



ALBUQUERQUE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
trust • equity • integrity • accountability

To: Executive Committee
From: Albuquerque Community Foundation Leadership Team
Date: September 5, 2023
Re: Passion City Church Recommendation

Through deep discussion and analysis, the Leadership Team recommends funding the donor advised fund grant distribution request to Passion City Church. The enclosed recommendation from the Horizon Forum supports the staff recommendation and provides their analysis and review of Passion City Church.

The Leadership Team reached full consensus on this recommendation and has provided additional context on this recommendation.

The Totality of the Situation

The Leadership Team recognizes the complexity of the legal, policy and values context for the Foundation at this moment. It is important to consider that the Foundation:

- Will make a good faith effort to act upon the advice and recommendations of Donor but may accept or reject any advice or recommendations of Donor in the sole and absolute discretion of the Foundation, as stated in all donor advised fund agreements
- Has board-approved values of Trust, Equity, Accountability, and Integrity
- Has a board-approved policy on dEi
- Has a board-approved strategic plan, with a stated goal to reach organizational sustainability and grow our endowment with the objective to “Diversify our donor base and attract new donors so our donor base reflects the community we service in regards to race/ethnicity; gender and gender identity; sexual orientation; religious, spiritual, or ethical practices/values systems; age; ability; veteran status; socio-economic status, etc.”
- Has a draft Values-Aligned/anti-hate grant distribution policy in process, not formally approved by the Board
- Has a draft anti-hate statement, not formally approved by the Board
- Has an aspirational commitment to “dEi in our DNA”.

As stated in its recommendation, the Horizon Forum notes that the assessment is “intended to supplement, not replace, Albuquerque Community Foundation’s own due diligence process.” However, based on the context of the approved and draft items listed above, the Leadership Team recognizes the weight of the Horizon Forum’s recommendation as a third-party consultant in this request.



ALBUQUERQUE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
trust • equity • integrity • accountability

Passion City Church: Areas of Concern

Listed below are some areas of concern surrounding Passion City Church. Staff will continue to monitor the activities of this organization to ensure consistent behavior and activities.

- The controversy surrounding white privilege and slavery
- The past discrimination and denial of services towards the LGBTQ+ community

Values-Aligned Philanthropy

Though deeply complex, the investigation of this distribution request has been very beneficial for the Foundation's Values-Aligned policy work. Below are some highlights of our learnings for deeper consideration as our policy development continues:

- Our legal advice has established that the "sole and absolute discretion" provision in the donor advised fund agreements solidifies the Foundation's ultimate discretion. This is important to consider when lawsuits are threatened as a coercive tactic.
- Our policy must provide the Foundation the right to conduct due diligence on any organization at any time.
- The consideration of religious organizations, values alignment, and community services offered will be a complex aspect of our policy development.
- We must adopt an anti-hate statement to further guide our values-aligned approach.
- We must continue to engage the full board in learning to support the deeply complex decisions these types of requests will require.
- We must deeply consider our commitment to values, dEi (noting the prioritization and ultimate goal of Equity in our intentional notation) and the power and privilege this Foundation has to be agents of change in our community, particularly for those communities most disproportionately harmed and affected by inequity.

Relationship with Affected Communities

Community Foundations are faced with an inherent conflict based on our position in the community. We can make efforts to support and build trust with under-represented and under-funded communities by building relationships, participating in learning, directing funding, increasing awareness, establishing affinity-based giving circles, among many other mechanisms. We understand that the intersections with critical issues (i.e. homelessness, mental health, education, etc) cause many communities of color and other communities of protected classes to be disproportionately affected.

We can intentionally invest and support these communities, and at the same time, direct grants through donor advised funds to organizations that oppose, dehumanize, harm, spread misinformation, work to dismantle civil rights, etc. to these very communities.

The complexity of this reality is why we must adopt a values-based approach, deepen our learning and commitment to equity and use our influence, grant dollars, and sole and absolute discretion to challenge systems of oppression and harm.



ALBUQUERQUE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
trust • equity • integrity • accountability

For the Executive Committee's awareness, staff will be engaging in a process to identify an organization from the affected communities to receive a grant double the amount of this request, totaling \$600. These grants will be funded through the CEO Fund or the Impact Fund, to be determined by staff.

Recommendation

The Leadership Team reached full consensus and recommends funding the grant distribution request to Passion City Church with the following provision:

- Along with the notification of this decision, the donor will be informed that the Foundation reserves the right to re-evaluate this organization should further grant distribution requests be presented.

The Leadership Team felt comfortable approving this distribution because:

- Amends made from the white privilege comment were clear in the Horizon Forum report
- The Horizon Forum report also confirmed that there was no additional harmful public statements made
- The organization does encourage and engage in charity work
- The organization's stance on LGBTQ+ is similar to many other mainstream Christian religions and we are not yet in a policy place to consider how to address how this arises throughout our distributions.
- The organization's primary focus is not the spread of misinformation on the LGBTQ+ community.



Assessment: Passion City Church

Prepared for the Albuquerque Community Foundation
August 7, 2023



Council on
Foundations

Values-Aligned Philanthropy Board Discussion Guide

Introduction

Philanthropy has a duty to ensure charitable dollars are used responsibly and do not fund groups espousing hate, extremism, or violence.

