Faith community fights hunger in Oregon

In early May, a delegation from Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) met with Governor Ted Kulongoski in Salem to discuss the rising hunger rate in the state and how the faith community, the state and others can respond. This was the first official meeting between EMO and Governor Kulongoski since he took office in January. EMO conveyed to the governor an understanding of the various roles the faith community has in addressing hunger. This includes providing emergency food services, building community-based organizations around food security and advocating for policies that address the root causes of hunger such as income, housing and health care.

Governor Kulongoski has made fighting hunger a top priority for his administration. The governor believes that a broad cross-section of involvement that includes businesses, non-profits, religious institutions and the government is necessary to effectively fight hunger in Oregon. During harvest week in the fall, plans for a faith-based event around the issue of hunger are underway with the governor, EMO and others in the faith community. In the meantime, EMO has pushed for several bills in the Oregon Legislature that would provide greater access to food for low-income individuals and has helped convene an interfaith group around hunger.

Close to 70 percent of the Oregon Food Bank’s emergency food distribution network is either faith-based or agencies associated with religious institutions.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Oregon continues to have the highest hunger rate in the nation, indicating that many in the state do not know from where or when their next meal may come. EMO, along with others in the faith community, plays a significant role in reducing hunger. Close to 70 percent of the Oregon Food Bank’s emergency food distribution network is either faith-based organizations or agencies associated with religious institutions. EMO has also been active in bringing people together around food security issues and hunger’s root causes.

For information on hunger-related bills in the Legislature, visit www.emoregon.org/publicpolicyadvocacy.html.

Itty elected new Episcopal Bishop in Oregon

Johncy Itty, 40, was elected bishop of Oregon on May 17. Once Itty’s election is confirmed, he will lead 21,000 parishioners in 788 congregations in western Oregon.

According to the church, the new generation of young clergy, such as Itty, is generally described as those born between 1961 and 1981. The Service of Consecration of Johncy Itty as Ninth Bishop of Oregon will be held on Sept. 20, 11 a.m., at the Salem Armory Auditorium, Oregon State Fairgrounds, with the Very Rev. Frank Griswold presiding at the event.

Source: Christian Century, June 14, 2003
Leadership

A time for healing and peace

"...I will heal them and... reveal to them an abundance of peace and trust."
— Jeremiah 33:6

On July 1, several hundred people gathered at M.O. Lott Baptist Church for a "town meeting" dialogue to discuss the fatal shooting of Kendra James by a Portland Police officer. The event was held to address the death of Kendra James, a 17-year-old African American woman, who was shot by Portland Police Officer Daniel McCollister on May 27th, 2003. The event was also attended by Portland Police Chief John ents, who reiterated his commitment to transparency and accountability.

The event started with a presentation by Michelle Bush, executive director of EMO, who explained the rationale behind the event and the role of EMO in addressing the issues of police brutality and community empowerment. The presentation was followed by a panel discussion, which included the Portland Police Chief and the event's keynote speaker, the Reverend Dr. Michael L. Johnson, president of the Portland Area Ministerial Association.

The Reverend Dr. Michael L. Johnson emphasized the need for a community-based approach to addressing police brutality and the importance of dialogue and transparency in strengthening trust between the police and the community. He called for a shared commitment to work together towards a future where young people will be kept away from drugs and law enforcement's unnecessary use of deadly force.

The panel discussion was followed by a question-and-answer session, which allowed community members to voice their concerns and ask questions about the legal and ethical implications of police brutality. The event ended with a closing prayer, led by the Reverend Dr. Michael L. Johnson, who encouraged the community to continue working together towards a future where we can all reign once again.

Challenge grant doubles gifts

Donor (Fund)                  Program
Agouron-Pharmaceuticals      HIV Services
The Autzen Foundation        Portland International Community School (PICS)
Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR)
The Brawner Foundation        Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC)
Markettka Buckler Revocable Living Trust EMO Annual Fund 2003
John A. & Phyllis S. Courtney Fund of the Oregon Community Foundation NE Emergency Food Program
June and Julian Foss Foundation Portland International Community School (PICS)
The Fred Meyer Foundation      NE Emergency Food Program
The Hoover Family Foundation  Portland International Community School (PICS)
The Jackson Foundation        NE Emergency Food Program & Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC)
The Susan G. Komen Foundation Russian Oregon Social Services
Oregon Department of Justice Russian Oregon Social Services
Polk Family Charitable Trust Parent Mentor Program
Portland Women’s Union Foundation Parent Mentor Program
The Herbert A. Templeton Foundation HIV Services
NE Emergency Food Program
Portland International Community School (PICS)

EMO celebrates recent grants and gifts

For more information about INEC, call Jenny Holmes at (503) 221-1054, ext. 278.
Patton Home garden party celebrates community & earth stewardship

To celebrate Earth Day on April 22, a party was held at the Patton Home Community Garden, located on the grounds of EMO’s Patton Home, a drug- and alcohol-free, single room occupancy housing facility. The event included a barbecue provided by EMO’s Delizioso Catering, as well as a work party to get the garden in shape.

