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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REAFFIRMATION, REFORMATION AND REPOSITIONING AT HEART OF 'AN EVANGELICAL MANIFESTO:' Evangelicals Reclaim Theological Definition and Encourage Support of a Civil Public Square

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 7 – “An Evangelical Manifesto” was unveiled earlier today during a press conference at the National Press Club, calling for reaffirmation of identity, reformation of behavior and repositioning in public life among Evangelicals.

“This is not a rebranding or a relabeling issue,” said Dr. Os Guinness, author and member of the Manifesto’s drafting committee. “‘Evangelical’ is not a bad brand; the trouble is, we have a bad reality.”

Such dynamics prompted a group of theologians and Christian leaders of considerable academic wisdom to carefully draft ‘An Evangelical Manifesto.’ This three-year effort has sought to reclaim the definition of what it means to be an Evangelical – a term that, in recent years, has often been used politically, culturally, socially – and even as a marketing demographic.

Recognizing that many people outside the movement now doubt that Evangelical is ever positive, and many inside now wonder whether the term any longer serves a useful purpose, they organized a core committee to draft a document that reclaims the term and the calling for both the culture and community of faith. The theological root traces back to the Greek word “euangelion” for ‘good news or Gospel.’

In the midst of a volcanic political season, presenters were resolute in stating that this Manifesto is not intended to influence the 2008 race, but rather more appropriately is a result from the aftermath of the 2000 election, when the Values Voter took center stage and became erroneously identified as a voting block.

“We’re not speaking to issues,” said Dr. John Huffman, Jr., senior pastor of St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, Calif., and board chair of Christianity Today International. “We’re not here to resolve issues, but rather to stand for the rights of those on the far left and those on the far right, calling for civility.”

“Why is this Manifesto needed?” asked David Neff, editor-in-chief and vice president of Christianity Today Media Group and one of the steering committee members. “Because American society has an increasingly new perception of what Evangelicals are. This is an endeavor to set the record straight. As Evangelicals we share a similar determination to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ. But our causes, issues, priorities and methodologies differ even as our core values are quite similar.”

The process of identifying drafters and early signers was not in any way meant to be restrictive, but rather born out of relationship according to categories.

“A lot of the people whose names you see here are people who are not as publicly visible, but are absolutely vital in this community’s function,” said Neff.

In response to how Christians might partner with others professing different faiths or no faiths at all, Neff responded that we need to tell the underlying meaning behind our actions. “If we advocate for the earth, it’s because God made it; if we advocate for refugees, it’s because Jesus was one; and if we advocate for children, it’s because He loved children.”

“We have a history of either giving up on the culture or trying to take it over,” said Dr. Richard Mouw, president and professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary. “Instead, we should do what we are capable of doing for the common good alongside others who have a sincere commitment to the common good. We need to develop a more adequate theology, not impose our will on society.”

The Manifesto repudiates the partisans of both a sacred public square that gives preference in public life to one religion, and a naked public square that would make all religious expression inviolably private and keep the public square equally secular.

Mouw cited findings of a recent Barna survey, indicating that the younger generation sees Evangelicals as ‘mean-spirited, homophobic and narrow minded.’ “This document calls for an Evangelicalism that is gentle and reverent,” he said.

Moderator Larry Ross, president of A. Larry Ross Communications, noted that this initiative is not “rewriting the rules of the game, but rather laying the lines down on the field. Individuals can evaluate or recalibrate their own beliefs and behaviors to determine whether the moniker truly fits for them.”

He continued, “The document does not become more or less inclusive based on who signed it, because as of today, any- and everyone can sign it. It is not about any name, but Christ.”

“Evangelicalism is about renewal, and renewal brings transformation,” Neff said. “The key moments in history, such as the abolition of slavery and women’s suffrage, were about personal transformation. Evangelicalism is not an ideology. It is not a party. It is a renewal movement that brings transformation.”

In addition to Guinness, Huffman, Mouw, Neff and Ross, the steering committee members who were not able to participate or be present include consultant and businessman Richard W. Ohman; Jesse Miranda, distinguished professor and director

of the Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership, Vanguard University; Dallas Willard, professor, School of Philosophy, University of Southern California; and Timothy George, dean, Beeson Divinity School.

Both the entire Manifesto and an executive summary are available online at www.evangelicalmanifesto.com, and are available for anyone to read, reflect, comment or sign. Also available is a study guide which will provide readers with insight and the biblical and theological underpinnings that shaped the language and direction of the document.

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Note to Editors: For more information about “An Evangelical Manifesto” please visit www.evangelicalmanifesto.com/media. To arrange an interview with members of the steering committee, please contact Vicki Morgan at 469.774.6377 or via e-mail at vicki@alarryross.com.