

COME LET US REASON TOGETHER: A GOVERNING AGENDA TO END THE CULTURE WARS

Statements of Support

Dr. David P. Gushee

Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics, Mercer University and President, Evangelicals for Human Rights

It has been my privilege in recent years to work with other evangelicals and with Third Way on the "Come Let Us Reason Together" project. The goal is a thoroughly biblical one: healing, an end to bitter cultural polarization in the United States. This is an ambitious goal but a thoroughly appropriate one for Christians whose eyes are fixed on Christ and the reign of God. The new Governing Agenda that we are together promoting shows the promise of advancing the goal of cultural healing.

It offers common sense, common ground solutions on four important issues: torture, immigration, abortion, and employment rights for homosexuals. The solutions we offer in each area share a common grounding in respect for human dignity, which ought to be a core principle for Christians—and all people of good will. I support this project because it fits with who I seek to be as a Christian, it shows promise of advancing human dignity on four critical issues for U.S. public policy, and it strengthens a new and important coalition that bridges culture-wars divides.

Rev. Dr. Joel Hunter

Senior Pastor, Northland, A Church Distributed

I wholeheartedly endorse the "Come Let Us Reason Together" governing agenda. This common ground initiative holds out an unprecedented opportunity for Evangelicals and progressives—two communities that have held deep distrust for one another in the past—to come together as ambassadors of reconciliation on some of the toughest cultural issues of our time. This concrete policy agenda does not entail compromise from either group. Rather, it charts for the next President and Congress a fresh course that can move our country beyond polarization, hostility and stagnation to a place that we can all agree is good.

Ronald J. Sider, Ph.D.

President, Evangelicals for Social Action

I strongly support the "Come Let Us Reason Together" governing agenda—a landmark effort that holds out the promise of locating common ground between two communities who have in recent times mistrusted and been too ignorant of each other. This timely and important effort is significant because it offers not just vague ideas but concrete policies that move our country forward. This new way represents a biblically faithful path for evangelicals and a real opportunity for our

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next president, whether Republican or Democrat, to bring a divided nation together at this critical time in our history.

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez

President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference

I wholeheartedly endorse and approve of not only the agenda but the entire effort to reconcile our nation, addressing wedge issues from a moral and faith platform that builds bridges and fosters fraternity for the common good.

Rachel Laser

Director of the Culture Program, Third Way

Robert P. Jones

Visiting Fellow in Religion, Third Way; President, Public Religion Research

We proudly stand together with our evangelical colleagues to support the “Come Let Us Reason Together” governing agenda. This groundbreaking agenda lights a principled, practical path toward ending the culture wars that have divided our nation for decades.

We embarked on this initiative with faith that a process of listening and reasoning together would provide the resources necessary to build a bridge across the gulf dividing progressives and evangelicals on cultural issues. The resulting agenda has tremendous potential in our current political moment, in which many Americans are looking for ways beyond the divisiveness and rancor of recent years.

With one voice, we are calling on our President and Congress to implement these four common ground policy proposals that provide not just ideas, but a well-marked path forward for this nation.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy

The National Campaign has long believed that reducing conflict and respecting a range of deeply held opinions is essential to making progress on the important issue of reducing teen and unplanned pregnancy. We support and try to model the belief that people with divergent views about sex, contraception, pregnancy, and family formation can work together toward a shared goal, finding common ground where possible and respectfully pursuing different strategies when necessary. In fact, this principle is the foundation of our advisory group on Personal Responsibility, Religion, and Public Values.

It is in the spirit of inclusion and in support of making progress on difficult social issues that we applaud the work of the “Come Let Us Reason Together” effort. The “Come Let Us Reason Together” project is working to identify areas of agreement on some of the most difficult issues facing our nation, including abortion.

“Although Americans of good will differ in their views about abortion, virtually all of us see value in lessening the need for abortion and would prefer that fewer women have to confront this difficult situation,” said Sarah Brown, CEO of the

National Campaign. “The National Campaign’s particular focus is in helping to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy in the first place. Through primary prevention—that is helping couples avoid unplanned pregnancy—the 1.3 million abortions in America each year can be dramatically decreased. At present, fully half of all pregnancies in the nation are unplanned and the majority are to adults not teens. We can and must do better.”

The decades-long argument over abortion has dominated the political debate at the expense of helping those who are sexually active avoid unplanned pregnancy in the first place. We have lost sight of the simple fact that when unplanned pregnancy is reduced so is abortion. Less unplanned pregnancy means fewer abortions—a fact that should help those on both sides of the abortion debate find common ground.

The items on the “Come Let Us Reason Together” agenda designed to prevent unintended pregnancies have real potential to reduce both teen pregnancy and unplanned pregnancy among young adults, which is where most unplanned pregnancies and most abortions occur. In fact, four-fifths of abortions are to women age 20 and older. These policies include grants for sex education and support for teen pregnancy prevention programs, including after school programs and resources to help parents better communicate with teens, as well as increased access to contraception for low-income women.

