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SOAR Immigration Legal Services reunites family separated by civil war for more than 25 years

By Caroline van der Harten, EMO's SOAR Immigration Legal Services managing attorney

On Jan. 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order suspending refugee resettlement for 120 days and barring individuals from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen from entering the United States for 90 days (indefinitely from Syria). Not only did this order disrupt our refugee resettlement efforts, it was devastating for many clients of EMO's SOAR Immigration Legal Services.

We have many compelling cases, but one in particular helps illustrate the injustice and deep impact of the executive order. Seven years

ago, when I first started working for SOAR Legal, I received a case on my desk. It was for a Somali woman who had become a U.S. citizen and submitted a family-based petition for her son. The woman, Rahma, came to the United States as a refugee together with eight of her children.

When civil war broke out in 1991 in Somalia, Rahma and her family dodged bullets and ran for their lives. Rahma's husband was killed, and she could not find her son, Hussein. Thinking that Hussein had also been killed,

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Photo credit: Aysmara Miller

Caroline van der Harten (right) accompanied Rahma (left) to the airport to reunite with her son, after being separated for more than 25 years.

EMO Benefit Dinner funds ministry to those in need

Welcome the Stranger:
Show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.
Hebrews 13:2

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) *Benefit Dinner & Awards Celebration* is the single most important annual fundraiser for our vital ministries to the poor, the vulnerable, the hungry and the sick throughout the state of Oregon. Funds contributed by sponsors and guests enable us to serve those in need and to advocate on their behalf at the Oregon Legislature for a just, equitable and sustainable society.

The 2017 celebration, to be held May 11 at the Hilton Portland, will lift up EMO's

longstanding commitment to refugee resettlement and radical hospitality with the theme of "Welcome the Stranger."

Guests will have the opportunity to bid on enticing live and silent auction items and to enjoy hors d'oeuvres and a convivial dinner in the newly redecorated Hilton ballroom.

Community leaders honored

The event brings together many of Oregon's most generous community leaders: individuals who regularly put their faith into action on behalf of the common good. We are honored to announce our 2017 award recipients—extraordinary

individuals and organizations whose courage, moral vision and commitment to action have contributed profoundly to making Oregon, and the world, a better place.

The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM), recipient of the *Ecumenist of the Year Award*, is an international congregation of Catholic Sisters that has ministered in the Northwest since Oregon became a state in 1859. Its United States-Ontario Province is headquartered in Marylhurst, Ore. SNJM is dedicated to the full development of the human person through education, social justice, contemplation and the arts. Among its

core values are hospitality and service to people who are impoverished, abandoned or living at the margins of society. SNJM's twin commitments to education and justice are exemplified by its recent partnership with EMO and the Albina Ministerial Alliance to bring The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III to Portland for the powerful *2016 Collins Lecture* on "Redeeming the Soul of America: Race, Justice and Reconciliation."

Sahar Bassyouni, director of the Muslim Educational Trust's (MET) Islamic School and Oregon Islamic Academy, will receive the *Religious Education Award*.

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Reflections on hope, faith & collective action

La esperanza muere ultima. Hope dies last.
—Jessie de la Cruz

God is the very ground of our hope.
—The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Jessie de la Cruz, a Mexican American farm worker and organizer, spent her lifetime fighting for justice for the working poor. Her quote, “Hope dies last,” springs from her deep belief that if you lose hope, you lose everything.

I’ve been thinking a lot about what hope means in the last few months. As I have listened to people I respect to hear what they say about hope, several underlying themes are consistent in their reflections.

First of all, hope fully accepts reality—the whole spectrum of the current state of things—and yet chooses to believe in something larger and more lasting. This larger reality believes in a God that created us as an act of love in order for us to be love in the world. From these beginnings, we have been gifted with an unlimited capacity in the human heart to be compassionate and to forgive, even in the midst of despair that can appear insurmountable.



Jan Musgrove Elfers
Executive Director

Photo credit: Georkis Ramos Quintana

I am reminded of the families of the people who were murdered at Mother Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, who chose to forgive the man who committed the heinous crime. “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness,” Archbishop Desmond Tutu states. If we believe that ultimately the law of love sustains the universe, we can maintain hope through the darkest of days.

Secondly, hope is action-oriented and based on the “we,” not the “I.” Feelings of impotence, apathy and isolation extinguish hope. When faced with the enormity of the challenges in life, it is in gravitating towards community and acting together to address suffering that we find hope. When we turn towards each other, we come face to face with another human being with a name and a face. In this turning, we find that we have much in common. This discovery fuels our collective actions—whether it is participating in a letter writing campaign to political leaders, volunteering with a church group at a local emergency food bank, or helping a refugee family find their way to a new life in a new country.

On Feb. 7, nearly 500 people from all over the state gathered together in Salem for *Interfaith Advocacy Day 2017*. This was an example of the great power of acting collectively to foster hope. So many participants commented that they were encouraged by the sheer number of people who showed up to advocate. There are ripple effects that go

beyond a single action. The result is our own transformation, as well as the transformation of others. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “Hope has a ‘we’ quality. It is not selfish. Whenever you truly hope, you hope for everybody. That is why hope is always contagious. Hope fires hope.”

Hope is also resilient. There is a gritty and courageous aspect to hope that refuses to quit. It withstands obstacles with a toughness that produces endurance. When we work to change systems and institutions that perpetuate poverty and inequality, or to change attitudes and behaviors that promote hatred, hope reminds us to act now, while also taking a long view. It holds the competing tensions between the often difficult realities of today with the prospect of a better pathway to the future.

At the *March for Justice and Equality* on Jan. 28 in Portland, various speakers acknowledged the long, unfinished fight for civil rights in the United States, which has been filled with many setbacks, while also celebrating the progress that has been made. Sponsored by the NAACP and the Albina Ministerial Alliance, the event was attended by thousands of people.