The Council on Foundations' Values-Aligned Philanthropy initiative equips foundations with the tools they need to develop policies and procedures around this important topic, and we have created several resources to support you in this process:

- A [white paper](#), which includes a landscape scan of the philanthropic sector's work to combat hate funding
- An [online resource hub](#) with updated links to resources and sample policies
- A [toolkit specifically for community foundations](#) with a step-by-step guide, sample policies, and other resources

It's important to be proactive with this work. Enacting a values-aligned philanthropy policy gives clear direction should concerns arise and minimizes the chance of a problematic grant in the first place. It is also a clear statement to donors, staff, and your community that you will not fund hate or extremist organizations.

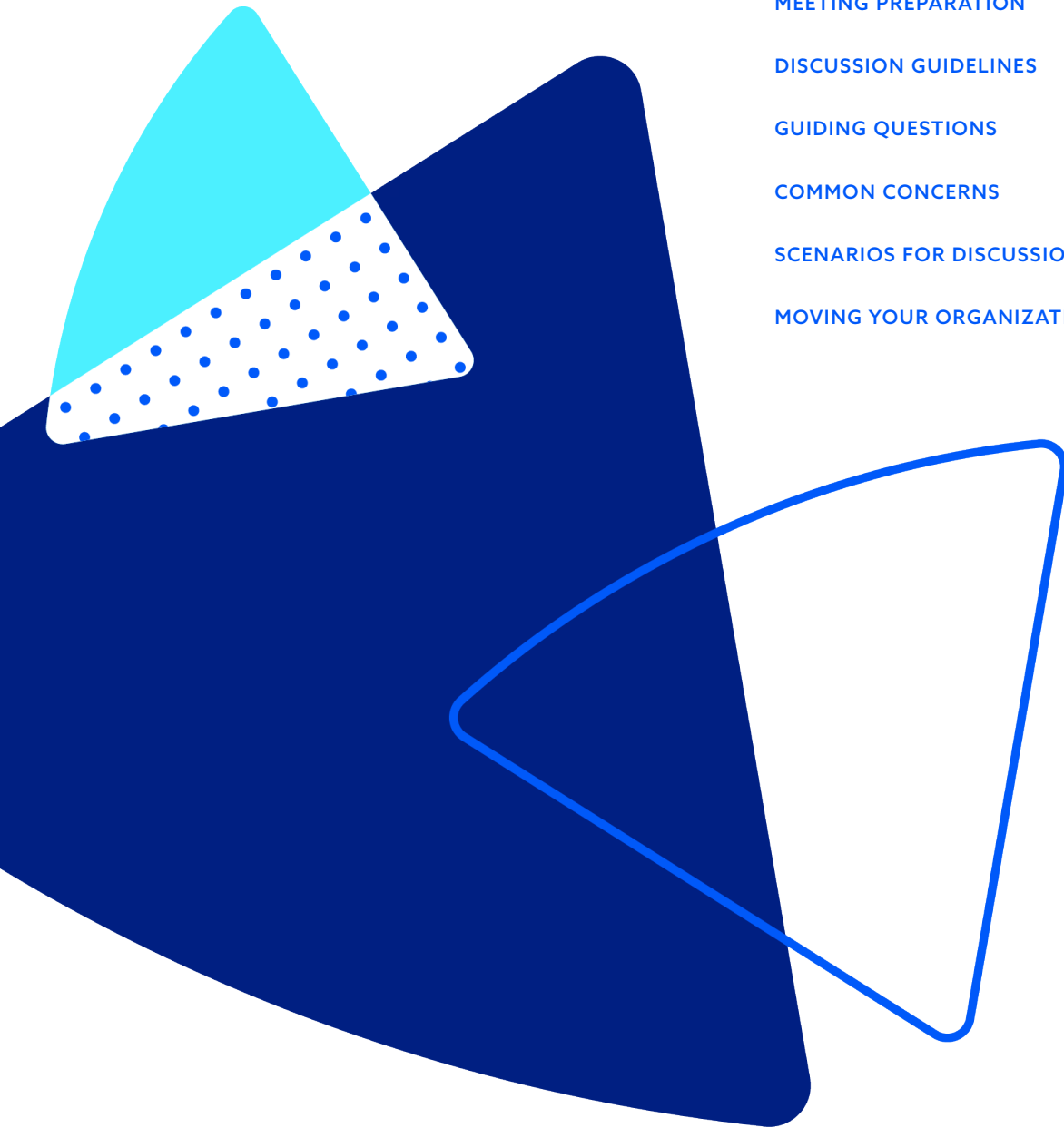
Community foundation leaders who have implemented value-aligned philanthropy principles have stressed the importance of ensuring boards are committed to and invested in this process from the beginning. Having the perspective and buy-in of board leadership helps ensure your policy reflects your organization's values and has full commitment from key stakeholders. Foundations also report, however, that securing board investment in this process can present challenges.

The Council is grateful to the staff of foundations and Philanthropy-Serving Organizations who contributed to this toolkit, and we especially want to thank Roey Thorpe for her work researching and writing this report. Through this collaborative approach, we hope to advance philanthropy's mission of serving the greater good

Contents

This toolkit is designed to support community foundation leaders in communicating to their organization's board the importance of implementing values-aligned grantmaking policies and guidelines.

MEETING PREPARATION	04
DISCUSSION GUIDELINES	05
GUIDING QUESTIONS	06
COMMON CONCERNS	07
SCENARIOS FOR DISCUSSION	09
MOVING YOUR ORGANIZATION FORWARD	11



Meeting Preparation

As with all meetings on complicated topics, thoughtful planning will make your discussion more successful.

