

# ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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## *Media Release*

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### **Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon executive director accepts new interfaith leadership position in Texas**

After seventeen and a half years as executive director of one of the nation's largest ecumenical organizations, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), David Leslie will be leaving the statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy.

Leslie has accepted an offer to serve as the next executive director of the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas. The Rothko Chapel is a unique interfaith organization that brings together art, spirituality and human rights to carry out its mission of promoting peace, freedom and social justice. The Chapel features paintings by Russian born American painter Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and is an international rallying place for human rights that welcomes over 80,000 visitors each year from all parts of the world.

A national leader in ecumenical and interfaith relations, Leslie has been active in the National Council of Churches and Church World Service, which honored him with the "Eugene Carson Blake Award for Ecumenism" in 2009. He serves on the board of National Religious Council Against Torture. In Oregon, he serves on the board of the Nonprofit Association of Oregon and on the advisory board of Northwest Workers' Justice Project, and his previous public service includes the Oregon Department of Human Services Faith and Community-based Advisory Group, Oregon Senate Interim Committee on Farmworker Issues, and State of Oregon Ending Homelessness Advisory Council.

"During the last seventeen and a half years at EMO, I have had the privilege of being part of efforts to foster ecumenical and interfaith relations throughout the state and engaging in numerous initiatives to enhance our collective mission to improve the lives of people living on the margins of society," said Leslie. "I

#### **MEMBER DENOMINATIONS**

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches of Oregon ■ Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) ■ Christian Methodist Episcopal Church ■ Church of the Brethren ■ Community of Christ  
Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon ■ Episcopal Diocese of Oregon ■ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ■ Greek Orthodox Church ■ Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) ■ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

am especially proud to be part of an ecumenical community organization that is committed to a public theology believing that the church and broader faith community's commitments to peace and justice really do matter and must be made known in the commons."

Leslie will continue in his current position with EMO through the end of May. The EMO Board of Directors has appointed Jan Elfers, EMO director of Public Policy Advocacy, interim executive director, effective June 1, 2015.

"As the board of directors for EMO, we share a vital responsibility to carry on a great mission," stated the Rev. Dr. Doug Wirt, EMO president. "Just as we give thanks for David's leadership, we also need to make clear that the mission of EMO continues. The need for EMO's services in our communities, the need for inspired witness and action on behalf of justice and compassion, and the importance of strong ecumenical and interfaith relationships in Oregon will all continue in 2015 and beyond."

Elfers first joined EMO in 2003. In addition to her current position, she has also held the positions of director of Peace Programs and director of Membership Relations. She is currently a board member of the Institute for Christian/Muslim Understanding and received the "Friends of the Muslim Educational Trust" award in 2009. Elfers is a member of the Episcopal Church and served on the Commission to End Racism at the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon. A native Oregonian, she earned an undergraduate degree at Lewis & Clark College and completed her master's degree in theology at Marylhurst University.