Into the Future: Serving together in faith

As Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) celebrated our 40th anniversary in 2014, we did so with an eye to the future. EMO is a creative and committed organization that lives faithfully into the call to love one’s neighbor and build up the communities in which we live.

We were privileged to assist more than 30,000 individuals, including families with children—many of whom are working and yet struggle to make ends meet. Through our community ministries, we provide direct services to refugees and immigrants; people living with HIV/AIDS and their families and friends; and our neighbors who are in need of affordable housing, job supports and access to healthy food.

And this service does not end with ministries of compassion but includes advocating for public policies and priorities that can enhance life’s possibilities. Last fall, for example, we distributed more than 8,000 copies of EMO’s Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures—an educational resource to help voters consider the ballot measures from a faith-based and moral/ethical framework. We also held numerous ballot measure forums across the state.

Our education and dialogue opportunities last year included the 2014 Collins Lecture by Karen Armstrong, who spoke on “The Transformative Power of Compassion” to a sold-out audience at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral. At the fifth annual Earth Care Summit at First Christian Church in Portland, hundreds of representatives from a wide range of faith communities came to learn and engage in discussions around “Breath of Life: The Earth’s Atmosphere.”

As these community ministries, advocacy and educational programs make crystal clear, standing and serving together in fellowship and community are at the heart of the ecumenical movement and the center of our mission. As the Psalmist reminds us, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.” Central to this vision is the commitment to learn from one another, listen to each other’s stories, restore broken relationships, and foster unity that transcends our parochial institutions and self-interests.

This report is just a brief snapshot of the diversity of the EMO community and how we serve together in faith. We offer our thanks for your participation in our work for the common good. And, if you are not yet involved in some aspect of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, please join us. The movement needs you!

Faithfully,

The Rev. Susan M. Kintner
President

Janet Musgrove Elfers
Interim Executive Director

Ecumenical/Interreligious Dialogue & Peacemaking

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! Psalm 133:1

Our interfaith education and theological dialogue programs help congregations and individuals deepen their own commitments and better understand their neighbors. Each year, EMO offers workshops, discussions, lectures, presentations, celebrations, and prayer vigils to celebrate Christian unity, foster interfaith relations, and explore ethical and moral issues. Our annual Collins Lecture provides a forum for clergy and laity to explore contemporary issues related to religion and social ethics.

- Celebrated EMO’s 40th anniversary and honored ecumenical and community leadership in Oregon with our Annual Community Awards & Celebration Dinner, which was attended by nearly 400 guests and raised over $62,000 for EMO’s ministries.
- Convened a consultation at Beavercreek United Church of Christ, bringing together regional and national denominational representatives concerned about the future of rural churches and parishes.
- Partnered with the Interfaith Action Network of Washington County and Interfaith Council of Greater Portland for a unique open space workshop, “Strengthening Our Region through Interfaith Action: What can we do together that we cannot do by ourselves?” Participants explored diverse points of view and new directions for interfaith relations and action.

Environmental Ministry

The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it. Psalm 24:1

Our Environmental Ministry programs connect, inform, inspire and empower people, congregations and religious institutions to work for justice and the care and renewal of the earth. We foster an awareness that care for creation is integral to a life of faith.

Interfaith Food & Farms Partnership expanded the Rockwood Food Opportunity Project by launching a farmers market accepting WIC and SNAP and assisting corner stores in providing healthy produce for their customers.

Thank you to the 1,607 donors and foundations (listed on these pages) who gave $914,221 to EMO during 2014.
During the 2014 Legislative “Short” Session, EMO participated in advocacy days and hearings in support of affordable housing, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and gun safety legislation.

Leading up to the 2014 General Election, EMO distributed more than 8,000 copies of our Guide to Oregon Ballot Measures and presented 15 ballot measure forums across the state including Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Hood River, Bend and Portland.

With the passage of public safety reforms (HB 3194) in the 2013 Legislative Session, criminal justice reform was, and continues to be, a high priority for EMO. We organized prison visits and meetings with the Oregon Department of Corrections to explore how the faith community can foster restorative justice in our criminal justice system.

Last year, nearly 600 volunteers helped EMO serve the needs of over 30,000 Oregonians.
Community Ministry

How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? … Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 1 JOHN 3:17-18

Our Community Ministry programs serve communities in crisis and people in need. Our diverse programs provide nutritious meals, affordable housing, social support, and integrated refugee and immigration services. EMO’s ministries help people put their faith into action by addressing human needs in their communities throughout the state.

Affordable Housing

EMO has a long history of developing and advocating for affordable housing and is dedicated to filling the housing needs of those less fortunate.

- **The Patton Home**—a 128-year old single-room occupancy residence—provided affordable housing for more than 63 individuals who were in recovery from substance abuse, transitioning from homelessness, or striving to maintain their personal independence; added a resident services coordinator to help residents obtain needed services.

- **Second Home**—a community response to the housing needs of unaccompanied, homeless youth while they attend high school—facilitated housing arrangements last year for 12 students with volunteer host families, providing 70 months of housing and over 6,000 meals.

Hunger, Nutrition & Social Services

Serving communities in crisis and people in need is central to EMO’s basic human needs programs.

- **Circles of Support & Accountability (CoSA)** was initiated last year to heal both individuals and communities after violent crime; following a restorative justice model, CoSA works along with the professional treatment and supervision that sex offenders are provided, offering practice in pro-social relationship building.

- In 2014, **Food Services/Delizioso Catering** prepared 22,344 nutritious, home-style meals for over 770 people in need.

- Last year, **HIV Services** offered assistance for 297 low-income people living with HIV/AIDS who made 8,504 visits to the Day Center for meals, counseling, peer support, clothing, showers and more; over 12,000 meals and nutritional supplements were delivered by the Daily Bread Express to home-bound individuals.

- The **Northeast Emergency Food Program** gathered and distributed more than 700,000 pounds of nutritionally-balanced food and 30,000 items of clothing to over 11,000 people in critical need during 2014; provided leadership and job training for 20 individuals through our Service Learner Initiative.

Refugee & Immigration Ministries

Our ministries offer comprehensive and compassionate services to thousands of refugees and immigrants.

- **Russian Oregon Social Services** gave direct assistance to 3,619 Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants in 2014, including domestic violence services, breast and cervical health education, mental health counseling, ESL, self-sufficiency and computer classes, citizenship training, legal and tax assistance, dental care and more.

- Last year, **Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR)** provided resettlement services for 382 refugees—the majority of whom came from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Iran, Iraq and Somalia—and helped them adjust to a new life in the Portland metro area; implemented the Mental Health Promotion Program.

- In 2014, **SOAR Immigration Legal Services** provided low-cost immigration representation to more than 2,000 immigrants and refugees in application processes.

SOAR Immigration Legal Services expanded its statewide work by offering eight Citizenship Days, a DACA Renewal workshop and 20 Citizenship Preparation classes across the state.