- **Identify a desired outcome.** Will this be an educational meeting introducing the group to values-aligned philanthropy? Or is the group ready to discuss a new policy or refine an existing one?
- **Choose a discussion leader.** Someone who is trusted and has skill at facilitation
- **Develop a clear agenda.** Provide appropriate background materials to frame the conversation, include discussion questions, and ensure you have enough time for a meaningful conversation
- **Pre-empt potential concerns.** Familiarity with the group and the topic will allow the discussion leader to recognize potential issues before they arise. It may be helpful to schedule one-on-one conversations with individual board members to answer questions and address concerns. We have included answers to common questions and concerns below
- **Consider the setting.** A virtual meeting may necessitate an additional person monitoring the chat for questions, or you may want to use breakout rooms; in-person meetings may require extra time and space, particularly if you break into small group discussions
- **Account for multiple learning and participation styles.** Create an environment in which a wide variety of voices feel welcome to share their perspectives. Not everyone processes best in a large group; make sure to offer additional platforms for participants to share feedback, such as through email or one-on-one conversations

- **Determine next steps.** There will likely be several conversations about this topic at the board level. Consider developing a timeline, and ensure you have a process for sharing takeaways with staff

Based on your objectives, consider one or more of the following activities:

- **Share [selected articles](#)** that discuss the philanthropic funding of hate ahead of the meeting. Come prepared with discussion questions meant to expand understanding of the issue as it relates to the foundation's work
- **Have an external speaker join** the conversation who can discuss the importance of this work and respond to board members' questions
- **Engage staff** who would implement these policies, such as your donor services or community impact team, to add depth to your discussion and give the board information about the practical implications of this work
- **Discuss hypothetical scenarios** to pressure-test existing policies (see [p. 9](#) for sample hypotheticals)

After your initial conversations, decide on your next steps to develop a policy and process. If your board is ready to jump in, consider forming a committee of staff and board members to develop a draft policy for further discussion. If the board needs more time, determine whether additional educational conversations or training would be helpful.

Council staff are available to present to your board on this topic, and organizations such as [the Horizon Forum](#) offer trainings for foundation staff.

Discussion Guidelines

Clear discussion guidelines encourage honesty and help avoid confusion.

While specific guidelines may vary based on your organization's dynamics, here are examples of guidelines the Council has found helpful:

- **Ensure confidentiality.** Maintaining confidentiality is important to creating an environment where participants can discuss this issue freely. Stories and other identifying information should stay in the room; lessons and ideas can leave. This is commonly referred to as the [Chatham House Rule](#)
- **Take space – and make space.** Participate, but also make space for others to engage. Participants should be mindful of how much they have spoken and make an effort to ensure the voices of their colleagues are heard
- **Create room for a variety of viewpoints.** Speak only from your own perspective; ask questions to better understand the perspectives being shared
- **Assume best intentions and listen with an open mind.** Treat each other's comments as a "first draft" and give feedback clearly but with empathy
- **Be present.** Listen deeply and participate actively. Avoid multitasking, especially in virtual environments

Guiding Questions

These questions assume a board that is skeptical but open-minded. Make sure to choose only a few questions and adjust as appropriate for your audience.

In general, what is the board's responsibility when it comes to developing a policy to prevent the funding of hate and extremism?

The board is the final determinant of who to fund and who to not. Ultimately, the foundation acts on behalf of the board when enforcing these policies – and when it funds problematic groups.

What is our current policy, if any? In what ways is it successful? Where does it fall short?

Review your existing due diligence and/or diversity, equity, and inclusion policies. Under these terms, when do you say “no” to a donor advisor? When do you not make a grant? What procedure, if any, do you follow?

How would an anti-hate funding policy better align our grantmaking with our foundation's values?

Community foundations are often mission-driven, values-oriented organizations – connect the need for a policy to your foundation's mission and the values that guide your grantmaking. Consider the ways your foundation embodies certain values and how funding hate could conflict with these values.

“Creating and launching a new grantmaking policy takes time for thoughtfulness. Don't feel like you have to start from scratch. Other community foundations are happy to share their experiences. We knew ahead of time that we would want to draft a more detailed policy in the future. You can always update your policy in the future to better reflect your values should the need arise.”

May Leong

Foundation consultant; former East Bay Community Foundation senior partnership officer

Where do we draw the line between freedom of speech/expression and hate/extremism?

For some foundations, it makes sense to take a stand on certain controversial issues. For others, the line may be promoting violence. Discuss what makes sense for your community and your organization.

Given the community we support, what is the right framing for this policy?

Are you developing an anti-hate funding policy, or are you updating your due diligence policy and donor agreement?

How hands-on should the board be with this work?

Boards will likely need to approve a final policy, but this question will help determine how involved they will be in developing that policy. Will the board lead? Should you form a working group that includes both board members and staff?

Common Concerns

How are others in the sector responding to the philanthropic funding of hate and extremism?

Many in the philanthropic sector, including community foundations, believe this is an urgent issue that responds to the crises of our time. One of the most powerful responses from community foundations has been the adoption of policies and procedures that prevent funding hate and extremism. While there is no way to know exactly how many foundations have put values-aligned grantmaking policies in place, we have engaged with over a hundred community foundations that have started developing or have already implemented such policies. For examples, see [our resource hub](#).

Doesn't the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) screen for hate and extremism?

