

**Rev. Laura Markle Downton**  
**Director, U.S. Prisons Policy and Program**  
**National Religious Campaign Against Torture**

Rev. Laura Markle Downton is the Director of U.S. Prisons Policy and Program at the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), an interfaith membership organization working to end torture in U.S. policy, practice and culture. Comprised of over 300 religious organizations, NRCAT membership includes representatives from the Catholic, evangelical Christian, mainline Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i, Buddhist, and Sikh communities. Rev. Markle Downton directs the state and federal advocacy agenda for interfaith leadership in NRCAT's campaign to end torture in U.S. prisons and jails, with a focus on ending long-term solitary confinement. She provides coordination, training, resource development, and technical direction to faith-based organizations nationally. Most recently, she has developed programmatic tools for faith community outreach including supervising the production of a documentary about solitary confinement called *Breaking Down the Box*, and coordinated a nationwide tour of a solitary confinement prison cell replica. Her ministry is focused on cultivating and increasing national and local collaborative partnerships with directly impacted communities, religious leadership, and other key allies in interfaith and human rights coalitions to advance NRCAT's human rights advocacy goals. She coordinates correspondence with members of Congress and representatives of federal, state, and local government entities to carry out NRCAT's human rights policy agenda, supervises the NRCAT seminarian organizing program in key states, and produces advocacy materials including toolkits, worship resources, model legislation, policy one-pagers, talking points, membership action alerts, and website content.

Prior to joining NRCAT, Rev. Markle Downton was a National Organizer for the General Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, building networks among communities of faith engaged in the promotion of restorative justice. She has worked with diverse religious communities and legal advocates for employment and housing justice in Washington, DC and Philadelphia, PA. She is a Provisional Elder in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Rev. Markle Downton holds a M.Div. from Princeton Theological Seminary, is a Midwest Academy trained organizer, and holds certification from the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) Program of Eastern Mennonite University.