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Statement from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Regarding the Federal Department of Homeland Security Being Dispatched to the Streets of Portland and Other U.S. Cities

At Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) we are a family of faith traditions who agree and disagree on many public policy issues, denominational traditions and practices. For over a century, our ethos has been to uplift unheard voices and listen to the stories of our neighbors who are most impacted by unjust systems. We will continue to encourage policy change and provide services to our community through our many programs. We confess that we have not always lived into these values. We commit to learning from our past, and to speaking and acting justly alongside our siblings who are unjustly treated.

We stand in solidarity with demonstrators on the streets of Portland and around the world who are seeking to bring awareness of racist policies and our complacency that has allowed them to be passed down from generation to generation. This awareness culminated as we watched in horror the eight minutes and 46 seconds when a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee on the throat of George Floyd until he died. This ugly act illustrates how deeply imbedded racism is in our society. It speaks of many acts of racism, injustice and oppression suffered by Black/Brown/Indigenous people of color throughout this country's history that brought us to this moment. This incident could not be covered up since it was recorded and seen with our very eyes.

Our solidarity has everything to do with the fact that change must come, and we can delay it no longer. While we are troubled by demonstrations that end in violence, we are also distressed by violent and divisive police action. However, we believe in Portland. With God's help, there is no problem we share in common that cannot be solved by working together.

Therefore, we join the chorus of those who demand that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) stand down. Whatever their purpose, rather than deescalate the situation, their presence has escalated it far beyond what would have happened had they respected the message from local community and elected leaders to stay away. DHS agents have used munitions banned by our City Council, removed demonstrators in unmarked vehicles without identifying themselves, used tear gas and flash bangs. They have displayed an unwillingness to listen to Portlanders. This is irresponsible behavior, and it contradicts the moral standards of our nation.

We seek now a return to demonstrations without a DHS or police presence and productive conversations with all our community partners about where we go from here. We bring to the table an open heart, spirit and mind-set toward what our shared future can be. We bring a belief that not only will the hand of God and God's amazing power prevail,

but that life lessons from our Holy Scriptures and faith traditions teach us methods of facing our difficulties in peace. We come to the table to listen, learn and engage. We encourage everyone to do likewise.

In this moment we call upon the spirit of the generations who came before us, whose blood, sweat, tears and engagement helped deliver us through so many similar trials. But we recognize that now it is our turn to do our part, to make whatever sacrifices are needed to ensure we hand to the next generations a world better than we found it.