

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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: Oct. 11, 2007

Contact person: Jan Elfers, (503) 221-1054,  
[jelfers@emoregon.org](mailto:jelfers@emoregon.org)

### **“From Despair to Hope”: Interfaith community responds to poverty crisis with conference and Collins Lecture featuring E.J. Dionne, Jr.**

On Thursday, Oct. 18, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) will present an all day interfaith conference focused on poverty.

“From Despair to Hope: An Interreligious Response to the Crisis of Poverty,” is designed to educate and mobilize the interfaith community to better address the complex problems associated with poverty. Panels, forums and workshops will highlight various aspects of poverty and faith’s response to the problem. The lunchtime keynote address will be given by two New Orleans community activists, followed by a discussion about the Katrina disaster as a paradigm for the convergence of despair and hope.

The culmination of the event will be the annual Collins Lecture titled “The Politics of Hope” at 7 p.m., delivered by E.J. Dionne, Jr., syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post*.

Both the conference and the Collins Lecture will be hosted by First United Methodist Church, located at 1838 SW Jefferson St. in Portland. The lecture is made possible by a grant from the Collins Foundation.

Ticket prices are as follows: \$30 for the conference on poverty, “From Despair to Hope,” which includes continental breakfast and lunch; \$10 for the Collins Lecture with E.J. Dionne, Jr.; or \$40 for both events. Students with ID are half price. For more information or to register, call EMO at (503) 221-1054 or go to [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org).

#### **Conference, “From Despair to Hope: The Interreligious Response to the Crisis of Poverty”**

##### **Morning panels will include:**

- “Interfaith Perspectives on Wealth, Poverty and the Beloved Community”—Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders will explore what our religious traditions teach about material and spiritual poverty. Panelists include Laila Hajoo, Islamic Social Services of Oregon State; Dr. Brad Harper, Multnomah Bible College; Rabbi Annette Koch, Beit Haverim South Metro Jewish Congregation; and Fr. Paul Schroeder, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church.
- “Socioeconomic Dimensions of Poverty,” led by socioeconomic experts working with those living in poverty, including Charles Hudson, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission; Victor Merced, Oregon Housing and Community Services; Judge Laura Pryor, Gilliam County; and Erik Sten, Commissioner, City of Portland.

##### MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church ■ African Methodist Episcopal Zion 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

**Afternoon workshops** include success stories, training for individuals and congregations, and an examination of underserved populations living in poverty. Leaders include Oregon Food Bank, Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger, Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force, Oregon Farmworkers Ministry, Jobs with Justice, Oregonians for Health Security, Central City Concern, Samaritan Counseling Centers, St. Vincent de Paul Downtown Chapel, Oregon Jubilee, Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, Interfaith Council on Mental Health and EMO.

At lunch, New Orleans residents and community leaders Tanya Harris of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) and Hulen Brown, a counselor and active member of the United Church of Christ (UCC), will share their personal stories of loss and hope as they work to rebuild their communities after Hurricane Katrina. A longtime activist, Harris was featured in Spike Lee's film, "When the Levees Broke," and was the first on her block to rebuild her home in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans. Brown and her husband, a UCC minister, fled their New Orleans home two days before Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast. She has used her training as a professional facilitator to help evacuees work through their grief and assist communities in rebuilding. Issues will include poverty, race, class and the challenges of rebuilding community.

#### **Collins Lecture, "The Politics of Hope," featuring E.J. Dionne, Jr.**

*Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne, Jr. is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and professor in the Foundations of Democracy and Culture at Georgetown University. He spent 14 years with the *New York Times*, reporting on state and local government and national politics, as well as assignments in Paris, Rome and Beirut. The *Los Angeles Times* praised his coverage of the Vatican as the best in two decades.

In 1990, Dionne joined the *Washington Post* as a reporter, covering national politics. He began his op-ed column for the *Washington Post* in 1993, which is now syndicated to more than 100 other newspapers, including the *Oregonian*. His best-selling book, *Why Americans Hate Politics* (Simon & Schuster), was published in 1991. The book, which *Newsday* called "a classic in American political history," won the *Los Angeles Times* book prize and was a National Book Award nominee.

Dionne is the editor of *Community Works: The Revival of Civil Society in America* and *What's God Got to Do with the American Experiment*, co-edited with John DiIulio, Jr. Dionne co-edited *Sacred Places, Civic Purposes: Should Government Help Faith-Based Charity?* with Ming Hsu Chen, and *United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship* with Kayla Meltzer Drogosz and Robert E. Litan. He is the series co-editor to the *Pew Forum Dialogues on Religion and Public Life*, which includes the recent publication "One Electorate Under God?: A Dialogue on Religion and American Politics." He is a regular political analyst on National Public Radio. His articles have appeared in many publications, including *Commonweal*, *The Atlantic*, *The New Republic*, *The American Prospect*, *Sojourners*, *Dissent*, *The Washington Post Magazine* and *The New York Times Magazine*.

*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.*

“Social justice requires economic support from government, a concern for family life and serious efforts to restore public order. Religious progressives may find their vocation in insisting that our society needs to grapple with each of these issues. At the heart of their arguments should be two principles: Compassion is good, but justice is better. And while government certainly cannot solve all problems, what government does—and fails to do—still matters enormously.” — E.J. Dionne, Jr.