Many believe that organizations with a 501(c)(3) or other nonprofit status have been thoroughly screened by the IRS for hate and extremism. This is not always the case, and any given organization:

- Might engage in different types of programming, not all of which are related to hate and extremism
- May evolve over time, sometimes toward anti-social goals
- May have a mission that appears positive and prosocial but utilizes tactics that involve extremism and/or harm to specific communities
- May deliberately conceal the truth of their purpose or practices to stay off the radar of an under-resourced federal agency.
- Might engage in hate or extremist activity that is protected by the First Amendment or is otherwise legal

- May not have undergone a thorough screening due to the IRS's lack of resources, particularly if the goals or activities of the organization in question have changed since its initial approval

Organizations that lose their tax-exempt status for hate and extremism are few and far between. In recent years, public accusations that the IRS is acting out of political motivation have made it even more difficult for it to act without overwhelming evidence.

Are we legally permitted to refuse to fund an organization that operates counter to our policy?

The short answer is yes. Refusing to fund hate and extremism is not only legal, it's typically very much aligned with a community foundation's core mission. Some donors may believe that putting restrictions on where the funds can go is a violation of First Amendment rights, but this has little legal support:

- Because a foundation is not a state actor, refusing to approve a donor's request does not implicate any First Amendment issues
- When funds are given to a foundation for a tax benefit, the foundation assumes fiscal and legal responsibility for those funds per the grant agreement

To ensure this does not become an issue, be upfront with donors about your values-aligned grantmaking policy. For new donors, this should be part of any grant agreement; for those that already have funds at your organization, plan on reaching out to them to inform them of your updated policy.

How do we define hate and extremism without appearing to take a partisan political stance?

Some foundations draw a distinction between belief and action: It's one thing for an organization to have values, even those that some may disagree with, and it's quite another to take or encourage action that may result in harm, especially when such action includes targeting individuals or groups. This is a powerful distinction to draw, and it allows an organization to dictate what is out of bounds when it comes to funding while remaining vocally committed to free speech, personal expression, and non-partisan social activism.

Our [toolkit for community foundations](#) has multiple examples of policies that address these issues in ways that reflect an organization's values and activities.

Scenarios for Discussion

The foundations in this section are fictional, but the scenarios described are each based on real-world situations.

The following situations can be used as examples of the importance and utility of having a values-aligned grantmaking policy in place, or they can be used as hypothetical stress-tests for your current policies or the policies you're considering.

As you think through how your foundation would respond, you can ask the following questions to guide the discussion and consider how different policy proposals would react in similar circumstances:

- What aspect of the situations would intersect with or contradict your organization's mission, stance, or values?
- What additional information would you need in such situations in order to know if the organization should act on its concerns?
- If the concerns are validated, what actions should you take?
- Why would it be the best course of action?
- Are there any risks in that course of action?
- How will you inform both internal and external stakeholders of your decision?

SCENARIO 1

Dahlia Community Foundation has given grants to support the development of infrastructure in small community-based nonprofits. One of the organizations that received funding was Lift Up, a mutual aid organization focusing on rural communities. Lift Up was in the news because three of the organization's five staff members were arrested for their participation in the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. Lift Up's board of directors refuses to fire the staff involved, saying it would be a violation of their right to free speech. One major donor, who is also an influential former state legislator and a staunch conservative who is very concerned about extremism, was outraged. He called the community foundation's executive director demanding the foundation cease support for this organization and followed it up with a letter to the entire board of directors.

SCENARIO 2

Magnolia Community Foundation is dedicated to supporting and strengthening their diverse urban community, which includes residents representing many different countries and cultures. The community foundation funds the Beating Heart Center (BHC), which provides pregnancy testing as well as counseling, diapers, and nursery supplies to pregnant women. To access these resources, women are required to watch a video that states life begins at conception and features testimonials from women who had abortions and regretted their decision.

Magnolia Community Foundation staff and board members have fended off concerns about BHC from pro-choice community members, citing the importance of honoring a wide range of views and cultural beliefs in their community as well as the resources that BHC provides to pregnant women. Recently, however, BHC sent supporters links to partners that included a website featuring photos of doctors who perform abortions in the city, along with their home addresses and phone numbers. The photos of the doctors are overlaid with crosshairs from a firearm sight, implying the doctors were in the line of fire.

SCENARIO 3

Petunia Community Foundation board members receive an email after their annual fundraising event from the executive director of the Petunia LGBTQ Pride Center, a grantee, who was shocked to learn at the event that the Petunia Community Foundation also funds the Everlasting Life Fellowship (ELF) church. ELF is well-known for a program that claims to “cure homosexuals” through “conversion therapy” and strict religious supervision. This practice has been debunked and condemned by the American Psychiatric Association and every major medical organization, but it is in line with ELF’s religious beliefs, which prohibit same-sex relationships.

Petunia Community Foundation does fund ELF, but the funding is for a soup kitchen that the church runs that feeds more than 50 local families each week. The Pride Center director feels that the soup kitchen is just a way this anti-LGBTQ church tries to appear mainstream. She requests that the community foundation cease funding ELF immediately due to the harm the church is doing to the LGBTQ community.

