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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 9, 2010 Statement by Local South Florida Pastors Regarding Pastor Terry Jones' Proposed Actions to Burn the Quran

The escalating rage and rhetoric related to several recent issues of faith has reached a fever pitch this week with the national attention on announced plans by a Florida preacher to burn Qurans at his church on Saturday.

Though the media have understandably focused on issues of Constitutional rights and free speech, as a group of fellow local pastors in the south of the state, we are concerned about the larger spiritual issues at stake.

Now, more than ever, pastors and Christian leaders have the opportunity to model civility in the public square and reclaim the purpose and mission of the church that demonstrates behavior consistent with our beliefs and deeds that don't betray our creeds, by remaining focused on the core of the Gospel and principles that Jesus himself espoused.

As Americans, we have freedom to perform acts with which others disagree or deem despicable, but our citizenship as Christians calls us to a higher standard -- one of love and respect for all humanity -- which supersedes our "rights."

Though we have the privilege and responsibility to express our deepest convictions, believers who follow Jesus are always called to do so in a posture of Christ-centered humility – making a difference *in* this world by being different *from* this world. We don't believe in fighting fire with fire. The Bible says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

While we affirm that every person has the right to believe what he or she wants, we also acknowledge that not every belief is right. Real civility is not to be confused with mere etiquette or indifference about differences. Every local church ought to be a demonstration of Gospel-informed civility—seeking "the peace and prosperity of the city" (Jeremiah 29:7).

Further, we need to be careful about misplaced passion, which can manifest as both passionately overreacting and passionately overreaching. Because the views and considered actions of the Gainesville church are not based on the teaching of the Bible and the life of Jesus Christ, they are not consistent with, nor supported by, the overall American Christian community.

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Though theological and other differences of our faiths preclude us, as Christian pastors, from supporting the teachings of Islam and the Quran, we welcome all people – including Muslims – in the name of Jesus Christ and welcome them into the doors of our churches. The role of the local church is to be a light in the community for biblical truth, reflecting God’s love, grace and mercy to all.

While we are encouraged by Pastor Jones’ announcement late Thursday that the event at his church has been cancelled, it is disappointing that proposed plans had to go this far. The mere threat of carrying out such an insensitive and uncivil act has already caused considerable damage to the reputation of the Christian church, the Bible and the teachings of Jesus, as well as to interfaith relations among good people – and to the common good – around the world.

God’s “will” is always in accord with His Word, and His commands in Scriptures always trump our feelings or desires. The Bible does not condone an act such as Pastor Jones and his church long planned, but thankfully cancelled – which is neither Christ-like, loving nor kind – and neither do we. But we are a forgiving community, and hope for restoration following this controversy while praying that God’s redemptive purpose will unfold in the days ahead.

Doug Brouwer, First Presbyterian Church of Ft. Lauderdale
Bob Coy, Calvary Chapel of Ft. Lauderdale
CE Glover, Mount Bethel Church, (Ft. Lauderdale)
Tom Hendricks, Rio Vista Community Church, (Ft. Lauderdale)
Bill Mitchell, Boca Raton Community Church, (Boca Raton)
Phil Roughton, Christ Church, (Ft. Lauderdale)
Stephan Tchividjian, Christian Community Foundation of South Florida
Tullian Tchividjian, Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, (Ft. Lauderdale)
Larry Thompson, First Baptist of Ft. Lauderdale
Max Yeary, Christian Life Center, (Ft. Lauderdale)