Jimmy R. Allen, Th.D

Coordinator, New Baptist Covenant, Author of Burden of a Secret

It is urgent for people of faith to support the change of attitude and action called for by the Come Let Us Reason Together Governing Agenda. Rejecting torture, supporting the right of gay and lesbian people to earn a living, reducing abortions with common ground policies, and creating secure and comprehensive immigration reform are steps practical and minimal in seeking to fulfill the mandate of Christ to His followers. On this common ground people of any faith perspective should find a place to stand.

Joe Battaglia

Founder and President, Renaissance Communications

Throughout my professional career, I have sought to build coalitions and consensus. The Biblical model of interdependence is not just a nice idea; it's necessary to achieve positive results. Evangelicals and members of both parties have cursed the darkness for too long.

The Come Let us Reason Together governing agenda is a long overdue effort to light a candle. The time is right to finally put division aside and work toward reconciliation, respect, and reason—and this agenda captures that spirit. The prevention and support policies aimed at reducing abortion promise to help those who face difficult choices about pregnancy to embrace life. While evangelicals may not for religious reasons accept homosexuality, neither can they support anything

that encourages discrimination toward gay and lesbian people that would deny them something as fundamental as a means of earning a living. Finally, a biblical model of human dignity and rights demands that we condemn the use of torture as a political tool and the use of immigrants as pawns in political battles. I pray that our leaders will embrace these policies that can help us move beyond politics, polemics and polarization.

Dr. David Black

President, Eastern University

The governing agenda of "Come Let Us Reason Together" is a conjunctive idea whose time has come. Collaboration among traditionally disjunctive evangelicals and progressives on the substantive issues of torture, immigration, abortion, and employment rights for people who are gay or lesbian is an excellent way for people of faith to unite as agents of reconciliation and grace. I enthusiastically endorse the agenda.

Tony Campolo, Ph.D.

Professor Emeritus, Eastern University

It is important that Christians be agents of reconciliation and that they overcome the belligerency that is all too common in the cultural wars. The "Come Let Us Reason Together" governing agenda is an important move to create common ground wherein Evangelicals and Progressives can work together to achieve a common good that they want to see realized in America. The time has come to eliminate the polarization that has so often characterized Christians on social issues.

Paul de Vries, Ph.D.

President, New York Divinity School, Board member, National Association of Evangelicals

There is one Lord Jesus Christ, and he has many issues. Tragically, while the Democratic and Republican parties each have at least an attenuated sense of some of his issues—each party seems tone-deaf to some others. Nowhere has the failure to be faithful to Truth and to listen to one another been more acute than on issues underlying the so-called "culture wars." Now is the time both to (1) call for reconciliation of differences without compromise on Truth, and to (2) hold both the Republicans' and the Democrats' feet to the Fire.

The Third Way's "Come Let Us Reason Together: A Governing Agenda to End the Culture Wars" is a timely, significant step in that direction. It is rooted in the protection of life and the respect for all people. It is redemptive, responsible and informed. In particular, it progressively addresses urgent issues related to real life: love, respect and protection for our unborn, homosexual, prisoner, and immigrant brothers and sisters.

Evangelical leaders upholding Biblical teachings have been a potent progressive force throughout American history. Historic Evangelical teaching is radically

progressive—not merely conservative or liberal—and Evangelicals should certainly be co-laborers with Political progressives in this cooperation without compromise.

Therefore, without qualification I heartily endorse the present vision and statements of the Third Way, and offer my encouragement and assistance in any way possible.

Rev. Dr. C. Welton Gaddy
President, Interfaith Alliance

Interfaith Alliance is dedicated to protecting faith and freedom. Since our inception, uniting diverse voices to challenge extremism and build common ground has been a vital part of our work. Against that backdrop, it is a pleasure for us to endorse the guiding principles of Come Let Us Reason Together. For too long, partisan and ideological divisions have been allowed to get in the way of affecting real change. My great hope is that this well-conceived project will help move our nation forward on the basis of shared values while working to lessen rancor stirred by disagreements on how those values apply to issues that continue to divide us. I applaud Third Way, happily support its assembly of this new coalition, and look forward to celebrating the fruits of its labor— meaningful advances toward a more compassionate and just society.

Tony Jones
Author of The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier;
Theologian-in-residence, Solomon's Porch, Minneapolis

I'm of the generation that is skeptical of labels. The way that both terms "evangelical" and "progressive" are bandied about in today's media-heavy age makes me uneasy. Yet the chord struck by "Come Let Us Reason Together" is just right: it's accommodating and nuanced, allowing for differences while seeking common ground. My hope is that President-elect Obama and the new congress will embrace this governing agenda, which includes policies that represent real progress on historically divisive issues: reducing abortions and ensuring workplace equality for gay and lesbian persons. Together, this growing group of faithful persons represents a new path forward in America that models a positive religious presence in the public square.