SCENARIO 4

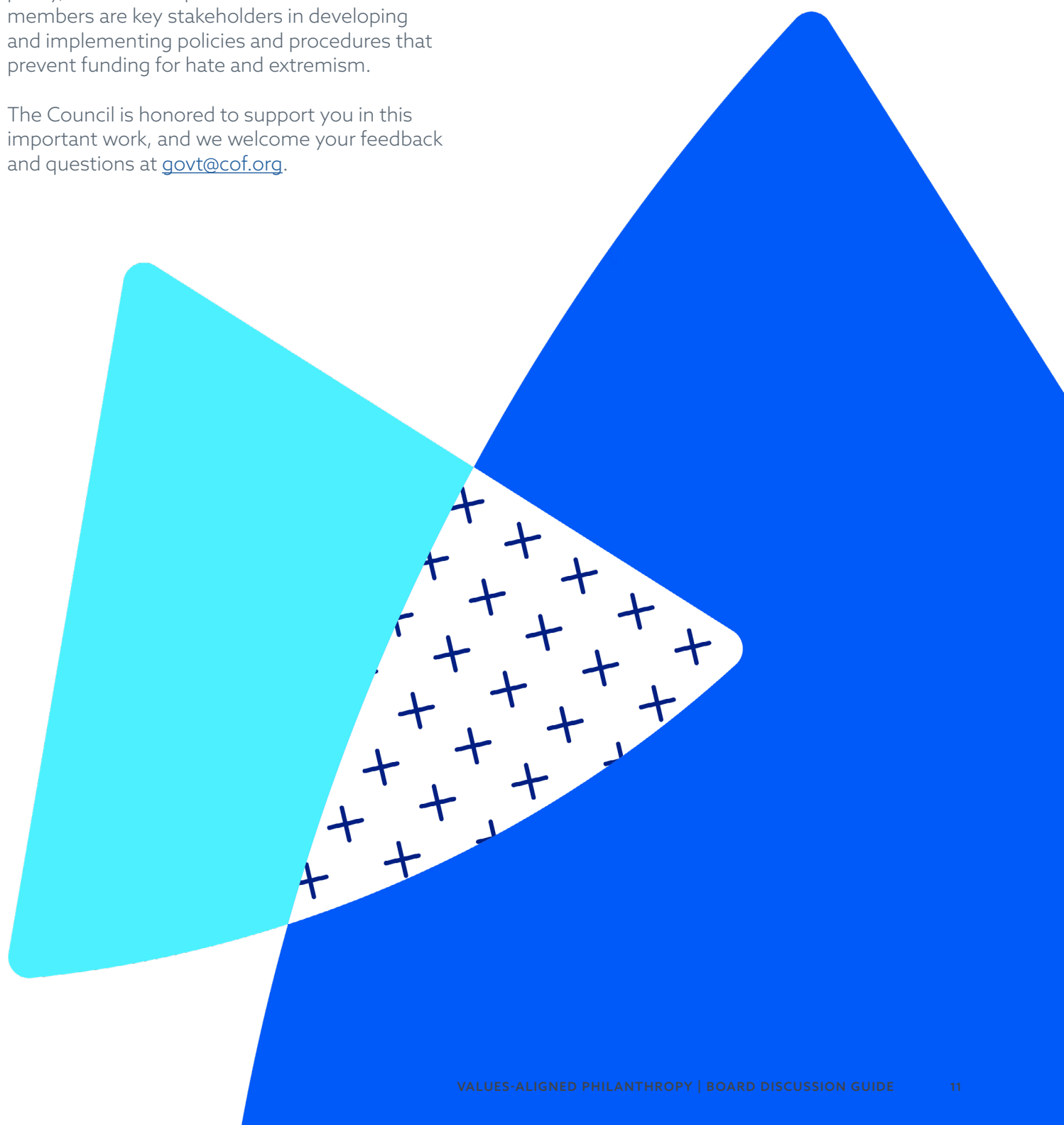
Evergreen Community Foundation is committed to supporting environmental and climate justice issues, and they both provide direct funding and host donor education programs encouraging community members to use their donor-advised funds to support organizations working on these issues. The community foundation has successfully built a donor community that includes not just a commitment to the issues, but close personal ties between donors and grantee organizations.

Several members of this donor community, including some with large donor-advised funds who are active funders, attended an environmental conference at the suggestion of Evergreen Community Foundation staff. The conference focused on the urgency of the threat and the need for decisive action. While there, the donors met activists from Planet Rescue, an organization that has promoted violent and anti-government action, including arson, theft of confidential documents, bombing of government buildings, and fraud, with a goal of disrupting federal and state environmental agencies. Planet Rescue states publicly that “extreme times require extreme measures” and, while vague about their specific plans, they told the community foundation’s donors that supporting their organization was the best hope for immediate impact. Upon returning, one of the donors enthusiastically put in a request to support Planet Rescue through their donor-advised fund and asked that the community foundation consider direct funding to them as well.

Moving Your Organization Forward

This conversation is only one step in the process of creating a values-aligned philanthropy policy, but it's an important one: Your board members are key stakeholders in developing and implementing policies and procedures that prevent funding for hate and extremism.

The Council is honored to support you in this important work, and we welcome your feedback and questions at govt@cof.org.





Council on
Foundations



Introduction

This document has been prepared for Albuquerque Community Foundation by the Horizon Forum. It provides an independent analysis of Passion City Church, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that, in its own words, is “a global Christian ministry dedicated to helping families thrive.” Passion City Church has been active in providing services across the world and servicing its attendees; however, it’s been embroiled in some controversy due to statements made by its founder on LGBTQ issues and slavery. This assessment offers the following contextual elements and is intended to supplement, not replace, Albuquerque Community Foundation’s own due diligence process:

- A brief background on Passion City Church (PCC) and key figures in its leadership.
- A summary of principal activities of PCC.
- A summary of their controversial positions
- An assessment on PCC

Horizon Forum’s assessments document facts, history, and opinions while prioritizing the methodological principles of neutrality, transparency, and replicability. This assessment engages in analytic research and provides direct recommendations on matters of policy.