The Patton Home Community Garden is the 2nd newest garden in the Portland Parks and Recreation Community Garden Program. The garden grew from a partnership between EMO and Portland Parks and Recreation with a grant from the Bureau of Housing and Community Development. It serves the north Portland community, as well as residents of the Patton Home. According to Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, director of Portland Community Gardens, “The Patton Home Community Garden, established just a year ago, is becoming a valuable neighborhood resource.” EMO’s Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC) was a key catalyst for the garden’s development.

For more information about the Patton Home Community Garden or if you are interested in volunteering, call (503) 221-1054, ext. 278.

International school celebrates seven new graduates

Portland International Community School (PICS), an Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon supported alternative high school for multi-cultural youth, working in partnership with Portland Public Schools, held its third annual graduation ceremony at the Fourquarie Church in southeast Portland on June 9. Following the ceremony, community supporter Anne Hughes hosted a reception at her Kitchen Table Cafe at Southeast 1st and Oak.

The mission of PICS is to provide a quality education to immigrant, refugee and first generation youth, age 14 to 21, who have not been successful in the public school system. PICS is the only high school in Oregon dedicated to this mission.

PICS students have special educational needs, due to cultural and language barriers. Immigrant, refugee and first-generation students often experience difficulty in the traditional public school system. Students come from a wide range of domestic environments, and many of their parents do not speak English.

Khemera Chean, Phililla Chihay, Maria Granados, Irma Izarraraz, Oscar Martinez, Tiu Nguyen and Sheila Tenante form the PICS class of 2003. Their countries of origin include Thailand, Cambodia, Mexico, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Tiu Nguyen has been at PICS the longest and says that he would not have graduated without PICS. Although Oscar Martinez already has a high school diploma from Mexico, he learned English at PICS and finished some supplementary course work to earn an Oxford diploma as well. Khemera Chean credits PICS with teaching him how to find his own perspective on life, and he will be recognized with a peace award for his active participation in Peacelands and his courageous spirit of peace. While Maria Granados is busy parenting her four-month-old daughter, Irma Izarraraz will be attending Ashmead College and training to be a massage therapist, and Sheila Tenante will be learning the skills of a flight attendant at Vancouver Air Academy. Phililla Chihay will be pursuing an associate’s degree in gerontology at Portland Community College. Phililla proudly stated, “I feel like I have accomplished more than I would have at a public school. I didn’t think I would graduate. I didn’t want to. Now I’m excited because I know that it’s really going to happen.” She added, “At PICS, we’re a family more than a school.”

EMO joins PICS students, staff, families and friends in congratulating this year’s graduates and wishing them all the best in the future. For further information about the school, please contact Rachel Baldwin at (503) 232-5334, or rbaldwin@emoregon.org.

Oregon Recovery Homes reaches the 100 mark!

Since EMO took over this state-funded contract in 1994, Oregon Recovery Homes has administered over 100 interest-free loans to groups of people in alcohol and drug recovery. The loans are used to establish peer-run, self-supporting, drug- and alcohol-free homes, which are based on the Oxford House model.

Oregon Recovery Homes outreach coordinator, Michael Motzester, describes the $100,000 revolving loan fund used to establish these homes as one of “the most cost-effective investments the state of Oregon has ever made.” Members of the houses repay the loan in 24 monthly installments, so the funds are continuously replenished and available to reuse over and over again. At the present time, there are 106 Oxford Houses in Oregon providing alcohol and drug-free housing and rehabilitative support to over 800 men, women and children in 22 cities and 14 countries throughout the state, making Oregon Recovery Homes and Oxford Houses responsible for the largest statewide alcohol- and drug-free housing network in Oregon.

For more information about Oregon Recovery Homes, contact Michael Motzester at (503) 307-4811. To learn more about Oxford Houses of Oregon, visit www.oxfordhousesoforegon.com.

PICS receives full accreditation

In May, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and Universities awarded Portland International Community School (PICS) full accreditation. Not only did the school receive accreditation, it was also commended in several areas, including the library and media options that are available at PICS and the high level of commitment by the staff. The school’s partnership development was also commended – in particular, for the successful collaboration with Portland State University and the Capstone Program that essentially creates a “big brother, big sister” program for students.