In Jeremiah 29:11, the prophet exhorts us to hold onto hope: “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Our futures are bound together. May we never lose hope that together, with sustained efforts, we can and will create a better future for all.

SOAR Legal reunites family

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Rahma fled with her other children to a refugee camp in Kenya. While she was devastated by the loss of her son and her husband, she appreciated that she had an opportunity to find safety and security for the rest of her children.

Rahma was ultimately resettled as a refugee first in Maryland and then to Portland, Ore., two years later. She and her children became acclimated and integrated into life in Portland, where her children went to school, grew up and started families of their own.

Many years after settling in the United States, Rahma received a phone call from her son Hussein. He was 24 years old when he was separated from the family, and as Rahma discovered, he was also able to escape the war. She was overjoyed to learn that he was alive and had been resettled as a refugee in the Netherlands. He had married and had also started a family. When Rahma told her other children, they could not believe it. They cried tears of joy as they wondered whether they could ever be reunited again.

Rahma came to SOAR Legal in 2007 to begin the process of bringing her son to the United States. She was saddened to learn that because her son was over 21 years of age, there was a visa backlog that would cause a long processing time for her son. Regardless, she submitted the petition and waited patiently.

I received the case in 2010 as a denial notice. It turned out that a DNA parentage testing appointment had been scheduled for Hussein

in the Netherlands, and he had not attended the appointment. I thought this was strange, so I met with the family to find out what had happened. As it turned out, Hussein had a heart attack on the train on the way to the appointment. Fortunately, he was able to get medical attention and recovered. The problem was that, since he missed his appointment, the immigration service closed his case.

I asked Rahma to send me the medical records and letter from Hussein’s doctor explaining what had happened. Without this evidence, the case would be closed, and Rahma would have to start all over again, losing that prior three years of waiting. When Rahma brought all the documents, we were able to successfully reopen Hussein’s case. It still took another six years for Hussein and his family to finally get an interview at the U.S. Embassy in the Netherlands. Rahma was so happy to see that his visa and the visas of his wife and five children had been approved on Jan. 24, 2017.

Hussein was in the process of looking for plane tickets to the United States and preparing to travel, when several days later, President Trump signed an executive order barring nationals from Somalia and six other countries from entering the United States. Rahma was devastated. She had been separated from her son for more than 25 years and had been working for 10 years to process his petition. How can the government be so cruel, she asked?

Fortunately, the Washington state attorney general filed for a stay to halt the executive order, and it was granted! Once the stay went into effect, I called Rahma and emailed

Hussein, telling them that they should plan on getting plane tickets to enter the United States as soon as possible.

Hussein, his wife and five children successfully got to Portland on Feb. 16. The SOAR Legal team accompanied Rahma and her family to the airport to await Hussein’s arrival. When he came through customs, Rahma ran towards him, and once she reached him, Hussein dropped to his knees and kissed her feet.

It was the most incredible moment I have witnessed in my time as an immigration attorney. It reminded me that this is why I do the work that I do. This is why we provide the services we provide. Hussein and his family are beginning to adjust to life in Portland. The children are enrolled in school, and Hussein and his wife are looking for work.

A second executive order barring entrance to the United States for nationals of Somalia and five additional Muslim majority countries was blocked by a federal judge in Hawaii, hours before the ban was set to go into effect on March 16. At SOAR Legal, we continue to work tirelessly on many other family reunification cases, as we wait to find out how this plays out in federal courts.

I am hopeful that our values of welcoming the stranger and our Constitution codifying freedom of religion and preventing discrimination based on religion will ultimately prevail. My hope is that refugees will not be further traumatized by unjust policies—rather, we can continue to welcome them to our nation and work toward supporting them in rebuilding their lives.

Save the date for the 2017 Collins Lecture

Confronting devastating effects of climate change on the most vulnerable

The 2017 *Collins Lecture*, scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 2, will explore how climate change disproportionately affects the world's most vulnerable people, triggering the loss of livelihoods, insecurity, forced migration and poor health. Polluted air and water, weather disasters and drought bring devastation to all, particularly those living in poverty. We will also discuss how fossil fuel production and transportation often impact the marginalized, as seen with the Dakota Access Pipeline in Standing Rock.

Guest lecturers will be The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, president and founder of Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) and canon for the environment in the Episcopal Diocese of California; and The Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, civil rights leader, climate change activist and retired pastor of the historic Providence Missionary Baptist Church of Atlanta.

With a doctorate in urban education and psychology from the University of Massachusetts and a Master of Divinity degree from Howard University, The Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley seeks to combine the disciplines of faith and science with lessons learned as a civil rights advocate in the 1960s. Durley's message, "climate change is a civil rights issue," makes the connection between the two globally systemic concerns.

"When your children suffer from asthma and cannot go outside to play, as is the case for many in Atlanta, it is a civil rights issue," says Durley. "When unprecedented weather disasters devastate the poorest neighborhoods in places



2017 Collins Lecturer The Rev. Dr. Gerald Durley, "Clean air is a moral responsibility for us all!"

Photo credit: Earthjustice



2017 Collins Lecturer The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham.

Photo credit: New Mexico IPL

like New Orleans, New Jersey and New York, it is a civil rights issue. When farmers in faraway lands cannot feed their families because the rains will no longer come, it is a civil rights issue."

Durley has worked with Interfaith Power & Light, Sierra Club, Eco-America, U.S. Climate Action Network, Environmental Working Group, Green Law, Ambassadors for Clean Air, Moms Clean Air Force and Water Keeper Inc. In 2015, he was honored by President Obama as a "Champion of Change" for his efforts in protecting our environment and communities from the effects of climate change.

