**Statement of Support for Muslims in the Lehigh Valley**

**by Community Religious Leaders**

Troubled that anti-Muslim rhetoric is spreading in the media and that attitudes of hostility toward Islam are on the increase in the United States, we affirm the right of Muslims to practice their religion freely and without fear or intimidation. We call on all citizens who believe in religious liberty to stand in solidarity with our Muslim neighbors that they might be assured of support from the larger inter-faith community of which they are so vital a part. Accordingly, we, the undersigned, who are leaders in the religious community of the Lehigh Valley, offer our names in support of the following affirmations:

1. That Muslims who live in the Lehigh Valley community as neighbors and friends have a right to live free from fear and intimidation;

2. That the First Amendment stands as the foundation upon which has been built the world’s most religiously diverse nation, and that infringing the religious liberty of one group diminishes the rights of all;

3. That respecting the right of all people to exercise religious belief and practice in a context of peaceful co-existence is not only a legal but a moral imperative, and that hate-filled speech and actions that threaten the personal safety or the dignity of others constitute a form of violence, which has no place in an open, free and religiously pluralistic society;

4. That our religious traditions have themselves endorsed the importance of showing hospitality to the newcomer and that all people in new settings are in need of welcome, hospitality, friendship and peace;

5. That Muslims, who have themselves been the subjects of terrorist attacks throughout the world, deserve the protections of law and the good will that citizens in the United States afford to each other.

As religious leaders we affirm the need for dialogue among people of diverse religious traditions, and we urge members of our community, whether or not they are religious, to study and learn about Islam and other religions. We affirm the values that we cherish as Americans: free inquiry, respectful encounter with others, tolerance of diverse viewpoints and peaceful co-existence among a wide array of religious bodies, groups and organizations. We celebrate the diversity of our religious community and the good will of citizens in the Lehigh Valley.

**The Statement was signed by the following:**

**Rev. Dr. Lloyd Steffen**

University Chaplain, Lehigh University

**Rev. Dr. Larry Pickens**

Ecumenical Director, Lehigh Conference of Churches

**Most Rev. John O. Barres**

Bishop of Allentown Diocese, Roman Catholic Church

**Monsignor John S. Mraz**

Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown,

Director, Office for Ecumenism & Inter-religious Dialogue

**Rev. Alan C. Miller**

Conference Minister

Penn Northeast Conference

United Church of Christ

**Bishop Peggy A. Johnson**

The United Methodist Church,

Eastern Pennsylvania Conference

**Eastern District Executive Board of the Moravian Church**

Bethlehem

**Bishop Hopeton Clennon**

Central Moravian Church

**Bishop Samuel Zeiser**

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod of

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

**The Rt. Rev. Sean W. Rowe**

Bishop of the Diocese of Bethlehem

The Episcopal Church

**Rev. Canon Maria W. E. Tjelveit**

Rector, Episcopal Church of the Mediator

(Ecumenical Representative)

**Rev. Susan Bennetch**

Presbyterian Church (USA) Moderator

Lehigh Presbytery

**Karen Matthias-Long**

Associate of the Bishop for Youth and Family

Ministry and Curator of Synodical Resources,

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

**Father Anthony Sabbagh**

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

**Rev. Fr. Nicholas Palis**

Dean, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

**Rev. Fr. Alexandros Petrides**

Asst. Priest, St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church

**Rev. Elizabeth Goudy**

Senior Pastor, Metropolitan Community Church

**Rev. Don Garrett**

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Lehigh Valley

**Rev. Joy Wyler**

Senior Minister

Unity Church of the Lehigh Valley

**Rev. Tom Cormier**

Temple Sophia. Ep.Gn., I.M. - Co-Chair

**Roseann Bowerman**

Chairperson, Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Bethlehem Township

**Rabbi Michael Singer**

United Synagogues of America,

Congregation Brith Sholom

Bethlehem (Jewish – Conservative)

**Rabbi Emeritus Alan Juda**

Congregation Brith Sholom

**Rabbi Melody Davis**

Temple Covenant of Peace

Easton, PA ( Jewish-Reform)

**Rabbi Emeritus Jonathan Gerard**

Temple Covenant of Peace

Easton, PA

**Rabbi Seth Phillips**

Congregation Keneseth Israel

Allentown

**Cantor Kevin Wartell**

Temple Beth El

**Cantor Ellen Sussman**

Temple Shirat Shalom

**Mr. Mark Goldstein**

Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley

**Mr. Richard Fitzpatrick**

Buddhism, Member of Lehigh Conference of Churches

**Mr. Timothy Bingham**

Former Board Liaison, Lehigh Conference of Churches

**Rev. Peter A. Pettit, PhD**

Director, Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding, Muhlenberg College

**Rabbi Danielle Stillman**

Assoc. Chaplain & Director of Jewish Student Center, Lehigh University

**Rev. Dr. Allen Richardson**

Chaplain, Cedar Crest College

**Rev. Callista Isabelle**

Chaplain, Muhlenberg College

**Rev. Alex Hendrickson**

Chaplain and Director of Religious & Spiritual Life, Lafayette College

**Chaplain Robert Israel Weiner**

Jewish Chaplain, Lafayette College,

Cantor, B'nai Abraham Synagogue

**Rev. Jennika Borger**

Chaplain, Moravian College

**Fr. Tim McIntire, OSFS**

Chaplain, DeSales University

**Mr. Kamran Siddiqui**

Muslim Association of the Lehigh Valley

**Deeba Jamal**

Secretary, Islamic Center of the Lehigh Valley

**Mr. Mohammed Khaku**

President, Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaat of PA

**Mr. Mohamed Rajmohamed**

Khoja Shia Ithna-Ashre Jamat of PA