



progressive  
christians  
uniting

*see. pray. act.*

## Media Kit

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# Key Points

- Who:** Progressive Christians Uniting, a nonprofit organization that advances social justice issues in California including LGBTG equality, racial justice, criminal justice reform, interfaith support, voter engagement, and environmental and economic justice issues.
- What:** We are growing a network of progressive Christian churches and faith leaders in California. We educate congregations and people of faith on key social justice issues and provide a framework for action and advocacy in their congregations and through public policy and the media.
- Why:** We believe that the oppression of one group or people is the oppression of all people. We engage and mobilize Christians to embody Jesus' way of compassion and justice for our world, to transform our society to better serve the needs of our most vulnerable and marginalized people.
- How:** Through key programs and outreach including the Justice Not Jails interfaith training (now managed by the Interfaith Movement 4 Human Integrity); policy projects to combat racialized mass incarceration; White Ally Toolkit Workshops; Agenda for a Prophetic Faith speaker series; screenings of documentaries about current justice issues; and downloadable resources in our key issue areas, as well as a map of progressive churches across the country.
- Where:** Based in Southern California
- When:** Progressive Christians Uniting was founded by John Cobb, Jr. and George F. Regas in 1996 as The Claremont Consultation, which soon took institutional shape as the Mobilization for the Human Family. In 2003, the organization's name was changed to Progressive Christians Uniting.

# Fact Sheet

## What's Progressive Christians Uniting?

We are a 501(c)3 that works everyday to build and grow a network of progressive Christian churches and clergy. We educate congregations and people of faith on key social justice issues, and provide a framework for action and advocacy in their congregations and through public policy and the media. Our core programming and advocacy areas include criminal justice reform, LGBTQ equality, environmental justice, economic justice issues, and voter engagement.

## Who's in the network?

We have over 80 churches that are featured on our Progressive Congregations & Communities map, in addition to a growing community of clergy and lay leaders.

## What's the criteria for being a "progressive" congregation?

In order to be considered for our Progressive Congregations & Communities map, congregations must meet four criteria including: actively work for social justice; fully affirm LGBTQ participation in church life; respect the wisdom of religious traditions; and seek to embody Jesus' way of compassion and justice for our world. We ask congregations to utilize our resources in their programming.

## What's "criminal justice reform"?

Our criminal justice system needs to be reformed to eliminate structural racism towards people of color, specifically African Americans. We believe

in educating congregations on a variety of ways to address this including breaking the "school-to-prison" pipeline by supporting students of color, instead of repeatedly suspending or punishing them; reforming drug laws and stopping the selective targeting of communities of color for marijuana and low-level nonviolent drug possessions; reforming mandatory sentencing laws; helping formerly incarcerated persons re-establish themselves in society after serving their time; and banning the inhumane practice of solitary confinement in our prison systems. We provide advocacy and educational resources to advance criminal justice reform in California.

## What's "environmental justice" entail?

The effects and impact of climate change have been well documented. We work to educate congregations and people of faith on ways to promote a sustainable southern California. that is fossil-free; understand individual and collective carbon footprints; and educate on issues of environmental racism to examine the disproportionate negative impacts of environmental policies and practices on African American, people of color, and poor communities.

## What's "economic justice" entail?

There are a broad number of economic justice issues that impact individual's daily lives. We focus on education and advocacy efforts to ensure all Californians earn living wages, have access to healthcare, and that there's adequate funding for critical government programs that serve low wage earners and people living in poverty.

# Fact Sheet

## What's "voter engagement" entail?

In recent years, there's been movement in various states to make voting more difficult for African Americans, the poor, and other marginalized groups. California is one of the best state for voters as it doesn't have photo voter ID laws and provides absentee ballots without question, as well as provides more than four weeks of early voting. We provide educational opportunities for people of faith and communities to learn about the importance of voting, as well as support efforts to increase voter turnout.

## What's your work on "LGBTQ equality"?

We believe that all are created in God's image. This includes people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. Our work to support LGBTQ-inclusion includes engaging congregations and people of faith on these issues, providing bible study and sermon topics, or recommending actions to make houses of worship more inclusive to transgender and other LGBQ-identified persons. Additionally, we support laws and policies that ensure LGBTQ people are treated equally and justly in our communities.

## What programs do you have?

Conscientious Projector, Agenda for a Prophetic Faith, Conversations around the Table, Deeper Love, and Voting as an Act of Faith. PCU remains a supportive partner to Justice Not Jails, now managed by the Interfaith Movement 4 Human Integrity. We provide downloadable resources in our key issue areas, and maintain a map of progressive churches across the U.S.