Active in the environmental community for over 30 years, The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham was one of the first faith leaders to fully recognize and articulate climate change as a moral issue. Through the IPL campaign—a religious response to climate change that includes a national network of more than 18,000 congregations with affiliated programs in 40 states (including EMO's project Oregon Interfaith Power & Light)—Bingham has mobilized thousands of religious people to put their faith into action through energy stewardship and advocacy.

"Jesus was an active person," states Bingham. "Praying about clean water and air is fine. But taking action to make sure that the air and water are clean, that's where we put our faith into action."

Bingham serves on the national board of the Environmental Defense Fund and the advisory board of the Union of Concerned Scientists and Climate One. Many national media outlets

including *The New York Times*, *Oprah* magazine and *Scientific American* have published stories about Bingham and IPL's work. She was named one of the top 15 green religious leaders by *Grist* magazine, has been recognized as a Climate Hero by *Yes! Magazine*, was featured as one of the leaders of the new green revolution in *Rolling Stone* and was named as one of the 50 most powerful women religious leaders by the *Huffington Post*.

The Portland area location of the event is yet to be determined. Check EMO's website, emoregon.org, for developing details.

Join the challenge to stop climate change

Once again, Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL), a project of EMO, is honored to be the recipient of a challenge matching grant from Interfaith Power & Light (IPL)—a nationwide, faith-based organization addressing climate change by promoting energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy. Every dollar donated to OIPL will be doubled, and this year IPL has increased our challenge grant from \$6,000 to \$12,000!

As the state affiliate of IPL, OIPL is working to build a statewide coalition of faith-based communities who can (a) clearly connect the impacts of climate change with the social and economic challenges faced by clients served through EMO programs, and (b) advocate for socially responsible state climate change policies. Every dollar raised for this purpose will be doubled, thanks to this wonderful opportunity presented by IPL.

If you would like to support this work, please make a secure online donation at emoregon.org (select Oregon Interfaith Power & Light), or mail your donation to EMO/OIPL, 0245 SW Bancroft St., Ste. B, Portland, OR 97239.

Workshops link climate justice with social justice

Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL), a project of EMO's Earth Ministries, endeavors to create a regional interfaith network to spur effective climate change advocacy through education, leadership development and interfaith collaboration.

During February, OIPL partnered with congregations, climate advocates, nonprofits and inspirational speakers to lead six *Climate Justice Legislative Workshops* in Beaverton, Medford, Lincoln City, Pendleton, Bend and Eugene.

The workshops equipped participants with knowledge of the impacts of climate change, including the links with social justice concerns such as poverty, health risks, racism and inequality. Participants were inspired to become actively involved in climate advocacy, and they were given the basic advocacy skills to do so.

We also started the process of creating a statewide network of congregational advocates working together as one strong lobbying voice.

Over 90 people attended the workshops, representing roughly 30 congregations throughout these six distinct regions of the state. Together, both during and following the workshops, participants contacted their elected officials 160 times, urging support for legislation that will put a cap and price on climate pollution. Workshop participants also identified over 65 businesses to approach about joining the growing coalition to pass this crucial legislation.

Since these workshops, OIPL has fielded requests from congregations in Portland, Salem and Corvallis to lead similar efforts in those communities. Contact Britt Conroy,



The Rev. John Pitney sings UN climate song during *Climate Justice Legislative Workshop* at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Pendleton.

Photo credit: Britt Conroy

EMO Public Policy Advocacy director, at bconroy@emoregon.org to discuss how OIPL might support and bolster your congregation and community's current climate activism.

Refugee Resettlement: EMO takes a comprehensive approach to an international crisis

Today's refugee crisis

The world is now witnessing the highest levels of displacement ever recorded, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency. An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.

In a world where nearly 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day as a result of conflict or persecution, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) work to resettle refugees is more important than ever before. But these efforts are now under threat from the current administration, which seeks to curtail refugee and immigrant admissions to the United States.

Our country was founded on the principles of welcoming the refugee and immigrant and guaranteeing freedom of religion. EMO shares these foundational American values. For nearly 40 years, EMO has been resettling refugees fleeing persecution and violence, seeking safety in the United States—just as refugees and immigrants have done throughout our country's history.

"We know that when one community suffers we all suffer—we are bound together in our humanity," Jan Musgrove Elfers, EMO executive director, says of EMO's resettlement work. "Our scriptures implore us to love our neighbors and to seek justice for all. To people of faith, this is not an option—it is God's command to us."

How refugee resettlement works

Refugees undergo more rigorous screening than anyone else allowed into the United States, with the average processing time between 18 to 24 months. The U.S. State Department granted legal immigration status to nearly 85,000 refugees in fiscal year 2016, according to the Pew Research Center. That same year, 1,780 of those refugees arrived in Oregon, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Once a refugee has been granted permission by the State Department to come to the United States, community organizations and state agencies take over the resettlement and acculturation process.

Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees

EMO's Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR) program, an affiliate of Church World Service, is one of those community resettlement organizations.

In operation since 1979, SOAR links sponsors—congregations, friends or community organizations—with refugees before they arrive in the United States, and helps them assist our new neighbors by picking them up at the airport, finding them places to live and furnishing their homes with basic necessities.

Meanwhile, the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement provides up to eight months of cash and medical assistance to newly arrived refugees. Refugees may be able to receive any other assistance that is offered to U.S. citizens, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and food assistance in the form of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.



Photo credit: Yelena Grigoryeva

The Al Tae family from Iraq arrived in Portland in August 2015, where they were reunited with family members already resettled in the area. SOAR assisted the family by registering them for ESL classes, a job search program, SNAP and TANF benefits, the Oregon Health Plan for medical insurance, and Mid County Clinic for health services.

