

# Tearing Down Walls! Building Up Hope!

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Bishop Yvette  
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Presiding Bishop  
The Fellowship



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Community  
Churches

## PRESS AND MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release: September 14, 2007

### **African-American Cross-Denominational Group and World's Largest Predominantly Gay Christian Denomination Announce Joint Efforts to Promote "Radical Inclusivity"**

***The Fellowship, Metropolitan Community Churches Unveil  
Goals;  
Plan Calls for 10 Major U.S. City Gatherings in 2008***

On September 11, 2007, with the backdrop of 9-11 as catalyst, the leadership of The Fellowship Churches ([www.radicallyinclusive.com](http://www.radicallyinclusive.com)), a national U.S. trans-denominational fellowship of primarily African-American Christian leaders working for radical inclusivity, and Metropolitan Community Churches ([www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org)), the world's largest and oldest Christian denomination with a primary, affirming ministry to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals, gathered at DaySpring Conference Center in Florida to declare solidarity and commit to work in unity on three objectives.

#### **FIRST JOINT OBJECTIVE:**

-- Resistance to and healing of religious and spiritual violence perpetrated against people who have traditionally lived at the margins of society, including people suffering from substance abuse; people living with HIV/AIDS and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and inter-sex people;

#### **SECOND JOINT OBJECTIVE:**

-- Radical and full inclusion of all people living at the margins of communities of faith and spiritual practice;

#### **THIRD JOINT OBJECTIVE:**

-- Commitment to the deep and challenging work toward reconciling the historical divisions in faith and religious communities created by racism, sexism, classism, serophobia and homophobia.

Presiding Bishop Yvette A. Flunder of The Fellowship and Moderator Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson of Metropolitan Community Churches facilitated discussion among their respective organizational leaders, resulting in the following public declaration:

#### **JOINT DECLARATION BY**

**Bishop Yvette Flunder, Presiding Bishop, The Fellowship  
and  
Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator, Metropolitan**

## Community Churches

The Fellowship and Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) lift up to the world our commitment and intention to challenge major fundamental, deep-seated religious beliefs, doctrines and theologies of the oppressive dominant culture. This culture treats people on society's margins as enemies of God and routinely mistreats, oppresses and excludes people from the community of faith and its institutions. We further confirm that these acts defeat the Christian commonwealth and we claim a season of refreshment, repentance and reconciliation.

Our organizations recognize the powerful opportunity to leverage our mutual ministries and movements toward full inclusion of all people and to provide networking and deepening of our common commitments.

Both organizations have agreed to facilitate 10 major city gatherings of open and affirming congregations in 2008 to listen and learn, share approaches and challenges in overcoming spiritual violence, discrimination, and racism and to unite people in prayer for true peace in the community and in the world.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to model solidarity among churches and people who live in the context of, and respond to, particularly painful experiences of violence.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to share insights and effective approaches for overcoming violence.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to deepen ecumenical contacts among the churches, national councils of churches, and related organizations and networks.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to work with intention to connect congregations, student and youth groups, theological and other church-related institutions in the search for a global declaration of the radically inclusive love of God for all people.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to promote interdependence while maintaining independence. Neither organization seeks to be an instrument of ecclesiastical restraint in the sense of diminishing the member church or ministry's individual calling.

***As leaders, we have agreed*** to establish and maintain strong relationships vital to our ministries and movement. As we make every effort to strengthen one another we recognize the importance of knowing one another, respecting one another and esteeming each member highly. As people of God working to uphold and advance the radically inclusive love of Jesus Christ, we will face the onslaught of opposition and we will do so together. We will encourage and strengthen our respective member churches and ministries through the sharing of our experiences. Our aim is to give insight as well as inspiration.

We believe associating and assembling together are vital in building relationship. The Bible tells us that the assembling of

the saints should not be forsaken. Therefore, we make every effort to come together as we have the opportunity for healing, corporate prayer, worship, fellowship and edifying one another in the Lord.

/signed/

**Bishop Yvette A. Flunder  
Wilson**

Presiding Bishop  
The Fellowship  
Churches

[www.RadicallyInclusive.com](http://www.RadicallyInclusive.com)

**The Rev. Elder Nancy L.**

Moderator  
Metropolitan Community

[www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org)

**THE FELLOWSHIP:**

The Fellowship is a cross-denominational fellowship of primarily African-American Christian leaders representing churches and faith-based organizations from diverse geographic and theological backgrounds. The overriding purpose of The Fellowship is to support religious leaders, both clergy and laity, in moving towards a theology of radical inclusivity which, by its very nature, requires an equally radical social ministry reaching to the furthest margins of society to serve all in need without prejudice or discrimination. The Fellowship works to create, sustain and celebrate community on the margins. [www.RadicallyInclusive.com](http://www.RadicallyInclusive.com)

**METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES (MCC)**

Founded in 1968, Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) is the world's largest and oldest Christian denomination with a primary, affirming ministry to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals. Known as the "Human Rights Church" for its commitment to social justice, local MCC congregations can be found in 28 countries around the world.

[www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org)

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Rev. Nancy Wilson (L), Bishop Yvette Flunder (R).  
Photo taken on September 11, 2007, at DaySpring Conference Center  
in Florida (USA) during discussions that led to the historic joint  
commitment  
to work for "radical inclusivity."