

**For Immediate Release**

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## **Why We Stay: The Changing Role of Women in our Faith Communities**

### *An Interfaith symposium*

**Cincinnati, Ohio** — There are long-held beliefs that Christianity, Islam, and Judaism do not empower women. Yet, women have been navigating this reality for many decades. On Sunday, September 20, 2015, 2-6:30pm, at the Cintas Center on the campus of Xavier University, explore the growing conversations around faith, feminism, and spirituality in a one-day symposium entitled, "Why We Stay... The Changing Role of Women in our Faith Communities." All genders from diverse faith backgrounds are invited to this free symposium.

Feminists argue that you cannot be a true feminist if you are a practicing Christian, Muslim, or Jew. Likewise, religious practitioners claim that you cannot be a true Christian, Muslim, or Jew if you support feminist values. Nevertheless, women who practice these religious traditions and hold feminist values are not uncommon, and the question "Why do you stay?" is one that is frequently asked of them.

Gina Messina-Dysert, Jennifer Zobair and Amy Levin, co-editors of the soon to be released book, "Faithfully Feminist: Jewish, Christian, & Muslim Feminists on Why We Stay" will participate in this interfaith discussion. In "*Faithfully Feminist*," 15 Christian women, 15 Muslim women, and 15 Jewish women, all of whom self-identify as feminists and as women of faith, share their stories of struggle and faith in a collection of insightful, witty, and provocative essays. The contributors to this anthology respond with passion and courage to critics who tell them that they cannot be both feminists and women of faith.

Judith Plaskow, the first Jewish feminist to identify herself as a theologian and professor emerita of Religious Studies at Manhattan College, Rosemary Redford Ruether, a pioneer Christian feminist theologian, internationally acclaimed church historian, and professor of Feminist Theology, and Amina Wadud, Islamic feminist scholar, teacher, and activist, co-authors of the book's Foreword, will join the co-editors and experts from our local faith communities in this interfaith dialogue.

The seminar is a collaborative program of the American Jewish Committee, Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati, The Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, Institute for Spirituality and Social Justice, Jewish Community Relations Council, The Ethics/Religion & Society Program, The Center for Diversity & Inclusion, The Center for Interfaith Community Engagement, The Dorothy Day Center for Faith & Justice, XU Gender & Diversity Studies, XU Mission and Identity, and XU Theology Department.

“Why We Stay recognizes the creativity and vitality that women bring to everything that they do, especially to their faith traditions,” said Dr. Gillian Ahlgren, Professor of Theology and Director, Institute for Spirituality & Social Justice, Xavier University. “In this gathering we recognize and honor women's contributions, past and present, and give them a space to continue to envision their faith-filled future. The fact that this conference is deliberately interfaith helps us draw from our common experiences as women and forge new connections going forward.”

Sandy Kaltman, vice president, AJC Cincinnati, stated, “AJC is committed to interfaith cooperation and dialogue because it promotes mutual understanding and moves us towards a safer and more peaceful world. The issue of women and faith is important to people of all religions and we are delighted to participate in this collective conversation.”

Shakila Ahmad, president, Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati added, “This event opens an important dialogue for Muslim women with unique, passionate women engaged in the Muslim, Christian and Jewish faith communities, locally and nationally. The interfaith community can accomplish so much for and with women if we are able to build better understanding of one another, our mutual challenges within our faith communities as well as our successes.”

Why We Stay: The Changing Role of Women in our Faith Communities symposium was supported in part by Xavier University Women of Excellence, Xavier University Office of the President's, The Brueggeman Center for Dialogue, and the Jewish Women's Endowment Fund of the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati.

For more information or to register for Why We Stay: The Changing Role of Women in our Faith Communities, call 513-745-3922 or email [issj@xavier.edu](mailto:issj@xavier.edu).

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