For up to eight months after the refugees' arrival, SOAR provides refugees ongoing assistance with employment, transportation, cultural orientation, English language classes, and citizenship and naturalization counseling. In 2016, SOAR welcomed 596 refugees fleeing violence and persecution. The majority were from Cuba and the former Soviet Union; others came from Iraq, Iran, Myanmar, Bhutan, Haiti, Ethiopia, Congo, Sudan, Romania, Somalia, Afghanistan, Eritrea and El Salvador. In turn, these new neighbors enrich the vibrancy and beautiful diversity of our community.

Immigration legal services

Our SOAR Immigration Legal Services program was founded in 1992 in response to an influx of Haitian asylum seekers, and it expanded to serve not just refugees but all low-income immigrants. Recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) as an authorized provider of immigration legal services, SOAR Legal has a staff of two attorneys, two BIA-accredited representatives and one legal assistant.

Last year, SOAR Legal provided educational services and legal consultations to more than 2,000 people. SOAR Legal's caseload includes naturalization, adjustment of residence status, family reunification, employment

authorization, asylum counseling, refugee travel documentation, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Housing

Among our immigrant neighbors are many children and teens. Given the recent stricter enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, the Beaverton School District has reached out to EMO with concern that undocumented parents of students in their community may be deported, leaving their children on their own to finish their high school education. Our Second Home staff are gearing up to meet this need.

Second Home assists teens who are living without a home, parent or guardian, yet are striving to meet high school graduation requirements in the Beaverton, Gresham-Barlow and Lincoln County school districts. Second Home brings together caring and competent community members—volunteer home providers along with school district and city staff—to provide unaccompanied students not only places to live, but also the mentorship and tools they need to thrive. Like all of EMO's programs, this is life-changing.

Emergency food and clothing

Refugee families struggling to get on their feet after their initial resettlement assistance has ended may continue to experience urgent food and clothing needs. At EMO's Northeast Emergency Food Program (NEFP) all clients are greeted with the opportunity to select their own groceries and clothing with a "shopping" experience, as if in a store. The volunteers and staff at NEFP strive to make sure that people feel welcomed, and that they understand that they are important and they matter—and that we will not let them go hungry.

Located in Portland's Cully neighborhood, NEFP shares resources with nearly 1,500 non-English-speaking households each year. Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish and Chinese are the most common languages other than English spoken by NEFP clients; other languages include Romanian, Samoan, Somali and Swahili.

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How you can help refugees and immigrants

Become a volunteer for one EMO's Community Ministry programs:

- Help settle a refugee family in their new home in the Portland metro area. Contact Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees at soar@emoregon.org or (503) 284-3002.
- Assist immigrant families facing homelessness due to domestic and sexual violence. Contact Russian Oregon Social Services at (503) 777-3437.
- Stock or distribute food and clothing at the Northeast Emergency Food Program. Contact Travis Niemann, program manager, at nefp@emoregon.org or (503) 284-5470.
- Become a home provider for a homeless, unaccompanied high school student. Contact Rick Stoller, home provider coordinator for Second Home, at rstoller@emoregon.org or call (503) 221-1054, ext. 277.

Donate to EMO's Refugee Rapid Response Fund. Go to www.emoregon.org.

Become a monthly sustaining partner for one of our programs. Set up your secure online donation at emoregon.org, or call (503) 221-1054 to speak to an EMO development associate.

Download our one-page "know your rights" fact sheet to help someone you know who may be at risk of deportation. Available for download at www.emoregon.org.

Sustaining the power of EMO

In times of crisis, the community looks to Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) for a rapid—and compassionate—response. A sudden increase in need for emergency food or a dramatic surge in applicants for immigration legal counsel can challenge resources. Government payment of contracts may be held up by changes out of our control.

With your help, EMO's Presidents' Circle Steering Committee is leading the way to create financial stability for these times. The Sustaining the Power of EMO campaign will develop the cash reserves EMO needs to meet short-term funding gaps and emergencies as they arise.

Our goal is to raise \$150,000 in cash reserves to enable us to move swiftly to meet emerging needs. To date, we have generated \$57,000 in pledges toward this fund and have received \$38,000 in payments. Donations to the Sustaining campaign will be matched by the Collins Foundation.

We hope you will become a supporter of Sustaining the Power of EMO. Please go to emoregon.org to make a secure online gift or use the donation form on page 8. For more information, contact Carla Starrett-Bigg at (503) 221-1054, ext. 275.

Thank you for your commitment to helping the most vulnerable—while continuing to advocate for equity, inclusion, compassion and justice for all!

Healthy Retail improves access to healthy food one corner store at a time

Picture a neighborhood store where health is the business model, where kids and busy families stop in—maybe even on foot or bicycle—for healthy snacks or staples for a quick meal. The Healthy Retail Network is making this a reality, as we begin our third and final year of partnering with small corner stores to improve food access in northeast and east Portland.

The Network is a partnership between Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and the Racial and Economic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) at Multnomah County Health Department. Together, we have partnered with five locally owned corner stores in areas that lack full-service grocery stores, offering the support necessary for store owners to buy and sell fresh fruits and vegetables. We are currently in the process of bringing on board four new stores in Lents, St. Johns and Gresham.

Because of our work, African-American individuals and families will have greater access to fresh produce. Healthier communities allow people to more easily make healthy lifestyle decisions. We heard from our communities that food access is a major barrier in eating healthy, and this initiative is a direct response to that concern.

"I'm excited to represent EMO's interfaith mission in Multnomah County and meet the challenge of improving food access for



County liaison Nina Phillips poses with new signage at KB Market purchased with funds from the Healthy Retail Network.

