



AUGUST 5, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Respect Amish movement in Lancaster, Pennsylvania is pleased to present a joint statement of support from an interfaith coalition of the areas largest religious groups, including the Lancaster County Council of Churches, the Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg, evangelical congregations, a Jewish synagogue and the area's largest historic Black churches. Together they represent all major faiths and denominations – liberal, mainstream and conservative – in more than 200 congregations throughout the county.

The interfaith coalition is committed to making certain that Lancaster City and County remain a place where the faith and culture of our Amish neighbors are respected.

JOINT STATEMENT

Many Lancaster County residents are concerned about the negative, inaccurate and potentially damaging portrayal of Amish religion and culture in the Discovery Channel's "Amish Mafia" TV series. These shows vilify the Amish religious way of life, suggesting that a peaceful people devoted to non-violence are vengeful, violent and criminal.

The Amish are horrified, shamed and embarrassed by the show's depiction of their religion and culture. While their religious beliefs forbid them from public objection to this portrayal, their spokesmen have expressed deep appreciation and support for the efforts of others to foster respect for their community.

At their core, this television series engages in religious bigotry. "Amish Mafia" is no more acceptable than "Jewish Mafia," "Catholic Mafia" or "Evangelical Mafia." The show is an affront to all people of faith.

By misrepresenting the Amish as a crime-ridden culture, the show gives, by association, the same impression of Lancaster city and county. It changes the image of the county from one of pastoral beauty, where people are devoted to faith, family and friends, to one of banal ugliness.

Each of us has a responsibility to consider how we, and members of our faith community, would feel if these shows attacked us as they are attacking the Amish. All religions observe some form of the Golden Rule – that we treat others as we would want to be treated. To stand by silently while these shows mistreat the Amish in our community would make us complicit in breaking that rule.

RespectAmish.org

For these reasons – objection to a bigoted portrayal of a religious people and concern over our responsibility to our neighbors – we call for an end to production and broadcast of the “Amish Mafia” series and respectfully ask the Discovery Channel and its sponsors to drop support for the series and other Amish-themed knockoff productions.

PRESS INQUIRIES TO:

THE SIGNATORIES, WITH MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| LANCASTER COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHURCHES | 131 churches in Lancaster County |
| Father Alexander Veronis | frveronis@comcast.net |
| Executive committee spokesperson | H: (717) 393-8300 M: (717) 538-2808 |

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|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Rev. Scott Fischer | sfischer@lcchurches.org |
| Executive director | O: 291-2261 M: 572-7876 |

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG | 89 parishes in central Pennsylvania |
| Office of Ecumenical Affairs | 18 parishes in Lancaster County |
| Father Paul R. Fisher | FrPFisher@hbgdiocese.org |
| Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Officer | O: (717) 657-4804 M: (717) 233-1014 |

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| Joseph Aponick | JAponick@hbgdiocese.org |
| Director of Communications | O: (717) 657-4804 ext. 210 M: (717) 728-6123 |

THE REGIONAL CHURCH OF LANCASTER COUNTY

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Keith Yoder | keith@ttwm.org |
| President, Executive team | (717) 656-4056 |

The Regional Church is a network of Biblically-oriented Christian leaders of congregations, businesses, and ministries.

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| LANCASTER MENNONITE CONFERENCE, MODERATOR | 170 churches in seven states |
| | 77 churches in Lancaster County |
| L. Keith Weaver | kweaver@lanasterconference.org |
| Moderator | (717) 293-5246 Ext.101 |

JEWISH CONGREGATION

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|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Congregation Shaarai Shomayim | jpaskoff@shaarai.org |
| Rabbi Jack Paskoff | (717) 397-5755 |

HISTORIC BLACK CHURCHES

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Brightside Baptist Church | myblessedlife@aol.com |
| Rev. Louis A. Butcher | (717) 295-9431 |

Bethel African-Methodist Church
Rev. Edward M. Bailey

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Lancaster County ACTION
Kirk Radanovic, vice president

Promotes candidates with Judeo-Christian values
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LANCASTRIANS AGAINST AMISH-SPLOITATION Films & TV SHOWS
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