## When did PCU begin?

Progressive Christians Uniting was founded by John Cobb, Jr. and George F. Regas in 1996 as The Claremont Consultation, which soon took institutional shape as the Mobilization for the Human Family. In 2003, the organization's name was changed to Progressive Christians Uniting.

## What if my faith community disagrees with your "progressive" positions?

We live in a pluralistic society where freedom of religion and belief is a cornerstone of our democracy. We have arrived at the positions that we take based on the model of Jesus' ministry: walking on the margins, hearing the cries for justice from vulnerable populations, and working within our network to create a better world for struggling Californians. At the same time, we don't believe that we have to agree with people on everything to work with them on anything.

## What does faith have to do with social justice?

The Gospel message and ministry of Christ focused on social justice including helping the poor, the weak, and those living on the margins. People of faith are called to live out these same values and ideas today and pursue social justice on behalf of the common good.

## Does PCU exclude persons who are not Christian or a part of another religious tradition?

No. While a significant amount of our work is dedicated to building the progressive Christian network, many of our events, activities, and programs are geared towards multifaith audiences and done in partnership with interfaith co-sponsors.

# Spokespersons

## Rev. Paige Eaves

a.paige.eaves@gmail.com

*PCU Board President*

Rev. Paige Eaves is pastor of the University United Methodist Church in Irvine, where she preaches to a politically mixed congregation and speaks as a faith leader in various community forums. She actively advocates for LGBTQ rights, the rights of workers and immigrants, and a national budget that prioritizes health, education and infrastructure over increases to the Pentagon budget. She holds an MDiv from the Candler School of Theology at Emory and graduate degree in public policy from UC Berkeley. Prior to ordination, Paige served as a consultant to the World Bank and as Executive Director of Sierra Service Project. Paige resides in Irvine with her musician husband, Forrest Robinson.

## Rev. Dr. Timothy Murphy

revtimothymurphy@gmail.com

*PCU Board Member*

Dr. Murphy holds a Ph.D. from Claremont School of Theology with a focus on counter-imperial churching that promotes a planetary gospel. He also holds a M.Div. from Eden Theological Seminary and a B.A. from Centre College in Danville, KY. Timothy is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) with ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. He served as the Minister for Youth and Social Justice at Pilgrim UCC in Carlsbad, CA for three years and has also worked as a student chaplain at an HIV/AIDS residential facility in St. Louis, MO as well as at a homeless shelter in Arlington, TX. His passions include transforming church into an alternative way of life, participating in small group ministries, and encouraging spiritual practices that inform social activism. Timothy currently resides in Pasadena with his wife Candace.

## Dr. Mikala Rahn, Ph.D.

mikala@publicworksinc.org

*PCU Vice President*

*Founder, Learning Works Charter School*

*Founder, Community Works*

Dr. Mikala Rahn has always held strongly to the belief that education defines a person and shapes who they become. With that principle in mind, Dr. Rahn founded Learning Works Charter School in 2008. The school focuses on the needs of students the mainstream educational system cannot address: dropouts, probation youth and pregnant and parenting teens. Using a core set of principles and unique tools developed by Dr. Rahn, Learning Works has succeeded in stemming the tide of dropouts like few others have. Dr. Rahn is also president of Public Works, an education research firm focused on preK-12 education, with extensive experience in the areas of school reform, curriculum and assessment, teacher retention, after-school programs, school-to-work transition, and parent involvement. She is also the founder of Community Works, which turns research into practice by supporting teachers, parents and students by providing training, classes and hands-on assistance. In addition, Dr. Rahn served as a member of the Pasadena Unified School Board. Before founding the Public Works Group, Dr. Rahn held education research and management positions at ETI and the MPR Associates. Dr. Rahn has her PhD in educational policy, MA in political science and MA in education administration from University of California at Berkeley, and a BA in human development communications from University of California, San Diego. Her hobbies are yoga, doing jigsaw puzzles and saving dropouts.

# Spokespersons

## **Dominick Correy**

dominick.correy@gmail.com

*PCU Board Member*

Dominick Correy serves as a Field Representative for CA State Senator Anthony Portantino. Formerly a “Chaser” at Learning Works Charter School in Pasadena, helping ensure students finish school, Dominick's areas of expertise include education and criminal justice reform. Dominick speaks to local groups about his incarceration experiences.