Upon receiving the news from the association’s main office in Idaho, Skip Adams, the school’s director, stated, “I’d like to thank the staff for their hard work and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon for their support. Our efforts have created a school program that students, parents and the community at large can feel proud of.”

Patton Home notified of Section 8 rental assistance

Patton Home was recently notified of project-based Section 8 rental assistance for 16 units from the Housing Authority of Portland, which will further Patton Home’s usefulness as a haven for very low income persons. Currently, over 50 of 63 rooms are occupied.
Coming Events:

Looking for Justice in Palestine and Israel.
From 1 p.m. Friday to 5:30 p.m. Saturday at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1624 NE Hancock, Portland. Presented by Friends of Sabiha North America and Americans United for Palestinian Human Rights. Full conference, $75; one day only, $45. To register or for more information, call (503) 655-6625.

September 15 and 16 Interfaith Walk for Peace in Washington, D.C.
For there to be peace in the Middle East, the sponsors of this event offer an opportunity for a highly publicized expression of moral vision and principle by American Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders who believe working together for peace is fundamental to our faiths. For more information, contact Ron Young, USICPME, at (360) 652-4285 or usicpme@aol.com, or Rev. Charles Biggs, URL at (415) 561-2307 or office@uri.org.

September 19 to 21 Writer’s Workshop
Location in Portland (call phone number below for address). For writers and would-be writers who have a hunger for God, for truth, for getting voice on paper and to experience what happens when words, silence and heart come together. Sponsored by Journey Into Freedom. For more information, contact Dale Stitt at (503) 244-4728 or visit www.journeyintofreedom.org.

October 17 to 31 Wilderness Trip to Perspective to India.
This is NOT a tourist trip. One cannot go to places like India without experiencing some of the realities that most of us spend our entire lifetime trying to ignore. This is an opportunity to reexamine our security base, to move out of our comfort zone, to meet some incredible people, and possibly to have our lives changed. There is a three-month preparation process, so contact Journey Into Freedom ASAP if interested. For more information, contact Dale Stitt at (503) 244-4728 or visit www.journeyintofreedom.org.

The Center for Spiritual Development launches Abrahamic Initiative
Beginning Fall 2003, The Center for Spiritual Development at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Portland will offer a new two-year program entitled Abrahamic Initiative: A Study of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Abrahamic Initiative program is designed to promote greater knowledge, understanding and accord among people of the Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The goal of the Abrahamic Initiative is to increase the religious, cultural and spiritual literacy of a concerned and inquiring public about these traditions. The educational focus will be anthropological and historical, social, cultural and religious. The Center will explore the importance of world-view and how religions shape a way of being in the world. It is the intent that this curriculum can help dispel misunderstandings and contribute to an informed and honest conversation for the good of each tradition and the community as a whole.

Abrahamic Initiative events

October 24 Lecture: Abraham – A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths. 7:30 p.m. at The Center for Spiritual Development. Lecture by Bruce Feiler, an award-winning journalist and speaker, and the New York Times best-selling author of five books. Cost: $15.

November 15 Lecture: When Religion Becomes Evil. 7:30 to 9 p.m. at The Center for Spiritual Development. Lecture by Dr. Charles Kimball, a professor of religion and chair of the Department of Religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC. Kimball has made more than 35 visits to the Middle East and is a frequent lecturer and expert analyst on issues related to the Middle East, Islam and the intersection of religion and politics. Cost: $10.

Upcoming EMO sponsored events

September 18 Oregon Faith Leaders’ Summit: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths.
From 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Northwest Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Rd., Salem. Oregon’s religious leaders, clergy and lay leaders from diverse faith perspectives will explore the unique role of faith and earth stewardship, assess the progress of state and interfaith campaigns to slow climate change, and to plan next steps. The summit includes briefings on the latest science on climate change, state and national policies and innovative regional solutions emerging in the Pacific Northwest. An interfaith panel will share insights on the religious issues raised by climate change. Invited and/or confirmed speakers include Dr. Kent Bransford, Physicians for Social Responsibility; K.C. Golden, executive director of NorthWestern Connections; Gov. Ted Kulongoski; state Rep. Pat Farr (R); and state Sen. Ryan Deckert (D). EMO is coordinating the event with the Northwest Jewish Environmental Project.

For more information, call Jenny Holmes, campaign coordinator, at (503) 221-1054, ext. 278.

September 15 EMO Program Tour: 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (includes lunch) at the Interchurch Center, 0245 SW Bancroft, Suite B, Portland. EMO offers an interactive tour of our ministries and services in the community. The tour is free and offered to anyone who is interested. To reserve your space, call (503) 221-1054. Special tours can also be arranged for your group.

To submit calendar items for the Voice, please e-mail mbush@emoregon.org.