

GETTING TO ONENESS

A COMMUNICATIONS PRIMER FOR CSL MINISTERS

Written by Rev. Karin Wilson for the Spiritually Motivated Social Engagement Advisory Committee to Dr. Kenn Gordon, Centers for Spiritual Living 2018

INTRODUCTION

CENTERS FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING AIMS TO provide deep spiritual leadership and a unified public voice that acts as a counterpoint to other religious voices prevalent in the current climate of social justice discourse. We know how to speak to the public, because we know how to speak the Truth. This is what we do.

Centers for Spiritual Living is *radically inclusive*, which means we persistently articulate what we stand *for*. Everybody is welcome as long as it's respectful and understanding. While other religions may choose to be against something, our philosophy continually seeks pathways to common understanding that elevates and lifts, making the way for new dialogues to emerge, both within the movement, and as a wayshower beyond.

This is a unique proposition - and one that is seldom heard. We believe the time is now for the voice of CSL to rise above the din. We aim to publicly be in the "for"-ground of social justice issues whether those issues be local or regional, national or global.

However, this can only be accomplished through our collective concerted effort to deliver a unified, consistent, and compelling message to our communities, and from there on to the media, while at the same time leaving room for each unique voice within our communities to be heard.

THE COMMUNICATIONS PRIMER, which includes a Media Kit, addresses the questions we all wrestle with - how can one teaching that reflects everything deliver a singular message? How can centers with limited resources and experience take this on?

Our journey to Oneness begins here.

OVERVIEW

THIS PRIMER is designed to help you reach your community with key messages on issues of the

day that may pertain and be of relevance to your community.

In addition, your team may wish to communicate publicly to those outside your immediate community who are ready to hear about Centers for Spiritual Living and its unique ability to create “A World that Works for Everyone.” In these cases, the Media Kit will assist in providing the necessary means to do get this work accomplished in a relatively seamless and professional manner.

As various issues arise in the public realm, the PRIMER provides the backbone for how you can choose to proceed within your individual community.

At no time is there an expectation for individual communities to share publicly the position statements of our Spiritual Leader, although it is highly encouraged. If an issue arises in your community, and you feel it has resonance, the hope of this Primer is to facilitate ease of communication through as many channels as is practical and reasonable.

WHAT’S IN THE PRIMER

The Primer is composed of two parts.

The first part gives all Centers a well-supported POSITION PAPER that aligns the issue of concern with a thoughtful reflection of spiritual principle as reached by members of the **Spiritually Motivated Social Engagement (SMSE)** committee. This paper can then be used to share with member communities, and in communicating your message through any social media your community may currently use.

The second part is the MEDIA KIT, which provides step-by-step suggestions on how to use the Position Paper to craft communication pieces that can be used for journalistic distribution (as distinct from social media).

1. THE POSITION PAPER - WHAT IS IT?

When significant national and international events occur that require a response from the Spiritual Leader of Centers for Spiritual Living, the CSL SMSE team convenes to craft a position paper. This message is designed in accordance with the Shared Values as outlined in CSL’s ODM (Organizational Design Model). Once crafted, this position paper is sent by email to all ministers using the email address we have on file, with the words MINISTERIAL ALERT in the subject line, and **will be simultaneously posted to the ministerial listserve.**

The phrase MINISTERIAL ALERT will be used only for these items, making it easy for you to spot in your email chain.

HOW TO USE IT

The Position Paper contains a variety of elements that form the backbone behind any subsequent communications, including media releases.

Contents of the Paper can be communicated through the following channels:

- ☐ SUNDAY CELEBRATION
 - ☐ READ the statement at your next celebration
 - ☐ INCORPORATE elements into your message(s)
- ☐ SOCIAL MEDIA
 - ☐ POST the statement in its entirety on your Facebook page
 - ☐ TWEET portions of the statement out, with a link to your Center's website
- YOUR CENTER WEBSITE
 - ☐ POST the statement to the news section of your website
 - ☐ This also assists with journalists looking to locate alternative spiritual perspectives

2. THE MEDIA KIT—AKA APPENDICES

There are many ways CSL position papers can be localized for the purpose of communicating with members of the journalistic media.

You are the expert in your own community. If you aren't sure if a position paper will resonate locally, ask some of your congregants you think might be affected by the event. They could become your greatest asset.

Keep in mind that not every issue necessitates a media release. Unless you are choosing to communicate directly with the journalistic media (as distinct from social media), any such release is unnecessary.

