

President/Vice President Candidates



Chris Pett – Candidate for President

Chicago, IL

Meli Barber – Candidate for Vice President

Indianapolis, IN

Chris Pett Statement:

I am a long-term member of Dignity/Chicago and DignityUSA. I've served several terms on the Dignity/Chicago Board and as Chapter President. Over several years I supported DignityUSA Board projects as a consultant, specifically the 2001 re-imagining project and strategic planning work. I served on the DignityUSA Board from 2015-2017 before assuming the role of national president. I began my career as a priest of the Diocese of Joliet and, after transitioning to inactive ministry, became an Organization Development Professional working for both for-profit and non-profit organizations. I retired in 2017 and focus my work now on DignityUSA and our mission locally and nationally.

Education Background: BA, Psychology, M.Div., M.R.E. and M.S.O.D.

Meli Barber Statement:

I am a member of Dignity/Indianapolis and DignityUSA where I currently work with our hospitality and social efforts. I began my career working as a director of religious education and youth ministry; I left that position to propose my now wife, as I knew that we could not live openly as long as I worked in ministry. I presently work for as a foster parent recruiter for a non-profit foster care agency in Indianapolis. I am excited about the opportunity to serve as the Vice President of DignityUSA and to continue to work towards justice and inclusion for all LGBT+ Catholics.

Education Background: BA, Theology & Philosophy, MA Theology, MSW

Joint Statement:

We are both honored and excited to put our names forward as candidates for the offices of President and Vice-President of DignityUSA. We believe we each bring unique experiences and perspectives to the mission and work of DignityUSA, within the context of much broader justice issues impacting LGBTQI Catholics in our Church, society and world. One of us represents much of what has brought us to this day; while the other represents emerging and changing perspectives on our future as a 21st century organization and movement.

As we emerge from our 50th anniversary milestone, our vision for DignityUSA is hopeful and compelling.

We believe that:

- Our mission and work are as relevant and vital today as they have been for 50+ years;
- We possess the gifts and conviction to endure the hard battle of taking down injustices aimed at LGBTQI Catholics, as well as those found at the intersection of faith, society and humanity;

- We remain the go-to voice – locally, nationally and now globally – of LGBTQI Catholics; that our leadership is valued, respected and highly sought by those in need; and
- We model a vision of the Church Jesus intends for us; that we live and breathe the Church that many hope for.

Looking ahead to the next two years following the 50th anniversary celebration, we will focus attention on a number of areas that emerged from our Jubilee discussions, including: strengthening/resourcing our chapters and virtual communities as truly diverse expressions of the justice movement, developing next generation leaders, expanding our voice nationally and globally, and offering educational and family-related resources.

We, together with the support and contributions of our extended DignityUSA family, commit ourselves to bringing this vision into reality in these next two years, to the best of our ability.

Board of Director Candidates (in random order) Vote for up to 3 Candidates



Ellen Euclide
Cleveland Heights, OH

Candidate Statement:

The humble, lived examples of Dignity members have shown me value and beauty in being proudly catholic and queer. I hope that by becoming involved with the board I can help others to have this same experience. I have not been active in a local Dignity community, but I can truly say that even small interactions online and casual conversations at the national gatherings have shaped the way I live my Catholicism and my queerness.

As a married queer woman in my 30s, who has been lucky enough to find a parish where I can live openly, I believe I can help DignityUSA to adapt and grow with the current moment. My wife and I are very involved in our parish, but getting married last year meant painful decisions and conversations. Knowing the loving, committed couples we love met through Dignity helped us to navigate this reality and embrace the messiness. Although Dignity is adapting and growing to attract younger members, the communities it has historically supported and the examples that its longtime members is one of its greatest strengths. Spaces for intergenerational friendship and witness are rare, and with this Dignity enriches our queer community.

I am very committed to anti-racism work and have been active with SURJ, CTA's Anti-racism team and a Catholic Worker publication devoted to issues of racism and diversity. I am impressed by Dignity's commitment to self-examination and anti-racism and hope that I could continue to place that at the forefront of the board's work. I also think that the Church Worker justice work is urgent and important and that my history organizing with Call To Action could help promote this work.

Current Employment: Costas Network Law Center, LLC – Bilingual Paralegal

Education Background: BA Spanish – Kent State University; MSc Public Policy, KU Leuven certificate in Paralegal Studies from Ursuline College.

Professional Skills and/or Training:

Volunteer Experience: Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless – Board Member; Showing up for Racial Justice NEO - Steering Committee Member; Catholic Worker Anti-Racism Review – Editorial Team; St. Dominic's Catholic Church – Parish Council. Three Trackers Adaptive Sports (instructor) 2015-present; (seasonally) Su Casa Catholic Worker (community member) 2007- 2013; Pete's Place Catholic Worker (co-founder) 2011-2013; Redwoods National Park (visitor center) 2014; Chicago New Sanctuary Coalition (planning team) 2011-2013.



Rev. Jason Carson Wilson
Washington, DC

Candidate Statement:

God loves everyone equally, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. That was something, which I understood intrinsically, even as a Black questioning boy in rural downstate Illinois. However, growing up in a conservative evangelical church made it impossible to live into that reality fully by being who I was born to be. That church, where I heard God call me to the ministry, outed me. That traumatic experience turned me from the church and my call until I discovered the United Church of Christ, a predominantly Open & Affirming (welcoming to LGBTQ+ people) denomination. The UCC not only welcomed me as member, but on Nov. 4, 2018, I became ordained UCC clergy. Community and sharing a worship experience different from my Protestant heritage with my partner have brought and kept me at Dignity Washington.