African-Americans in the Portland metro area," says Christopher German, new program coordinator for the Healthy Retail Network. In addition to German, Program Assistant Mona McDonald brings passion and dedication for encouraging health and behavioral change in the African-American church community.

For more information about the Healthy Retail Network, contact Christopher German at (503) 349-1382 or cgerman@emoregon.org.

Refugee resettlement

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"In addition to doing my best to learn pleasantries in many of the languages our clients speak, and communicating with gestures and body language, we use bilingual friends and neighbors to help translate," says NEFP Program Manager Travis Niemann. "And we also use Google Translate. I find it is helpful to translate a word or two on the computer and then point to the screen to allow them to read it in their native language. I once amazed myself by speaking a few words in Swahili, much to the delight of the client!"

Culturally specific services for Russian-speaking immigrants

Immigrant women and children facing homelessness due to domestic violence are especially vulnerable. Oregon's 100,000-member Russian-speaking community, one of the state's largest immigrant groups, is isolated due to both language barrier and social custom—making it difficult for victims of domestic and sexual violence to access help when they need it. Our Russian-speaking, culturally sensitive team at Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS) helps vulnerable immigrant women and children find support, safe housing and the tools for self-sufficiency.

At EMO, our comprehensive, collaborative approach helps our new neighbors in all their diversity find the safe, stable, welcoming homes they need in order to thrive, flourish and make their own distinctive contributions to our shared community.

Dine out & fight AIDS on April 27!

Join EMO's HIV Services on Thursday, April 27, 2017, for Portland's ninth annual *Dining Out For Life*.

Dining Out For Life is an annual international event to raise funds for AIDS service organizations. When you dine out at a local participating restaurant, 20 to 35 percent of your purchase will go directly to local programs serving people with HIV/AIDS. The fundraiser is held in over 60 cities throughout the United States and Canada. In the Portland metro area, *Dining Out For Life* benefits EMO's HIV Services and OHSU's Partnership Project.

Dining Out For Life provides the opportunity for Portland's communities to nourish ourselves and directly contribute to the nourishment and support of others in need. At EMO's HIV Day Center, we provide hundreds of meals a month for low-income, HIV-positive clients, and support them in accessing critical medical resources such as medical case management at OHSU's Partnership Project. Through these resources, people living with HIV/AIDS in Portland can maintain medication adherence. Through adherence, people living with HIV/AIDS drastically increase their long-term health and decrease their viral loads, which studies show significantly decrease the potential for the virus to be spread.

Last year, 38 Portland restaurants participated in *Dining Out For Life* in every quadrant of the city. Diners also had the opportunity to give personal donations that



night. In total, over \$28,000 was raised for the two organizations.

Great Portland metro area restaurants are lined up again this year, including (but not limited to) 3 Doors Down, Bazi Bierbrasserie, Bison Coffeehouse, Bridges Café, Doug Fir, Extracto Coffeehouse, Ford Food & Drink, Garden Bar (Division location), Gracie's, Madrona Hill Café, Las Primas, The Original, Oven & Shaker, P & Q's Market, Peter's Bar & Grill, Red Sauce Pizza, Red Star Tavern, Rose and Thistle, and 17 McMenamins locations. Dine out at one of these restaurants on April 27, and be sure to mention that you're there for "Dining Out."

For more information and a full restaurant listing, visit diningoutforlife.com/portland or contact Jesse Herbach, HIV Services program manager, at (503) 460-3822 or jherbach@emoregon.org.

EMO advocates for climate justice, immigration & housing during 2017 Legislative Session

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is committed to bringing the voices of people of faith into the policy-making process at the Oregon Legislature and beyond. Our advocacy is designed to create systems, institutions and public policies that promote peace, justice and a life of possibility for all people. During the 2017 Legislative Session, EMO is focusing our advocacy efforts in three key areas: climate justice, immigration and housing.

Climate Justice—EMO seeks to promote environmental stewardship and social justice by combating climate change. This Legislative Session, we are supporting SB 557 and similar legislation to cap and price climate pollution. Additionally, EMO is calling for investments in climate-friendly transportation options, like transit services, safe routes for Oregon children to walk and bike to school, and clean electric buses and cars.

Immigration—EMO advocates for protection of family and community well-being by standing with our immigrant neighbors. We are part of a coalition working to pass inclusivity ordinances in cities and counties throughout Oregon to ensure that immigrants and refugees feel welcome and that local resources are not used to enforce federal immigration law.

Housing—Oregon is in a statewide housing crisis. EMO is supporting HB 2004, HB 2006 and a \$50 million allocation for crucial homelessness prevention and assistance programs.

HB 2004 would end no-cause evictions, which can be unjust, discriminatory and put families at risk of homelessness. To prevent de facto evictions through extreme rent increases and to ensure family stability, the bill would allow cities to enact rent stabilization policies, while still ensuring a fair system for landlords. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon joined

many partners in drafting HB 2006—a reform to the state’s largest housing subsidy, the mortgage interest deduction, a subsidy that costs Oregon nearly \$1 billion every biennium. Roughly 61 percent of the tax benefits of this program go to the top 20 percent of taxpayers—at a time when over 20,000 Oregon children are homeless and securing affordable housing is harder than ever. Follow progress of the bill on Twitter at #MIDremedy.

We also fully support a \$50 million allocation for the Emergency Housing Account (EHA) and State Homeless Assistance Program (SHAP), programs that help prevent and end homelessness and provide emergency shelter.

The members, board of directors and staff of EMO advocate for these and other crucial policy priorities. You will find us in Salem meeting with elected officials and testifying to legislative committees. If you would like to join us, contact Britt Conroy at bconroy@emoregon.org.