## **Rev. Dr. Christopher Carter**

spartincarter@gmail.com

*PCU Board Member*

*Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, UC San Diego*

Professor Christopher Carter's teaching and research focuses on philosophical and theological ethics, Black and Womanist theological ethics, environmental ethics, and animals and religion. He approaches religious studies as a liberation ethicist committed to exploring how the moral economy of U.S. religious thought and culture impact the everyday lives of marginalized populations, particularly African American and Latino/a communities. He is active in the leadership of the American Academy of Religion where he serves as a steering committee member of both the Religion and Ecology and the Animals and Religion Group. Professor Carter is also a pastor within the United Methodist Church and has served churches in Battle Creek Michigan, Torrance, and Compton California. His passion for teaching evolves out of his experience growing up in poor and marginalized communities. To this end, he believes that education is the practice of freedom and that the process of learning should be transformational.

## **Rev. Jim Burklo**

jtburklo@yahoo.com

*PCU Board Member*

Jim Burklo is the Associate Dean of Religious Life at the University of Southern California and Adjunct Instructor in Public Policy at the USC graduate School of Social Work. He also is an Adjunct Instructor in Interfaith Leadership at Claremont Lincoln University. An ordained United Church of Christ pastor, he is the author of four published books: OPEN CHRISTIANITY, BIRDLIKE AND BARNLESS, HITCH-HIKING TO ALASKA: THE WAY OF SOULFUL SERVICE, a 2013 novel about religious diversity in America: SOULJOURN, and his most recent, MINDFUL CHRISTIANITY. His weekly blog, MUSINGS, focuses on progressive Christian spirituality and social activism; he also blogs at ProgressiveChristianity.org, Patheos.com, and Huffington Post. He is a graduate of UC Riverside and San Francisco Theological Seminary. Jim and his wife, Roberta Maran, live in Hollywood.

## **Peter Laarman**

peterlaarman@gmail.com

*Justice Not Jails*

Peter Laarman was PCU's executive director from 2004 through 2013. Ordained in the United Church of Christ, Peter served for ten years as senior minister of New York's Judson Memorial Church before coming to California. He currently volunteers on the leadership team for the PCU-initiated project on race and mass incarceration called Justice Not Jails. He is also involved in the development of an effective national faith-based center for thought leadership and action on in the interconnected issues of white supremacy and class oppression. In his first career, Peter led the communications departments of both the American Federation of Teachers and the United Auto Workers over a period of 18 years.

# Spokespersons

## **Rev. Sandie Richards**

sandie.richards@gmail.com

*PCU Board Member; Pastor, First United Methodist Church of San Fernando*

Rev. Sandie Richards is a progressive United Methodist minister and a passionate advocate for justice. She has been at the forefront of such important movements as Living Wages, Workers' Rights, Marriage Equality, Ending Gun Tragedies, and Human Rights in the US as well as the Philippines. An experienced advocate and spokesperson, she is in demand as a speaker and has been a contributor on shows such as TYT's The Point, and The Stephanie Miller Show with guest host John Fugelsang. She currently serves as the senior pastor at First United Methodist Church of San Fernando.

## **Rev. Andy Schwiebert**

andrewschwiebert@gmail.com

*PCU Board Member; UCC Minister*

Rev. Andy Schwiebert runs a progressive young adult ministry that is sponsored by the United Church of Christ in the greater Los Angeles area. Rev. Schwiebert's topics of specialization include economic justice and immigration.

## **Rev. Sandhya Jha**

*Director, Oakland Peace Center*

Rev. Sandhya Jha is the founding director of the Oakland Peace Center in Oakland, CA. She is an expert in economic justice, anti-racism work, and faith organizing.

## **Alex Morales** AlexMorales@all4kids.org

*PCU Board Member; CEO Children's Bureau*

Alex Morales is active as a member of the Claremont United Methodist Church (CUMC). As a social worker and CEO of a non-profit community organization, he has heard the heartache and pain of over 1000 families in his counseling work with vulnerable families. He became convinced that parents don't want to mistreat or neglect their children, they just don't know how to parent well, they don't have the support in our society to do it better, and they are even presented with many unjust obstacles in our society. Both of Alex's parents immigrated to the United States from Mexico. In addition to Alex being a social worker, he holds a degree in Physics. His father was a minister. And, his mother was an engineer who later became a minister. Alex no longer sees himself as working; he calls it his mission and ministry for social justice.

## **Paulina Piña Garcia**

pinagarciaapcu@gmail.com

Paulina is a graduate of Wellesley College and of Harvard Divinity School, where she received her Master of Theological Studies degree with a concentration in Women, Gender, Sexuality and Religion.