There are two types of media releases:

1. Generic media releases sent out by CSL Home Office, crafted by the SMSE team in accordance with the position paper, and sent out directly following or in conjunction
 - a. Emailed to all ministers using the email address we have on file, with the words MEDIA RELEASE in the subject line.

STEP TWO

CONSIDER YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

In cases where a media release from Home Office that has already been crafted and distributed, use that as your template.

Your goal is to make sure that whatever you share makes sense at the grassroots level. An event that occurs in Atlanta, Georgia may have no relevance to those in Toronto, Canada.

How well you know your community can make a significant difference. The minister in Toronto may find that a congregant has family in Atlanta – in which case the Position Paper is extremely relevant at a local level. **Media cannot find our affected congregants on their own, and wants to hear from them.**

If it turns out you have people in your community affected, ask if they would be willing to work with you on a piece for the media.

STEP THREE

WHAT STYLE OF COMMUNICATION?

Here are a few ways* you can use the statement to assist people in seeing world events from a CSL perspective:

1. Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper
2. Write an opinion column and submit it to the editorial page of your local newspaper
3. Consider offering yourself as a potential guest on a popular (tv/radio) talk show
4. Write a localized media release

**Samples are included in the appendix at the back of this document.*

THE LOCALIZED RELEASE

In cases where a media release from Home Office that has already been crafted and distributed, use that as your template.

If you are opting to create your own media release, use the position paper as a framework.

- ☐ It's good protocol to use a combination of quotes from our Spiritual Leader, as well as some from yourself
- ☐ Feel free to insert quotes around any portion of the statement for the spiritual leader
- ☐ Do not create any quotes in the name of the spiritual leader other than those which have been presented in the statement

- ☐ Any quotes made in your own name are your responsibility. Home office is not responsible for anything said by a local minister.

ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS

Your locally crafted media release should include the following:

- A jpeg photo of yourself and the Spiritual Leader
- Contact email and cell number
- Video clip if relevant
- Link to your home page, and the home page of CSL.org

RELEASES OF LARGE-SCALE INTEREST

In the event that an issue emerges that compels many centers to want to contribute their unique voice to the journalistic discourse, online coaching sessions will be held to assist ministers through the process. These will be available for short windows. Further consultation for those wishing to expand their media outreach can be booked privately. Contact a member of the SMSE team for details.

THANK YOU!

We hope this press kit assists you in growing your community. If you have any questions, please contact a member of our Spiritually Motivated Social Engagement Team, and we'll be happy to assist in whatever way we can.

APPENDIX/MEDIA KIT

- Sample Using Affirmative Speech in Public Statements
- Sample Position Paper
- Sample media release with Spiritual Leader and Local Minister quotes
- Sample opinion column
- Sample letter to the editor

SAMPLE USING AFFIRMATIVE SPEECH IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS

An Interfaith Pledge of Commitment to Protecting the Rights of All

We, the Celebration of Abraham, the clergy and leaders of other faith communities of Davis, California, recognize and acknowledge the anxiety and concern ~~in the wake that has resulted from the fear and divisiveness sown by the outcome~~ of the 2016 elections. Our strength is in our diversity, and we join our voices to declare and affirm our support for all residents of Davis, Yolo County, and the faculty, staff, and students of the University of California at Davis. We stand ~~against hate~~ **for love**. We stand ~~against bigotry~~ **for inclusivity**. We stand for equality. We stand for justice. We stand for protecting and embracing the rich diversity that reflects the humanity of all Americans. **(or We stand for a world that works for everyone.)** We commit to listening to all members of our community regardless of political philosophy.

We proudly stand with our Muslim brothers and sisters and those coming from Arab, Middle Eastern or Southeast nations or cultures. **We recognize as Divine law** ~~We strongly assert~~ that they have the same rights as any other humans to enter this country, and to avail themselves of opportunities to live here, work here, and obtain the benefits of higher or other education. ~~-On our watch, Muslims should will~~ not be profiled, singled out, or subjected to arbitrary or discriminatory treatment merely because of their religion or places of origin.

We note with despair the increases in hate crimes and hate speech following the election that have been directed against Muslims, Jews, African Americans, and others, and commit ourselves to ~~countering these acts with all of the resources in our control~~ **whatever it takes to love and protect each of us.**

SAMPLE MINISTERIAL ALERT - POSITION PAPER

CENTER FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

POSITION PAPER – FEBRUARY 25, 2017

Subject: Inclusion of Transgender Students

THE ISSUE

The current Presidential administration has reversed the Justice Department decision of 2016 that ensured protection of the rights of transgender students in our nation's schools, which includes the right to be treated consistent with their self-disclosed gender identity, and offer privacy options for students for any reason. The decision on how to handle such cases is now left in the hands of local government, state and municipal officials.