Interfaith community turns out en masse for a day of advocacy

A record number of nearly 500 people signed up for *Interfaith Advocacy Day 2017*! Held on Feb. 7 at St. Mark Lutheran in Salem, the event brought together people of many religious traditions from throughout Oregon, motivated for a day of advocacy and action.

Keynote speaker Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum gave an inspirational speech during the morning plenary. She focused on the federal travel ban that had recently been issued and stressed Oregon’s commitment to refugees and immigrants. Rosenblum received an enthusiastic ovation from the audience upon her announcement that Oregon had just filed a request to join a federal lawsuit by the state of Washington challenging the constitutionality of President Donald Trump’s Jan. 27 executive order on immigration. (Her request was granted later in February by U.S. District Judge James Robart.)

The morning plenary session was followed by in-depth workshops, advocacy training, a procession to the Capitol steps, and 78 meetings with state legislators. With the theme “Raising Diverse Voices of Faith to Strengthen Oregon Communities,” specific issues addressed included housing, hunger, health care, gun safety, wage theft, and climate justice.



Keynote by Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum.



Top: Greeting by legislators at the Capitol steps. Bottom: Constituents meeting with House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson (right).

Photo credit: Joe Snyder

Voice

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

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MEMBER DENOMINATIONS

African Methodist Episcopal Church • American Baptist Churches of the Central Pacific Coast
Archdiocese of Portland • Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon & SW Idaho
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
Presbyterian Church (USA)—Presbytery of the Cascades • Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
United Church of Christ • United Methodist Church
Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference • Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Creating a criminal justice reform movement

Bringing justice to the legal system is a concern that unites people across races, ethnicities, political affiliations and religious traditions. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) has a long history of working for criminal justice reform through advocacy and education, and more recently through our Communities of Support & Accountability (CoSA) program.

Established in 2014, CoSA uses a restorative justice approach to empower the community to journey alongside persons impacted by the criminal justice system—offenders, victims, staff and their families—and seeks to provide a range of ways for congregations and volunteers to engage with criminal justice issues and those impacted individuals.

We are now partnering with the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon to further advance criminal justice reform and provide more services for those in the legal system throughout our state. We envision this collaboration as the seed of an

interfaith movement.

The next step towards this movement is to launch an advisory/action committee of faith leaders interested in criminal justice reform. If you or someone in your faith community is interested in joining the interfaith advisory/action committee, please contact Audrey deCoursey (*see contact information below*).

Also, through support from the Diocese’s Prison Ministry Commission, EMO is piloting a project to connect volunteer mentors in the community with incarcerated individuals who lack outside visitors. We are looking for volunteers interested in serving on an initial cohort of “penpals” to someone experiencing long-term incarceration.

If you are interested in either of these opportunities, or to learn more about criminal justice reform, please contact Audrey deCoursey, CoSA program manager, at adecoursey@emoregon.org.

EMO honored with award for bridge-building

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) was honored with the “Legacy Award for Bridge Building” at Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church’s tenth annual *Drum Major Services*. Jan Musgrove Elfers, EMO executive director, accepted the award on Jan. 14, 2017.

The celebration takes place the weekend immediately prior to Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The term “drum major” is from a sermon Dr. King gave on Feb. 4, 1968, at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, asking that he be remembered “as a drum-major for justice, peace and righteousness.” From this root, the *Drum Major* celebration honors organizations and individuals whose humanitarianism, non-violent activism, peace-building efforts, volunteerism and community service have changed our community in positive, measurable ways.

In addition to Jan Elfers and EMO, other

honorees included: Wajdi Said, Muslim Educational Trust; JoAnn Hardesty, NAACP Portland Branch 1120; Julianne Johnson-Weiss, Stumptown Stages; Kay Toran, Volunteers of America Oregon; and Lou Radja, EduCongo.

As part of the ceremony, six micro-scholarships were awarded to local high-school students who have demonstrated a noteworthy commitment to their academic endeavors.

“As a community, we’re so proud of the selfless contributions and measurable efforts made by each of this year’s honorees,” said The Rev. J. W. Matt Hennessee, senior pastor of Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church. “Our Drum Major program gives us an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate those who perform extraordinary everyday acts of service with reliability and commitment.”



Photo credit: Henry Moore

The Rev. Dr. Rodney Page, former EMO executive director, presented Jan Musgrove Elfers, current EMO executive director, with the “Legacy Award for Bridge Building” at the *Drum Major Services* on Jan. 14.

Exchanging viewpoints on race & justice from the pulpit

On the heels of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) 2016 *Collins Lecture* with The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III, “Redeeming the Soul of America: Race, Justice and Reconciliation”—and in response to rising incidents of hate crimes based on racism, xenophobia and anti-Muslim rhetoric—our faith traditions are called to take a leadership role to address the divisions that separate us, as we seek to build bridges that will foster hope in our communities.

To answer this courageous call, EMO and the Albina Ministerial Alliance are offering a practical response for places of worship to engage with people of differing races, cultures and religious traditions. The Pulpit Exchange program—between predominantly community

of color churches with predominantly white churches in the Portland metro area—will focus on sermonic themes of race, justice and reconciliation.

Leaders from EMO’s denominational membership and the Albina Ministerial Alliance have each identified 10 congregations interested in participating in the Pulpit Exchange pilot program. Those congregations will be matched with another participating place of worship.

On the day of the Pulpit Exchange, which is determined by the congregations, the pastor and at least five of their congregation members will visit the matched congregation. A sermon by the guest faith leader will be followed by a potluck meal and discussion with members of the host congregation.

Participating congregations will be encouraged to continue their newfound relationships by exploring ways to serve together and deepen the dialogue.

Once the Pulpit Exchange pilot project is completed, our goal is to take the model throughout Oregon. If your church is interested in participating, contact Audrey deCoursey at adecoursey@emoregon.org or call the EMO office at (503) 221-1054.



