, plead with civic and religious leaders and with our fellow citizens across the nation, to stand back from the heated rhetoric and the inflamed passions of the moment and to reflect, individually and together, on the kind of nation we have been at our best and the kind of nation we want to be for the rest of the world, and for our children and grandchildren. We pray that, upon deeper reflection, we all will see the events in New York City and other parts of the country not as an opportunity to exploit division but a chance to foster our unity, our distinctively American *E pluribus unum* - out of many, one.

And finally, we join with religious leaders of many faiths in encouraging the faithful of all religious traditions and of none to observe the weekend of September 10 - 12 as Days of Prayer. In whatever way is in keeping with your religious tradition, pray that the hearts broken on that terror-filled day may be comforted, that distrust of one another, hostility toward faiths other than our own, and cruelty under the guise of devotion may have no place in our nation or our lives.

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About the Council of Religious Leaders

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC) was founded 25 years ago, at a time when racial tensions and social injustices were on the rise, and a group of religious leaders in Chicago recognized the growing need to understand cultural and religious differences and learn how to work together. To the best of our knowledge, CRLMC is unique as a continuing inter-religious organization in the nation and likely in the world. By uniting the churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other religious assemblies, CRLMC seeks to present a unified vision and voice on issues affecting the common good of the people of Chicago.

For Further Information Contact Co-Directors: Rev. Paul Rutgers 312-431-3236; Rev. Stanley Davis 312-504-3582. Website: www.crlmc.org

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