Contents

Introduction	2
Organizational Background.....	4
Activities.....	4
Controversies	5
On White Privilege & Slavery	5
On LGBTQ+.....	6
Assessment & Conclusion	9



Horizon Forum

Horizon Forum is a fiscally sponsored project of the Proteus Fund, a 501(c)(3). The initiative aims to strategically engage with sector leaders in philanthropy to ensure their charitable missions are insulated from extremism, bigotry, and hate activity.

Horizon Forum's primary activity consists of hosting semi-annual dialogues with stakeholders and researchers familiar with the institutional landscape of philanthropy and unique challenges of self-regulation therein. It also partners with peer institutions and university-based research centers to provide public facing thought leadership and data-based recommendations for stakeholders. Finally, the program also provides direct services for foundations, assisting them in establishing processes and policies for vetting grantees and ensuring they protect their mission to nurture the public good and "do no harm" with their philanthropy.

Copyright © 2023 Horizon Forum



Organizational Background

Passion City Church is an Evangelical church founded in 2008 by Louie Giglio, a pastor, author, and speaker, with the aim of establishing a spiritually conducive environment for young adults and college students in Atlanta, Georgia. The Church is a subsidiary of Passion Conferences, a registered 501(c)(3), which started as a movement in 1995, and held its first conference in 1997, in Austin, Texas. Passion Conferences is also the parent company to Passion City Church, Passion (Christian music band), sixstepsrecords, and Passion Publishing. A self-described “Jesus Church” the Church believes in “localized communities of believers” who seek to amplify Jesus’ “fame” through “strengthening the lives people and repair[ing] communities.”¹

The Passion Movement (as it is commonly referred to) is headed by Louie Giglio, who is the “Visionary Architect” and Director behind the Passion Conferences and all its subsidiaries. Louie is also the Director of the Passion Global Institute, a religious seminary that “blends the vision and mission of the Passion Movement with the world-class education of Dallas Theological Seminary.”² He is also a best-selling author who has published over 10 books. Shelley Giglio – his wife, is the Chief Strategic, Director of Label Operations and Artist Management for sixstepsrecords, co-founder of the Passion Movement, and leads the GROVE, a gathering for the Women of Atlanta.³

Activities

Passion City Church and the “Passion Movement” are actively engaged in various activities that focus on worship, spiritual growth, community outreach, and mobilizing young people. Amongst these activities include:

- Worship Gatherings: In addition to the large Sunday worship, the Church also seeks to establish size and area based gathering across the Atlanta Metro region in the form of “Connect Groups” and “Community Groups”.⁴
- The Passion Conferences: The conference, which was the original activity that Giglio launched his movement through, is an annual 3-day conference held across the US is aimed at 18–25-year-olds. The conferences are composed of sermons and speeches by prominent Christian speakers and musical performances by Christian musicians.

The conferences usually focus on a central theme, for which the organizers want to raise awareness. In 2011, they launched the “Do Something Now” fundraising campaign which encouraged attendees to donate to different charitable organizations.⁵ In 2012 the campaign was renamed 72DaysForFreedom

¹ <https://passioncitychurch.com/us/>

² <https://passionglobalinstitute.com/seminary/about/>

³ <https://passioncitychurch.com/louieandshelley/>
<https://passioncitychurch.com/the-grove/>

⁴ <https://passioncitychurch.com/atlanta/communitygroups/>

⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20230202234850/https://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/11/college-kids-feeling-passion-for-conference/>



during that year's Passion Conference, which called attendees to rise up against human trafficking.⁶ Attendees raised \$3.1 million for organizations working on bringing awareness to and helping and supporting individuals trapped in modern-day slavery.⁷ The group also raised money and collected items for Atlanta's City of Refuge homeless ministry, partnered with World Vision USA to fund the building of a health facility in Syria in 2016, and launched the Make History Together fundraising campaign in partnership with Compassion International to sponsor children living in poverty around the world in 2017.⁸

Controversies

While the Passion Movement and its affiliates/subsidiaries have been positively received by many, the movement has not been immune to controversy in the past. Certain aspects of its teachings, practices, and leadership decisions have drawn criticism and raised questions among some observers. Below are the biggest controversies that have embroiled the institution and its leaders.

On White Privilege & Slavery

In June 2020, Louie Giglio held an online discussion in which he called for "an open and honest conversation around how racism has plagued our city for generations, and the steps we can take to confront it." The discussion was attended by Chick-Fil-A CEO Dan Cathy, and rapper Lecrae.⁹

20 Minutes into the conversation Giglio stated that "We understand the curse that was slavery, white people do, and we say, 'that was bad,' but we miss the blessing of slavery that it actually built up the framework for the world that white people live in and lived in."¹⁰

He then went on to state that the reason why white people don't engage in with the idea of "White Privilege" is due to the word itself, which he stated is "like a fuse goes off for a lot of white people because they don't want somebody telling them to check their privilege." Speaking to the African American rapper, Giglio said that the term white privilege should be changed to "White Blessing" adding that "I'm living in the blessing of the curse that happened generationally that allowed me to grow up in Atlanta."¹¹

⁶ <https://freedomcommons.ijm.org/news/national/72-days-freedom-and-how-you-can-help?page=0%2C6>

⁷ <https://sojo.net/articles/passion-2012-calls-us-rise-against-modern-day-slavery>