Being a member of Dignity Washington has been an educational experience. Witnessing how my fellow Dignitarians are demoralized by the church makes me thankful for the faction of my denomination that supports LGBTQ+ people fully. But, in the vein of to whom much is given much is expected and because I am called to fight against injustice everywhere, Dignity Washington helps fuel my passion for LGBTQ+ rights advocacy. That advocacy included speaking at the United Nations as part of the Ethics of Reciprocity Conference, during which I referenced Dignity Washington's influence on me. That influence prompted me to want to share my queer theological insights during the 2018 Dignity Young Adult

Caucus Retreat as a way of reminding them that they are, indeed, fabulous creations of God. I relish the chance to bring my full self to the DignityUSA board, in order to provide new perspectives that help the MOVEMENT grow. As a social justice minister and policy advocate, I am committed to growing movements. In fact, I am the founding executive director of the Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative, a domestic and international policy advocacy organization focused on LGBTQ+ people and people of color. Joining DignityUSA's Board of Directors would be an extension of that advocacy work and also an opportunity to further efforts already begun to widen the circle. Using my skills as a public theologian and social justice activist would allow me to live into that commitment. My presence would also enhance the diversity of DignityUSA.

Current Employment: UCC Minister

Educational Background: BS News-Editorial University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Master of Divinity, Chicago Theological Seminary

Professional Skills and/or Training: Certified Life Coach, Transformation Academy

Volunteer Service: Member - National Religious Leadership Roundtable, (Current); Member - Fellowship of Reconciliation Holding Company Board (Current); Member - Potomac Association (UCC) Justice & Witness Committee (Current); Chair - Central Atlantic Conference (UCC) LGBTQ+ Task Force (Current)



Rev. Ann Penick
Alexandria, VA

Candidate Statement:

I would be honored to serve on the DignityUSA Board of Directors. I believe serving on the Board would be a great opportunity for me to be part of developing and growing this ministry and community with LGBTQIA and Allies. I have been journeying with Dignity since June of 2014 when I first presided at Mass with Dignity Washington when they began their discernment process to include women presiders. At the same time, I was attending and participating in some of the New Ways Ministry events in the Baltimore area. I believe I am part of a community that both accepts and supports me. I want, with my service on the DignityUSA Board, to bring that same acceptance and support to all Dignity members as well as others of the LGBTQIA community and their Allies as I stand witness for an alternative to institutional Church injustice that we all have experienced.

Current Employment: Ordained Roman Catholic Womanpriest with Dignity/Washington and Dignity Northern Virginia, Licensed Mental Health Clinician/Case Manager – George Mason University Psychological Services Office. I also serve a community of young families in Washington, DC known as “The DC Family Mass”.

Educational Background BA History – Northern Illinois University; MA 19th/20th Century European History – Loyola University Chicago; MA Agency Counseling – University of Alabama-Birmingham; Lay Formation

Ministry Certification – Diocese of Birmingham; Clinical Pastoral Education (3 units) – Charleston, SC; MA Pastoral Ministry – Boston College.

Professional Skills and/or Training: Former high school teacher and adjunct college professor. Pastoral Associate, Campus Minister and College Chaplain. Psychological counselor and case manager at George Mason University, I have skills and training in Leadership, putting together and presenting PowerPoint presentations to various groups, fundraising, Music (singing and playing guitar), and Liturgical Dance

Volunteer Service: Music Ministry at various parishes and Catholic communities in IL, AL, SC, MA and MD (1971-2011). Children's Liturgist in SC and MA (1996-2008). Hospice Volunteer (SC), 1995-2000. 52% Women's Political Action Group, contributing writer for newsletter, (SC, 1995-2000). Retreat Planner (1997-2008). Served on RCWP National Retreat Planning Committee (2015).



Martin Witchger
Washington, DC

Candidate Statement:

After several years in various leadership roles in DignityUSA, including the most recent two years on the national board, I continue to be energized by and committed to our mission of supporting and advocating for LGBTQI equality in our church and society.

As part of the marketing and membership committees, I would like to continue to dedicate my digital marketing and social media strategy skills to help further our reach, expand our membership, and overall help DignityUSA continue to grow in influence and stature. There are millions of LGBTQI and Catholics and allies that have yet to know about DignityUSA, or be connected to us in some way, and I strongly believe with a concerted effort of tried and true digital marketing and engagement methods, we can broaden our base of supporters and members by the thousands. Doing this will help us raise more money to do this important work, be more powerful in realizing our mission, and ensure our legacy.

I have found much meaning, personally and spiritually, from being part of DignityUSA and my local chapter of Dignity/Washington, in helping us be the best organizations we can be. We should continue to prioritize a commitment to equity and inclusion, centering the most marginalized in our community, especially trans individuals and people of color.

As a member of a younger generation, I find it increasingly important for DignityUSA to also practice intersectionality and that many in our generation expect it. We must recognize that our plight for justice for LGBTQI Catholics is wrapped up in the broader movement for justice and stand in solidarity with others in the fight for racial, social, economic, and environmental justice.

I'd be honored to continue serving on the board for another 2-year term in order to help realize my vision for a more digitally savvy and broadened membership of DignityUSA and my commitment to equity, inclusion, and justice in all our work.

Current Employment: Senior Online Campaigner, Sierra Club

Educational background: BA Anthropology & Environmental Studies – Washington University, St. Louis

Professional Skills and/or Training: Digital communications, digital marketing, social media management, persuasive & advocacy writer.

Volunteer background: Dignity Young Adult Caucus Co-Chair: 2013-15; Dignity/Washington Young Adult Group Leader: 2013-present; DignityUSA Board Member: 2017-present.