EMO Benefit Dinner

Continued from page 1

Under Bassyouni’s leadership, MET provides compelling education about Islam both within and beyond Oregon’s Muslim community. MET’s dedication to youth education is exemplified by its superb pre-K through 12th grade college preparatory schools, and by its mentoring program that fosters faith-based community service and leadership skills. This holistic approach, incorporating a God-centered outlook on life, develops principled individuals capable of building meaningful bridges with those of other faiths. In addition to her leadership at MET, Bassyouni also speaks at numerous colleges and churches about Islam and Muslims.

The Collins Foundation, recipient of the *Ecumenical Humanitarian Award*, is recognized for its ongoing dedication to humanitarian endeavors throughout the state of Oregon and its unwavering commitment to the vibrant life of our community. The Collins Foundation has since 1947 provided crucial funding for health initiatives, social services, education, housing, employment and preservation of Oregon’s natural environment. Collins support undergirds EMO’s community ministries and makes possible the highly regarded annual *Collins Lecture*, the most visible of EMO’s

theological education activities.

The Honorable George A. Van Hooissen, recipient of the *Rodney Page Ecumenical Service Award*, has throughout a distinguished career in public service demonstrated a profound commitment to justice and compassion for all. Van Hooissen served as jurist for the Multnomah County Circuit Court, Oregon Court of Appeals and Oregon Supreme Court. Prior to that, he was elected to the Oregon Legislature as a state representative; he was then elected Multnomah County District Attorney.

Van Hooissen has the distinction as the first president of EMO’s board of directors, serving from 1974 to 1977. Under his leadership, the newly formed organization was strengthened by increasing denominational membership and launching community ministry programs.

Andrea Williams, recipient of the *Young Visionary Award*, is executive director of Causa, Oregon’s immigrant rights organization. She works to improve the lives of Latino immigrants and their families in Oregon through advocacy, coalition building, leadership development and civic engagement. “Immigration is the civil rights issue of our time,” she says. “We are continuing to fight for immigration reform and a path to citizenship.”

Sponsors

Providence Health & Services is a Gold Sponsor, and the Oregon-Idaho Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church is a Silver Sponsor. Bronze Sponsors to date include Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oregon and SW Idaho; Community of Christ – Greater Pacific NW Mission Center; Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; Episcopal Diocese of Oregon; First Unitarian Church, Portland; Neil Kelly; Parkrose Community United Church of Christ; Ron Means & Rodney Page; Marilyn Sewell & George Crandall; Thrivent Financial; and Waltz Sheridan Crawford Insurance. Additional support is provided by Beneficial State Bank and Wright Land Company.

Join us!

The Benefit Dinner & Awards Celebration will be held Thursday, May 11, at the Hilton Portland, 921 SW Sixth Avenue. Check-in, silent auction and reception begin at 5 p.m., followed by dinner, live auction and a festive awards presentation at 6:30 p.m.

Admission is \$100 per person. Sponsorships include a table of ten. Reservations may be made securely online at emoregon.org or by calling (503) 221-1054.

EMO celebrates grants & gifts

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s board of directors and staff extend their appreciation to those who support EMO’s ministries. The following is a partial list of foundation and community support received by EMO since the last issue of the *Voice*.

Donor (Fund)	Program
American Immigration Lawyers Association	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Black United Fund of Oregon	NE Emergency Food Program
Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS	HIV Services
CareOregon	HomeShare
The Collins Foundation	Annual Fund
DDI Benefits	HIV Services
Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation	HIV Services
Episcopal Diocese of Oregon	Communities of Support & Accountability, HIV Services
The Equity Foundation	HIV Services
Doris H. & Michael F. Garcia Fund	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Grand+Benedicts	NE Emergency Food Program
Harris Family Foundation	Refugee Response
Hart Family Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Holzman Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Immigration Counseling Service	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Irwin Foundation	NE Emergency Food Program
Joseph E. Weston Public Foundation	Second Home, Annual Fund
Juan Young Trust	Second Home
M.A.C. AIDS Fund	HIV Services
Meyer Memorial Trust	HomeShare
Morel Ink	HIV Services
Neighborhood Partnership Fund	Public Policy Advocacy
Oregon Food Bank	NE Emergency Food Program
Parrilli Renison	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Pride Foundation	HIV Services
The Regeneration Project	Oregon Interfaith Power & Light
Reser Family Foundation	Second Home
Susan G. Komen Foundation	Russian Oregon Social Services
Valley Community Presbyterian	Second Home
Verizon - Pacific Market	Russian Oregon Social Services
Willamette Week	NE Emergency Food Program

The Collins Match:
A challenge worth taking

We are deeply grateful to the Collins Foundation for leading the way in Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) 2017 Annual Fund drive with a \$70,000 challenge grant. All new and increased donations to EMO will be matched at 100 percent by the Collins Foundation.

As a supporter of EMO’s Annual Fund, you partner with EMO in bringing together Oregonians for interfaith dialogue, peace work, direct service to those who need it most, and advocacy addressing the root causes of poverty and environmental degradation.

To double your new or increased gift to EMO, please use the form below or make a secure online donation at www.emoregon.org. For more information, call (503) 221-1054.

Double my gift to EMO with the Collins Match!

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please make tax-deductible check payable to EMO or pay by:

☐Visa ☐MasterCard ☐American Express

Card # _____ Code _____ Exp. _____

Amount: ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other _____

Please send your gift to:
EMO, 0245 SW Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland, OR 97239.
You may also make a secure online donation at emoregon.org.