CSL's POSITION

Centers for Spiritual Living sees all people as holding equal value. Transgender youth – an estimated 150,000 according to the Williams Institute at the UCSL School of Law – are our country's children, and as our country's children they deserve the respect and the space to grow in safety and in love regardless of which state they live in.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE SUPPORT/REFERENCE - diversity committee, dictionary/lexicon - potential hot buttons - resources - trigger issues - CSL COMMITTEE'S identification of "go-to" people to run this through prior to release

SUGGESTED QUOTES FOR LOCAL MINISTER/SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

"When it comes to the rights of children, we believe all deserve equal protection."

QUOTES FOR ATTRIBUTION TO REV. DR. KENN GORDON, SPIRITUAL LEADER OF CSL

"As a faith community that is home to many members of the LGBTQ community, these recent events are difficult for many of us."

"My hope is that the goodness and the light of compassion will return so that all young – regardless of gender identification – be respected and secure in our schools."

"This is their birthright – to be safe – as it is everyone's birthright."

SUPPORTING SPIRITUAL QUOTES AND/OR MATERIAL

Insert here

SUGGESTED COURSES OF ACTION

- Centers with bathroom facilities may choose to rebrand them as gender neutral, and welcome other spiritual community to do the same
- Speak with any adult transgendered congregants and ask if they would be willing to speak publicly on the issue in concert with your Center. Approach parents of transgender students asking if they require support in this regard
- Phone, call or write your local government and educational authority requesting immediate action to secure transgender rights

SOURCE MATERIALS

Feb. 22, 2017

[Statement of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, US Department of Justice](#)

The website includes a PDF of the original Guidance Letter and Supreme Court Letter

Summary: The Department of Justice and the Department of Education today withdrew guidance for educational institutions, issued in 2015 and 2016, that took the position that the prohibitions in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and implementing regulations against discrimination on the basis of sex require access to sex-segregated facilities on the basis of gender identity rather than biological sex.

Feb. 23, 2017

[The White House Press Briefing – Feb. 23, 2017](#)

Scroll down to find conversation with reporters on bathroom, and US President Donald Trump's position

May 13, 2016

[US Department of Education & Justice Department letter](#)

This is the original statement, and the arguments as they were set out under the previous Obama administration

OVERVIEW OF MEDIA RELEASE FORMAT

- Media releases are designed to give reporters all the necessary facts – who, what, where, when and most importantly why.
- Essentially you want to ensure your release addresses the following:
 - *Someone doing something for a reason*
- Releases aim to be one page only

STRUCTURE YOUR RELEASE

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Headline | use active voice |
| First Paragraph | summarizes the issue and the action that is currently underway along with attribution |
| Second Paragraph | provides context and depth for the first. Can sometimes be a quote |
| Body | Fleshes out details. If there is an event held, provides location – time and date. This is also where you can build the link between your local center, and those of the larger organization – including quotes from the relevant CSL Position Paper |
| Boilerplate | This is your ABOUT CSL. It may be relevant to include two separate sections here – one for YOUR community, and one for the broader community. Or, feel free to combine (as has been done in the sample provided). |
| -30- | This is a media convention indicating the formal media release is now complete. |
| Contact information | Name, title, cell phone, email, website Ensure anyone quoted in the release is actually available to speak with the media. If your minister doesn't want to take direct calls, you may select someone for that duty to monitor and manage media calls. |

Photo / video

Reporters appreciate not having to hunt down images. You improve your chances of getting to know the media by including a photo, and even better, an image of your event. ACTION shots of events are better than headshots.

SAMPLE RELEASE

YOUR LOGO HERE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Center for Spiritual Living dials for justice for transgender students

VANCOUVER, Wash. – Rev. Dana Wilson from Vancouver Center for Spiritual Living joined hundreds of other ministers today across the nation to register support for transgender students, following the federal government’s decision to roll back protections established under the Obama administration.

Wilson spoke with Bob Smith, the head of the Education Department in Vancouver urging reinstatement of Title IX, which protects the right of transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms that match their gender identities.

INSERT LOCAL QUOTE HERE

“This initiative began from a grassroots decision not to take no for an answer,” said Wilson. “We operate from a belief that positive persistent action is what creates change, and that’s what we hope to do. When it comes to the rights of children, we believe all deserve equal protection.”

