

HOW THEN *Shall We Live?*

Covenantal Life in the Midst of Coronavirus & White Supremacy

Naomi Washington-Leapheart



Reverend Naomi Washington-Leapheart, a daughter of Detroit, is the Director for Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs for the city of Philadelphia. In this role, she serves as a public-facing leader, liaison, and subject matter expert for the Mayor's Office on local and national matters that impact diverse communities of faith. She also recruits and manages the Mayor's Commission on Faith-Based and Interfaith Affairs.

In just over one year, Naomi has deeply influenced the relationship between City Hall and Philadelphia's diverse religious communities. She has been City Hall's primary advisor on COVID-19 guidance and messaging for houses of worship, implementing multi-layered plans to build their capacity and resilience during this time of grief, loss, and difficulty. Her work has been featured in local, regional, and national radio and television programs, podcasts, and print publications.

Naomi is also an adjunct professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, where she teaches a variety of courses, including two that she designed: "Do Black Lives Matter to God? A Theological Exploration of Race, Suffering, and Resistance" and "Agitating for Justice: Faith-Rooted Community Organizing." In 2019, Naomi received the Pohlhaus-Stracciolini Award for Teaching Excellence. She is often invited to lecture and consult for various student and faculty groups within the

University, and as a multi-faith advisor to Campus Ministry, Naomi directs the Villanova Gospel Choir and preaches in ecumenical worship services.

Prior to working in city government, Naomi was the Faith Work Director for the National LGBTQ Task Force, the country's oldest national LGBTQ justice and equality group. In that role, she coordinated the Task Force's public faith messaging, led local, regional, and national faith gatherings, and trained faith leaders in LGBTQ advocacy.

Before joining the Task Force, Naomi was a faith organizer for POWER Interfaith, a multi-faith, multi-racial network of congregations in Southeastern and Central Pennsylvania. She also served as Co-Pastor and Minister of Music at the Wisdom's Table at St. Peter's United Church of Christ. Naomi's love for intellectual rigor began during her undergraduate years at University of Pennsylvania, and she has since earned the Master of Divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary and presented at annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion.

Naomi has spoken at congressional, state, and municipal hearings, and has held sacred space in sanctuaries and on the streets. She regularly preaches and teaches in diverse worship settings, national conferences, and religious and academic institutions around the country, including Vanderbilt University School of Divinity, Swarthmore College, Ithaca College, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, Wake Forest University School of Divinity, Chicago Theological Seminary, the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Council of Churches, and the International Council of Community Churches.

Naomi serves on the boards of SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change and Philadelphia Family Pride and is also a member of the Faith Advisory Council of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. She delights in singing with the Philadelphia Threshold Singers, an all-volunteer choir whose mission is to bring audible comfort and kindness to the bedsides of people living in hospice care.

In 2019, Naomi was named one of nine "LGBTQ Faith Leaders to Watch" by the Center for American Progress and was included in The Root 100, an annual list of the nation's most influential African-Americans, ages 25-45.

Rev. Naomi is proudly affiliated with the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries and is grounded in life and love by her wife, their teenager, and their family pets.