

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA.



National
Institute for
Civil Discourse

July 25, 2017

Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer
General Secretary
American Baptist Churches USA
PO Box 851
Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851

Dear Rev. Spitzer:

I enjoyed the opportunity to meet with you last Friday, July 21, to discuss ways that the American Baptist Churches USA could potentially work with the National Institute for Civil Discourse on our Initiative to Revive Civility that we will formally launch this fall. I was particularly pleased to learn about your deep personal commitment to promote civility and to see the pastoral letter you wrote shortly after becoming General Secretary. Your stated goal of having American Baptists contribute "to a more harmonious American civic life" intersects directly with the purpose of NICD and I am excited about things we can possibly do together.

As we discussed, the National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD) is a non-profit, non-partisan institute based at the University of Arizona that is dedicated to addressing incivility and political dysfunction in American democracy. NICD's programs are designed to create opportunities for elected officials, the media and the public to engage people of different views respectfully and take responsibility for the quality of our public discourse. NICD's National Advisory Board has members from both political parties including former Presidents Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush, former Senators Tom Daschle and Olympia Snowe, former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell and prominent journalists like Katie Couric and Greta Van Susteren.

I am writing to formally invite the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) to be an organizational partner in the Initiative to Revive Civility. The Initiative to Revive Civility is a national grassroots campaign which will seek to create a counter narrative to the incivility that permeates our public spaces. The Initiative will offer specific suggestions about what individuals can do to promote civility and respect in their daily lives and also help organize small group discussions around the country between Americans of different political views. National partners will play a big role in spreading the word about the Initiative and you'll find attached a description of the role of partners. As you will see, it asks ABCUSA to do three things:

1. Publicly endorse the Initiative to Revive Civility
2. Share information about the Initiative with members of the denomination
3. Encourage interested members and churches to be involved in community conversations to promote civility and respect



We have issued similar invitations to about 25 denominations and other national faith based organizations who represent a range of theological and political views. We are gratified by the initial response we have received and many denominations and organizations have already become partners or indicated an interest in becoming one, including: The Episcopal Church, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, National Latino Evangelical Coalition, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Seventh Day Adventists, the National Association of Evangelicals, Mennonite Church in America, United Church of Christ, Network, Faith in Public Life, Progressive National Baptist Convention and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. We anticipate even more denominations joining us and certainly hope that the ABCUSA will be among that group. We have also been joined in this Initiative by the League of Women Voters and we anticipate that other groups working to improve civil society will also be working with us.

We are thankful for your interest in working with us and hope to hear back from you soon with the good news that you will be able to be a partner organization in this important effort. In the meantime, please let me know if you have any questions or need more information about anything relating to NICD or the Initiative to Revive Civility.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Carolyn" and last name "Lukensmeyer" clearly legible.

Carolyn Lukensmeyer