Dr. Richard J. Mouw
President, Fuller Theological Seminary

We have had too much shouting and fist-waving in recent years in our debates about key issues of public policy. It is time to lower the rhetoric and see if we can find practical solutions, ones that allow all of us to preserve the integrity of our deepest convictions as we look for appropriate ways of living together as citizens of a pluralistic society. It is time to "Come Let Us Reason Together"

Rev. Brian McLaren

Author, speaker, pastor, and networker among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists; author of Everything Must Change: Jesus, Global Crises, and a Revolution of Hope

One of the miracles recorded in the gospels is the healing of paralysis, and we need that kind of miracle today. We are paralyzed in polarization regarding many of our most pressing issues. That's why I'm thrilled that more and more of us are coming together in faith to reason together in hope ... to address issues in a fresh, robust way. We're seeking ways of reducing abortion rather than using the issue to divide electorates and win elections, protecting the rights of both gay Americans to live without fear and of religious organizations to hire without interference, putting torture off the table so our nation can stand on moral high ground without hypocrisy, and seeking both border security and humane treatment of immigrants. We're at a pregnant moment and we need to let new possibilities be born.

Dr. Stephen Monsma

Research Fellow, The Henry Institute, Calvin College

I support the "Come Let Us Reason Together" statement of common ground public policy goals. I do so because I am convinced the policy positions outlined in this document are in keeping with a biblically-based worldview, applied to our contemporary situation in a balanced, prudential manner. They do not merely represent a gray compromise between conflicting positions, but represent principled positions that rise above the cultural war rhetoric of both the left and the right."

Melissa Rogers, J.D.

Visiting Professor of Religion and Public Policy, Wake Forest University Divinity School; former Director, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

Who would have guessed four years ago that some leaders of the evangelical and politically progressive communities would jointly call on the next president to end torture, reduce abortions, reform immigration, and protect equal employment opportunity for gays and lesbians as well as autonomy for religious organizations? Thanks to Third Way and all of the project participants for bringing us to this day.

May the next president heed the call to adopt this agenda. And may the spirit of this project — reasoned, welcoming, and honest conversations about American values – be embodied in and advanced by our work in the days ahead.

Rabbi David Saperstein

Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

The Come Let Us Reason Together Governing Agenda is a remarkable initiative that has the potential to provide a vitally needed breakthrough in reshaping the political and religious discourse of America. As one associated with a segment of the American community that is notably progressive politically and long engaged with interfaith dialogue and coalition building, I know that the values, goals and

policies suggested here will resonate deeply with the American Jewish community. That this call for common ground is set in the context of commitment both to vibrant religious expression and the Establishment Clause (an idea first propagated in this nation by Evangelicals) will be a source of great encouragement to, and will evoke engagement from, a wide range of progressive religious communities including my own. It is the nature of consensus documents that they do not fully reflect the complexity of anyone's view, and my own views differ on some key issues. But I am struck not by the differences exposed by this important document, but rather by the common ground it wisely illuminates. It is a true cause for hope.

Walter B. Shurden

Minister at Large, Mercer University, Macon, GA

Who in America would not want to reduce abortions, protect the rights of gay and lesbian people while protecting religious groups to follow their convictions, renounce torture, and create secure and comprehensive immigration reform? The "Come Let Us Reason Together" project is magisterial and reconciling. It is a work for all of us, conservatives and liberals of all political stripes and all religious expressions. Let's join together! Let's reason together! Let's heal this country together!

Dr. Glen Stassen

Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics, Fuller Theological Seminary

This Come Let Us Reason Together Governing Agenda is worthy of very wide support in the evangelical community. It reflects core values of the kingdom of God: justice, inclusiveness in community, and mercy, especially for the most vulnerable. It also embodies the kind of practical solutions our country needs. This agenda can be part of the healing our nation so desperately needs.

Rev. Tyler Wigg-Stevenson

Director, Two Futures Project

Christians have a biblical mandate to seek the common good for both individuals and society, loving our neighbors as ourselves and seeking the *shalom* — the peace, prosperity, and health — of the culture in which we live (Jer 29.7). The common sense consensus issues in the governing agenda for Come Let Us Reason Together stake out just such territory. I hope that fellow Christians will embrace this opportunity for the church to act as leaven, salt, and light for the well-being of our society, and the integrity of our gospel witness.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, Ph.D.

Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology, Yale University; Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; past president of American Philosophical Association and Society of Christian Philosophers; author (with Robert Audi) of Religion in the Public Square: The Place of Religious Convictions in Political Debate

The relationship of evangelicals and progressives has been seriously polarized in recent years, many evangelicals thinking of progressives as anti-religion, many

progressives thinking of evangelicals as benighted authoritarians. The "Come Let Us Reason Together" project uses the auspicious time of the election of Barack Obama to move beyond these stereotypes, by identifying four important issues on which evangelicals and progressives can work together: reducing abortions through common ground policies, protecting the rights of gay and lesbian people to earn a living, renouncing torture, and creating secure and comprehensive immigration reform. As a progressive evangelical, I strongly support this project.