Honor & Memorial Gifts
September 2016 to Feburary 2017

Gifts in Honor

In honor of ACCESS Academy Backpack Program, Jennifer & Duncan Ellis
In honor of Kendrick Allen, Jay Grossman
In honor of Gregg Alpaugh, Richard Attanasio & Amy Alpaugh
In honor of Sam & Marisa Anderson, Jeff McLaughlin
In honor of Gaile Baack, Trish Eby
In honor of Kristi Baack, Eric Baack, Gaile Baack, Joanne Deazley
In honor of Dr. H.D. & Jean Barker, John Barker
In honor of the Beaverton High School Softball Team, Leslee Viehoff
In honor of Walter John Boris, Corliss Marsh
In honor of Willy Bowles, Deborah Berry
In honor of Mark & Jane Cotton, John & Corliss Cotton, Shawn & David Looney
In honor of Chuck Currie, Deborah & Mark Fisher
In honor of Guadalupe Garcia de Rayos, Karen Carlisle
In honor of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Patricia Dickerson, Lesley Unthank
In honor of Tom & Maria DeMull, Dan Abernathy & Marisa DeMull
In honor of John Dennis, Helen Dennis
In honor of Jan Elfers, Jeffrey & Sharon Musgrove, Carla & Matthew Starrett-Bigg
In honor of Rose Fitzgibbon, Megan Kim
In honor of Don Frueh, Paul & Jan Eck
In honor of Linda Gebetsberger, Helen Dennis
In honor of Del Greenfield, Bonnie & Peter Reagan
In honor of Sam, Ben, Bruine & Robyn Hack, Kimberly Hack
In honor of Luke Hammar, Louis Goeschl, Mike Olson, Donna Hammar
In honor of Theodore Haywood, Lisa Westarp
In honor of Jesse Herbach, Debbi Bodie, Nicole Judd-Bekken, Julia Lager-Mesulam
In honor of Ilse & Glenn Johnson, Jennifer Johnson
In honor of Donald Kahapea, Tarn Allen & Cory Meisch
In honor of Howard Kenyon, Carla & Matthew Starrett-Bigg
In honor of Robert Kenyon, Howard Kenyon
In honor of Cynthia A. Levin, Heather Stein
In honor of Carolyn Lindsey, Kay Carman
In honor of Jeanne Meyer, Versie Meyer
In honor of Christopher Murillo, Amy LeSage
In honor of Travis Niemann, Alaine Duncan, Doyle Niemann & Karen Morrill
In honor of Anmol Patel & Sita Niemann, Sam Niemann & Neha Patel
In honor of Kathryn Pawlick, Anne Pawlick, Maxwell Ward
In honor of Jenny Pratt, Linda & Aaron Cohen, Jesse Herbach, Ruthann Marquis
In honor of Darla, Frank, Bill, Shane, Valerie, Xavier, Elleri & Emerson, Shannon Ristau
In honor of Diane & Bill Savage, Josh & Laura Flosi
In honor of the Savage Family, Arthur & Barbara Gilbert
In honor of Thelma Scott, Doris Dines

In honor of Strength for the Journey Camp, Lisa Jean Hoefner
In honor of Don Tarbutton, Lawrence & Linda Monk
In honor of Katie Ugolini, Wayne Werbel & Lynne Phillips-Werbel
In honor of Pat Walsh, Emily Donaldson
In honor of Marjorie Wolfe, Kirke Wolfe
In honor of friends & family in the new year, Rocky Blumhagen & Richard Royle

Gifts in Memory

In memory of John Lang Anderson, Margaret Anderson
In memory of Paul Bellavia, Stacy Bellavia
In memory of Brian Bounous, Brenda Mendiola
In memory of Trudy Bradley, Dan Bradley
In memory of Roland & Louise Brown, Elizabeth Brown
In memory of Richard Burton, Reed & Holly Fowler
In memory of Carol Carpenter, Karen & Gordon Sykes
In memory of John Casas, Raymond L. Barnes
In memory of Michael Cosentino, Rosemarie & Michael Graham
In memory of Jack Cox & Juan Mendez, Quest Center for Integrative Health
In memory of George Curran, Domenica Gonzales
In memory of Rodney Demoss, Jamie Christianson
In memory of Gladys Flesher, Ranata & David Niederloh, St. Luke Lutheran Church
In memory of Lois Grumm, Maria Grumm
In memory of Eric Gustafson, Evona Brim
In memory of Ronald Gustafson-Barr, Diana J. Gustafson-Barr
In memory of Bethenia Harper, J.W. Matt Hennessee
In memory of Jesse Hernandez, Irma Hernandez
In memory of William Hogan, Diane Hogan
In memory of Stanford Jamison, Elaine Hartzog
In memory of Mitch Kincannon, Lauren Nathe & Christopher Chiacchierini
In memory of Margaretta Dunn Kruse, Suzanne Cerddeu
In memory of Gregory Lindstedt, Robert & Carol Lindstedt
In memory of Bill Mitchell, Geraldine Mitchell
In memory of Orel Pierson, Jr., Carol Anne Drayton, Keith Edwards
In memory of James Pizza, Norma Pizza
In memory of David Plance, Barbara Millikan
In memory of Claude & Lola Roberts, Claudia Jean Roberts
In memory of John “Robbie” Robertson, Kenneth Caldwell, Bill & Sue Funk, Margaret Gemmell, Laura Good, Herman & Helen Guichelaar, Dorice Jones, Sally & James Lindemann, Gary & Jerrie Lovre, David & Darnell Mandelblatt, Jane Rabe, Ginny Robertson
In memory of Joey & David, Gail Sanford
In memory of Eileen Starrett, Carla & Matthew Starrett-Bigg
In memory of Aaron Walters, Sylvia Zingesser
In memory of Richard Warner, Michael & Anni Powell
In memory of Donald Weston, Bruce & Judith Bishop
In memory of Robert Wright, Cecil Prescod
In memory of Johannes Zumstein, Julia Spence