

An Open Letter from Ankeny Religious Leaders:

Dear Ankeny People,

We, pastors and leaders in Ankeny, are deeply committed to the community here, both within the congregations we serve and in the larger community. We write today out of concern for the community, particularly the way we listen to and interact with one another.

We write today because of recent events related to a School Board Candidate Forum, planned and hosted jointly by the Ankeny Chamber of Commerce, Ankeny Community Network, and Ankeny AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) Cluster, scheduled for October 24, at 5:30pm at Prairie Trail Elementary. These three organizations, representing a broad and diverse range of Ankeny residents, planned to ask all ten school board candidates about their views on education issues that impact our community.

However, the Chamber of Commerce chose to pull out of the event because of personal attacks made against the Chamber leadership.

We are deeply concerned that personal attacks of any kind would be made against a leader in our community because of a cooperative, nonpartisan effort to hear from school board candidates. We renounce and reject threats, bullying, and personal attacks as incompatible with Christian living, no matter what.

Instead, we call on the people of Ankeny, especially our fellow siblings in the body of Christ, to follow Jesus' command to love our neighbors. Loving our neighbor requires us to listen to and respect one another, even when we disagree. Loving our neighbor means getting to know our neighbors, wholeheartedly engaging with open minds instead of mistrust or outright hostility.

Furthermore, we are grateful for our democratic system that allows the residents of Ankeny to elect school officials to guide the district. We commend all those who participate in voting, and we encourage them to understand the candidates and the impact they might have on our schools.

We are grateful also for the incredible educators in Ankeny, including not only teachers but also administrators and support staff. Education is important, and wise leaders can improve even more the learning experience our community provides to the children of Ankeny.

We hope that the planned candidate forum can continue with all the school board candidates.

We hope that many residents of Ankeny will attend to listen and learn.

We hope for robust election-day turnout.

Above all, we hope for everyone who follows Jesus to act with integrity and love toward all their neighbors.

In Jesus Christ,

Fr. Michael Amadeo

Rev. Owen Cayton

Fr. Jason Lee

Rev. Dr. Tim Olson

Mr. Tom Primmer, OblSB

Rev. Travis Segar

Rev. Beth Wartick

Rev. Vincent Bete

Rev. Mike Janes

Rev. Barbara Wise Lewczak

Rev. Eric Pasanchin

Pastor Scott Rains

Pastor John Wagner

Rev. Lana Williams