

Interchurch Center, Suite B □ 0245 SW Bancroft Street □ Portland, Oregon 97239  
*phone* (503) 221-1054 □ *fax* (503) 223-7007 □ *Web site* www.emoregon.org

For Immediate Release

DATE: Aug. 2, 2007

CONTACT: Jenny Holmes, IFFP project director

(503) 221-1054, ext. 214

Heather Burns, IFFP project coordinator

(503) 333-6951

### **Congregations support local farmers through new marketing opportunities**

This summer, congregations in the Portland area are moving beyond charity to promote economic and environmental justice—they are supporting local farmers and making local produce more accessible to low-income neighbors right outside their doors each Sunday. Five Portland area congregations are hosting farm stands that provide fresh, locally-grown vegetables and bouquets of seasonal flowers. By hosting the farm stands, the congregations support local refugee and immigrant farmers, raise awareness about local food, and provide their members and neighbors with a source of fresh, healthy food in a direct marketing project, which is organized by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership. The congregations hosting farm stands include Redeemer Lutheran Church, Micah's Village, First Presbyterian Church of Portland, First United Methodist Church of Portland and St. Philip Neri Catholic Church.

The farmers involved in the project include several Meskhetian Turkish farmers who are part of the New Agriculture project of Mercy Corps Northwest, as well as several Hmong farming families. Hmong farmer Yua Lor, originally from Laos, became involved in the church farm stands because she was interested in developing relationships with regular, friendly customers. Lor says, "Connecting to customers who want to buy what I grow just makes sense, and it's a stress free experience for me."

From seed to table, food is a profoundly spiritual and ethical concern. Communities of faith can play a vital role in creating a just and sustainable food system by demonstrating a commitment to local food and farmers. In a world where food typically travels 1,500 miles from farm to plate and is often grown on large corporate farms, choosing food that is grown locally on family farms is a sound environmental and social choice. Still, many people cannot access locally-produced food because of its cost or availability. The farm stand project aims to play a role in changing this by enhancing community food security—a process of ensuring that all people have access to affordable, nutritious and culturally-appropriate food at all times, regardless of income.

At Micah's Village, fresh, organic produce that is left over at the end of the market is donated to the Clackamas Service Center to be distributed to those who need it. First Presbyterian Church has organized a

#### MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ American Baptist Churches ■ 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) ■ Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)  
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland ■ United Church of Christ ■ United Methodist Church ■ Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

coupon project in which church members buy coupons to use at the farm stand and contribute to coupons that are distributed to low-income members of the community who reside near the church.

Besides enhancing community food security, the farm stand project builds community and helps congregations have a deeper connection to the land and the season. Colleen McClean of First United Methodist Church explains why she has been involved in organizing the farm stand, “Part of our faith tradition is to be fully present and celebrate the gifts of creation. The aroma of fresh vegetables and flowers enlivens our senses and deepens our awareness of God’s gifts to us.”

For more information about the project, contact Jenny Holmes, director of Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns, at [inec@emoregon.org](mailto:inec@emoregon.org).

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon 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.

#### **Farm Stand Locations and Times:**

Redeemer Lutheran Church: “NE Neighborhood Farm Stand”—Corner of NE 20<sup>th</sup> and Killingsworth; Sundays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through September.

Micah’s Village: “Village Market”—Corner of SE 132<sup>nd</sup> and Sunnyside Rd., in the grange hall parking lot; Sundays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through September.

First Presbyterian Church—1200 SW Alder St.; Sundays, 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. through August; call (503) 228-7331 for possible September hours.

First United Methodist Church—1838 SW Jefferson St.; Sundays, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. through August.

St. Philip Neri Catholic Church—2408 SE 16<sup>th</sup> Ave.; occasional Sundays, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. through August; call (503) 231-4955 for specific dates.