

2021 DAY FOR ALL PEOPLE PLENARY SPEAKERS *(all confirmed)*



**REVEREND DR. COREY WALKER**, is a Professor of the Humanities at Wake Forest University and author of “A Noble Fight – African American Freemasonry and the Struggle for Democracy in America.” He serves as the President of the Center for Faith, Justice and Reconciliation, which is based on the historic campus of Union Presbyterian Seminary, where he is also Visiting Professor of Religion and Society.

Dr. Walker has held faculty and academic leadership appointments at Brown University, University of Virginia, Virginia Union University, University of Richmond, and Winston-Salem State University and was visiting professor at the Historisches Institut at Friedrich-Schiller Universität Jena in Germany. He is a current member of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.

He is a former Dean of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy.



## **GOVERNOR RALPH S. NORTHAM**

Before he was inaugurated as the 73<sup>rd</sup> Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Ralph Northam served as an Army doctor, pediatric neurologist, business owner, state Senator and Lieutenant Governor.

A native of Virginia's Eastern Shore, Governor Northam was educated at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), where he graduated with distinction.

After graduation, Governor Northam was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Army. He served eight years of active duty and rose to the rank of major. He attended Eastern Virginia Medical School and then traveled to San Antonio for a pediatric residency, where he met his wife Pamela, a pediatric occupational therapist at the same hospital. Governor Northam did his residencies at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and served as chief neurological resident at Johns Hopkins Hospital. As an Army doctor, he served in Germany, treating soldiers wounded in Operation Desert Storm.

When Governor Northam and Pamela returned home, they chose to build their life in Hampton Roads. He began practicing pediatric neurology at Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters in Norfolk. He established Children's Specialty Group, his current medical practice, to provide expert pediatric care for patients. Governor Northam also served as assistant professor of neurology at Eastern Virginia Medical School, where he taught medicine and ethics. Governor Northam volunteered as medical director for the Edmarc Hospice for Children in Portsmouth, where he spent 18 years caring for terminally ill children.

Governor Northam approaches public service with the same passion he brought to his military and medical service. He is committed to working with leaders from both parties to build a Virginia that works better for every family, no matter who they are or where they live. Governor Northam and First Lady Pamela Northam have two adult children.



**BALDEMAR VELASQUEZ**, is an internationally recognized leader in the farm worker and immigrant rights movements.

Born in 1947, Baldemar grew up in a migrant farmworker family based in the Rio Grande valley of Texas. Every year, his family would migrate to the Midwest and other regions to work in the fields planting, weeding, and harvesting crops like pickles, tomatoes, sugar beets, and berries. They traveled in trucks and old cars, and often lived in barns and converted chicken coops. The family eventually settled in Ohio, and Baldemar worked in the fields seasonally through his high school years to help support the family. In 1969, he became the first member of his family to graduate from college, graduating from Bluffton College with a BA in Sociology.

Incensed by the injustices suffered by his family and other farmworkers, Baldemar founded the AFL-CIO's Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) in 1967. Under his leadership, FLOC has set international precedents in labor history, including being the first union to negotiate multi-party collective bargaining agreements, and the first to represent H2A international guestworkers under a labor agreement.



**SISTER HELEN PREJEAN**, is known around the world for her tireless work against the death penalty.

In 1982, she moved into the St. Thomas Housing Project in New Orleans in order to live and work with the poor. While there, she began corresponding with Patrick Sonnier, who had been sentenced to death for the murder of two teenagers. Two years later, when he was put to

death in the electric chair, Sister Helen was there to witness his execution. In the following months, she became spiritual advisor to another death row inmate, Robert Lee Willie, who was to meet the same fate as Sonnier.

After witnessing these executions, Sister Helen realized that this lethal ritual would remain unchallenged unless its secrecy was stripped away, and so she sat down and wrote a book, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States*. It hit the shelves when national support for the death penalty was over 80% and, in Sister Helen's native Louisiana, closer to 90%. The book ignited a national debate on capital punishment, and it inspired an Academy Award winning movie, a play and an opera.

Over the decades, Sister Helen has made personal approaches to two popes, John Paul II and Pope Francis, urging them to establish the Catholic Church's position as unequivocally opposed to capital punishment under any circumstances. After Sister Helen's urging, under John Paul II, the catechism was revised to strengthen the church's opposition to executions, although it allowed for a very few exceptions. Not long after meeting with Sister Helen in August of 2018, Pope Francis announced new language of the Catholic Catechism which declares that the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, with no exceptions.