The move comes following the Trump administration’s decision that it should be the role of the states – and not the federal government – to make such determinations.

The minister’s calls coincide with action being taken by Centers for Spiritual Living at the national level.

“Transgender youth – an estimated 150,000 according to the Williams Institute at the UCSL School of Law – are our country’s children, and as our country’s children they deserve the respect and the space to grow in safety and in love regardless of which state they live in,” said CSL Spiritual Leader, Rev. Dr. Kenn Gordon. “This is their birthright, as it is every person’s birthright.

This marks the second time in less than a year that Centers for Spiritual Living has come out in favor of the rights of the LGBTQ community. Last year, CSL cancelled its annual convention in Tennessee following that state’s decision to allow counsellors and therapists to refuse to provide treatment for members of the LGBTQ community on personal grounds.

“Centers for Spiritual Living sees all people as holding equal value. As a faith community that is home to many members of the LGBTQ community, these recent events are difficult for many of us,” Gordon said. “My hope is that the goodness and the light of compassion will return so that all young people – regardless of gender identification – be respected and secure in our schools.”

ABOUT CENTER FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING VANCOUVER

CSL Vancouver was founded in 2014. It is part of a global community that originated in 1926 in the United States and today represents 400 spiritual communities in 30 countries around the world. Based in Golden, CO, the center teaching a New Thought philosophy focused on the study and practice of Religious Science which is a trans-denominational philosophy that honors all spiritual paths and lifestyles.

For more about Centers for Spiritual Living, see csl.org. For more about CSL Vancouver, see our website at: xxxx.xxx

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SAMPLE OPINION COLUMN

OVERVIEW

Opinion columns, by nature, are most powerful when they are both fact-based and personal. As such, this is example may be of limited use, but follows most of the common recommendations.

A good checklist of how to orient your opinion column can be found here in this [Writer’s Digest article](#).

[reference clergy source - authentic to you](#)

**Time for religion to stop bullying transgender students -
MOTHER/FATHER/GOD -**

By Rev. Dana Wilson, Vancouver Center for Spiritual Living

they don't know where to go with a response / don't be afraid to do this, and accept / bold stmt in principle /

It's been 65 years since Christine Jorgensen made the bold step to live life as the woman she was meant to be.

I wasn't even born when she made that courageous move that sent shockwaves throughout America and the world. I grew up in a world where this was medically possible, and yet here we are decades later struggling to accept people for who they choose to be.

Today, this is looking like a battle for control of the bathrooms. I've seen it all before.

I remember walking the high school halls as a young man, saddled with a girly name, trying to figure out if now was a safe time to go to the bathroom. If the wrong kinds of people were in there, it was a free-for-all, and school rules were that the bathrooms were off limits. No tattle-tailing allowed.

When Amendment IX came out, I celebrated. Not only for the children and young people who are transgender, but also for all those who feel bullied because they don't feel they fit in.

Less than 12 months later, and it seems all is lost once again. And it's the adults – once again – who have been the biggest bullies.

Even prior to this latest debacle, the National Center for Transgender Equality reported that 59% of transgender students have been denied access to their bathroom of their choosing. In other words, they're bullied by adults into taking action that feels unsafe.

And so our federal government is now throwing up its hands and saying: not my problem. Get your state to figure it out your school to figure it out. Transgender children already undergo so much pain, and just when it was about to be relieved, the government swooped in and took any hope of safety away.

At my center, we're having none of it. Instead, we're saying yes to free and safe washrooms.

This week, we took down the gender signs on the doors to all our Center washrooms. We want to make sure that everyone has access to a bathroom that suits their personal needs and their personal choice. That means fathers can change their baby's diapers. And it means, someone who may feel like a boy one day and a girl the next, is safe to go in either.

We are all God's children. God doesn't like us more if we're one gender or another, if we're one age or another, if we're one colour or another, or belong to one socio-economic group. God loves us all. Our biggest task as humans is to love ourselves, and love each other – in all of God's diversity and in every

twist and turn this life offers us.

If we want our children to learn not to bully, we need to set the tone. We, as adults, need to put down our bullying tactics, and speak to the humanity of who we are.

We're changing at our Center. At the end of day, if enough of us gather together, we can ensure all the provisions of Title IX come to fruition. We don't need a government to tell us how to do it, or to legislate or force us. We simply need to say yes.

Christine Jorgensen had the courage to say yes to the doctor to do the surgery that would make her whole. It's time for us to remove what no longer serves, and have the courage to do the same.

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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