⁸ <https://web.archive.org/web/20171111125207/https://www.aic.com/lifestyles/passion-2016-leaves-thousands-socks-and-towels-for-homeless/p7GNEcrTVVuzYJ00KcB17O/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMs74FJ625I&ab_channel=PassionCityChurch

<https://www.thechristianbeat.org/passion-2016-raises-over-800-000-to-build-hospital-in-syria/>

<https://www.jubileecast.com/articles/14484/20160107/passion-conference-has-raised-811-813-39-for-project-haraka.htm>

<https://www2.cbn.com/news/us/wow-millennials-make-history-passion-conference-sponsoring-7000-kids-across-globe>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20180511100412/https://makehistorytogether.com/>

⁹ <https://www.newsweek.com/atlanta-pastor-louis-giglio-white-privilege-blessing-1511126>

¹⁰ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEuI-03Jcc4&ab_channel=PassionCityChurch (21:31)

¹¹ Ibid Timestamp: (22:25)



Giglio's comments were met with criticism online, with several commentators accusing him of white supremacy.

Soon after Giglio apologized online by saying that what he meant was “not seeking to refer to slavery as blessing—but that we are privileged because of the curse of slavery. In calling it a privilege/benefit/blessing—word choice wasn't great. Trying to help us see society is built on the dehumanization of others. My apology, I failed.”¹²

In a 2-minute video also released on Twitter, Giglio apologized saying:

I am deeply sorry for the pain and confusion I have caused by my comment this past Sunday. I've never in my life thought there was any blessing in slavery. That thought is repulsive. I am grieved that what I said did not communicate or align with what I truly believe.

Giglio further added that:

white people often too quickly dismiss the reality that America was largely built on the dehumanization of black people. These dismissals miss that reality. I failed at an honest attempt to start a conversation with my fellow white brothers and sisters to see the reality of our white privilege. For the many who want to brush the concept of white privilege aside, this acknowledgment is an important step toward engaging the conversation.

He ended the video saying, “I am planning to continue and will make more of a concentrated effort to learn, understand, stay engaged and to be a part of all of us moving forward together to the place that God wants us to be.”¹³

On LGBTQ+

In 2013, Louie Giglio withdrew from delivering the benediction at Barack Obama's inauguration, after audio of a sermon he delivered in the 90s surfaced.¹⁴

In the sermon titled “In Search of a Standard – Christian Response to Homosexuality”, Giglio cites the Bible in saying that homosexuality “is sin in the eyes of God, and it is sin in the word of God.”¹⁵

He also stated that Christians,

[M]ust lovingly but firmly respond to the aggressive agenda of not all, but of many in the homosexual community. Underneath this issue is a very powerful and aggressive movement. That movement is not a benevolent movement, it is a movement to seize by any means necessary the feeling and the mood of the day, to the point where the homosexual lifestyle

¹² <https://twitter.com/louiegiglio/status/1272732497189777408?s=20>

¹³ <https://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/atlanta/pastor-atlanta-megachurch-asking-forgiveness-after-controversial-comments/WEOL23K6JNBO3LI3262525P3J4/>
<https://twitter.com/louiegiglio/status/1272960621869518850?s=20>

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/10/obama-inauguration-ouie-giglio-gay-remarks>

¹⁵ <https://web.archive.org/web/20220330052225/http://turret2.discipleshiplibrary.com/8169A.mp3> (Full Sermon)



becomes accepted as a norm in our society and is given full standing as any other lifestyle, as it relates to family.”¹⁶

Other Quotes from the sermon include:

- We must not just sit quietly by and stick our heads in the sand and let whatever happens happen in our country. We’ve got to respond to the world that we live in. That is the mandate that comes to us as people of God. And this issue is coming more and more to the forefront every day.¹⁷
- Men, women, I can’t say anything other to you tonight than this, that if you look at the counsel of the word of God, Old Testament, New Testament, you come quickly to the conclusion that homosexuality is not an alternate lifestyle... homosexuality is not just a sexual preference homosexuality is not gay, but homosexuality is sin. It is sin in the eyes of God, and it is sin according to the word of God. You come to only one conclusion: homosexuality is less than God’s best for his creation. It is less than God’s best for us and everything in our lives that is less than God’s best for us and his plan for us and his design for us, is sin. That’s God’s voice. If you want to hear God’s voice, that is his voice to this issue of homosexuality. It is not ambiguous and unclear. It is very clear.¹⁸
- First Corinthians, Chapter 6. In verses nine and 10, it talks about the things that prevent people from entering the Kingdom of God. It talks about all kinds of immoral behavior. And right in the midst of that passage, right in the middle of that verse it says, ‘and those who are homosexual.’ It’s clear.¹⁹
- The only way out of a homosexual lifestyle, the only way out of a relationship that has been engrained over years of time, is through the healing power of Jesus.²⁰
- We’ve got to say the homosexuals, the same thing that I say to you and that you would say to me... it’s not easy to change, but it is possible to change.²¹

Some observers have noted that while the sermon is considered provocative by LGBTQ+ advocates, Giglio approached the conversation through the familiar “hate the sin, not the sinner” refrain found widely in contemporary Christian discourse. During the first minute and a half of the recording, Giglio stated that: Tonight, we’re not going to attack homosexuals. Tonight, is not intended to be a homophobic attack on those who are in homosexual lifestyles, that would maybe foster fear or intolerance in our lives.”²²

Following the resurfacing of this sermon in lead up to the inauguration Giglio issued a statement saying:

¹⁶ Timestamp: (31:45)

¹⁷ Timestamp: (2:40)

¹⁸ Timestamp: (17:37)

¹⁹ Timestamp: (47:40)

²⁰ Timestamp: (40:25)

²¹ Timestamp: (43:16)

²² Timestamp: (1:25)



Due to a message of mine that has surfaced from 15-20 years ago, it is likely that my participation and the prayer I would offer will be dwarfed by those seeking to make their agenda the focal point of the inauguration. Clearly, speaking on this issue has not been in the range of my priorities in the past fifteen years.²³

Church Clarity, a website dedicated to evaluating churches for their policies on LGBTQ+ and Women in Leadership, has a page dedicated to Passion City Church, in which they score the Church as: Undisclosed. The website states that they previously scored the Church as “Unclear: Non-Affirming” due to a Leadership Covenant for Young Life leaders list which was previously on the website.²⁴ The covenant stated that:

Additionally, if you participate in any of the following lifestyles or behaviors, we ask that you not apply to serve or lead in this area of our House:

- Sexual relationship outside of marriage
- Homosexual relationship
- Extramarital affair
- Excessive alcohol use
- Illegal drug use
- Physical or verbal abuse²⁵

This statement has been removed from the website.

In 2018, Church Clarity posted an article authored by Erica Ferguson, who is a member of the LGBTQ+ community. In the article Ferguson stated that Passion City Church denied her Baptism due to her identity.²⁶ Ferguson stated over a 5-month period she volunteered and attended the Church, where she came out as a gay woman to a church group that she attended. She stated that while her coming out was met with “grace and love,” when she applied for baptism, a representative of the church called her and stated that they decided not to go through with the baptizing “due to differing interpretations of scripture.”

After discussing with the local church pastor, he stated that they were not denying her baptism, but rather, they wanted to continue to journey with her, to get to know her story more before they would feel comfortable baptizing her. After pressing him over a period, the pastor stated that they wouldn’t be able to baptize her because her “lifestyle would violate the statement of beliefs and code of conduct that their people must sign to be considered any part of the staff.” Following this conversation Ferguson decided to leave the church because of their unclear policy towards the LGBTQ+ community.

²³ <https://web.archive.org/web/20220617020707/https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/11/us/politics/minister-withdraws-from-inaugural-program-after-controversy-over-comments-on-gay-rights.html>

²⁴ <https://www.churchclarity.org/church/passion-city-church-2399>

²⁵ Screen capture of the Covenant before removal: <https://s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/cc-archive-links/passion-city-church-2399+/passion-city-covenant-2018-05-14.png>

²⁶ <https://www.churchclarity.org/updates/when-they-denied-my-baptism-erica-ferguson>



That said, Passion City Church was actually criticized by other Christian evangelical communities for not taking a strong enough position on LGBTQ issues. This came after Carrie Underwood, a well-known country singer who has publicly supported gay marriage, was invited to perform at the Passion conference in 2017. Thus, the official position of the church on LGBTQ matters is ambiguous.²⁷

Assessment & Conclusion

The Albuquerque Community Foundation's Working Definition of Hate/Harm reads as follows:

Any activity from the organization that attacks or maligns an individual or groups of individuals on the basis of their having certain characteristics, including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, sex, national origin (including membership in a Native American tribe), sexual orientation, and/or organizations with policies or practices that do not align with this value system.

Based on research conducted by Horizon Forum researchers on Passion City Church (PCC), it has been found that neither the church nor its founders have intentionally or directly espoused hateful beliefs, made hateful comments, or maligned any group based upon their real or perceived immutable characteristics. The church's position on LGBTQ matters remains grounded in conventional religious doctrine and scriptural interpretation that considers marriage between a man and woman as the only morally acceptable institution for sexual expression and identity. This stance aligns with the prevailing discourse embraced by conservative religious groups. Moreover, this position is augmented by a visible shift in some conservative religious discourse towards adopting a "hate the sin, not the sinner" narrative and away from attacking or condemning the LGBTQ community. That is, by categorizing sexual relations that fall outside of the church's framework of religiously and morally acceptable, as simply a lifestyle choice or a "sin," the church avoids attacking individuals and communities based on their identity. The position has become common among groups that previously espoused more harmful rhetoric.

Of course, some observers would argue that the very reduction of sexual identity to a behavior, is in and of itself a form of discrimination, stigmatization, hate, and dehumanization. This is a long-standing debate that Albuquerque Community Foundation may want to reflect upon in light of its values-alignment principles and policies. In doing so, however, it must take into consideration what this would mean for its engagement with other faith-based grantees. Furthermore, the previous controversial opinions expressed by Giglio do not reflect the overall attitude of PCC towards the LGBTQ community nor does criticism of the LGBTQ community seem to be a priority for the church. It is also worth noting that Giglio has shown genuine remorse and offered apologies for his remarks on slavery, indicating that his words were unintentional, demonstrating some level of responsiveness and accountability. This is particularly significant given that the church operates in Atlanta, a city with a significant African American population. In accordance with Horizon Forum's overall risk-management approach, we recommend that anti-hate policy's be narrowly and carefully implemented. In conclusion, in the

²⁷ <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2017/01/05/atlanta-pastor-criticized-carrie-underwood-performance/96217082/>



judgement of Horizon Forum, Passion City Church is not in violation of Albuquerque Community Foundation's anti-hate policy, nor does it conflict with its overall values-alignment principles.