

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

Media Release

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Photos available

Climate rally draws hundreds in Portland

Today over 1,000 Portlanders gathered in Pioneer Courthouse Square joined people in 181 countries to mark the International Day of Climate Action at the Oregon 350 Climate Action Rally to call for quick action on climate change. The event was organized by the Oregon Interfaith Power and Light project in partnership with Climate Solutions, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility and over 20 organizations, businesses and congregations. Groups including the Oregon Climate Crisis Walk, the River of Action (a 350 formation of canoes and kayaks on the Willamette), the 350 Bike Ride, PSU students and a coalition of local businesses converged upon the square for music, comedy, speeches and the formation of an aerial 350 for a photo to be displayed at Time Square.

A rousing performance by the Ta Ko Hachi traditional Japanese drummers started off the rally followed by an invocation by Rabbi Cahana of Temple Beth Israel focused on the story of Noah. In this story, Noah warns for many years of a great flood before people pay attention. With global warming it has been much the same, and time is getting short to turn the tide Cahana noted.

The 350 movement, founded by author Bill McKibben, has inspired over 5,000 actions today to raise awareness of the maximum safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which is 350 parts per million (ppm). The level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is currently at around 387 ppm and the bills in Congress are only targeting stabilization at around 450 ppm which is based on an older scientific assessment of the safe level carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. In six weeks the UN Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen will negotiate a new climate treaty and 350 organizers hope that the actions today will help raise the bar for a stronger treaty. McKibben noted. "They're asking our leaders to lead--to pay attention to scientific reality, not political convenience. The International Day of Climate Action represents the most widespread day of political action in the planet's history.

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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

The need for solidarity with other people across the globe, especially those feeling the impacts of climate change now, was a recurring theme of the Portland rally, underlined by Sr. Pat Nagle, World Council of Churches delegate to UN Copenhagen conference who reflected on people she has met at the United Nations meetings on Climate Change. Nagle said, "I'm thinking especially of Margaret Lokawua who lives in Karamoja, Uganda, and works there among the 889,000 peoples, mostly pastoralists, agro-pastoral herders [for whom there] is literally no place for them to grow their crops and feed their animals." She observed, "Marginalized already, they are pushed to the brink [by climate change.]"

Other speakers included Phil Carver, who just completed a walk of 350 miles and 35 days along the Oregon Coast, which included Town Hall meetings to raise awareness of how climate change will impact the Oregon Coast. He was welcomed by former Secretary of State Bill Bradbury, a long-time champion for action on climate change. Portland's small business community was also strongly represented by Jae Larsen, CEO of TheGreenVille Project. Larsen sees the need for businesses of all shapes and sizes to take a leadership role in combating climate change. "We have the ability to shape corporate culture and play a vital role in modeling good behavior in the neighborhoods we operate in," Larsen said. She said, "The time has come for us to be responsible stewards of the environment that has provided such opportunity and prosperity."

Late Friday, Oct. 23, Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA), chairman of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, released the text of the chairman's Mark of the Clean Energy Jobs and American Power Act (S. 1733). Jamie Hogue of Climate Solutions said the bill will "allow the US to take control of our energy future and create more clean, green jobs, while beginning to tackle the climate crisis by reducing the levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere."

At the local level, Megan Ponder, representing Mayor Sam Adams, read a mayoral proclamation declaring Oct. 24 the 350 Day of Climate Action in Portland. The Portland/Multnomah Climate Action Plan will be going to Portland's Council on Wednesday, Oct. 28, and 350 local organizers will be attending.

Leader of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Power and Light, Jenny Holmes, said, "Today is just the beginning of the 350 movement. There will be much more required in the days ahead to turn the fossil fuel ship we are on and we must not delay."

More information on the Oregon 350 Climate Action Rally and follow up as well as other climate action events can be found at www.350oregon.org.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) Oregon Interfaith Power and Light project engages the faith community to strive for accountability in our individual and collective energy decisions in an interdependent world. EMO is a statewide association of Christian denominations—including Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox bodies—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.