

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Criminal Justice Reform advances equity on many levels.

Injustice in our legal system cements racial disparities into our social fabric. Incarceration removes members of our community from their active roles as parents, workers, and civic leaders. Even after serving time, a criminal record creates barriers to integration, in finding housing, jobs, treatment, and social connection. Since people of color are incarcerated at disproportionate rates, all these impacts fall on communities that are already marginalized, and exacerbate existing disparities.

Over 70% of Oregon's prison population is housed in five facilities in Eastern Oregon – even though most of the adults in custody come from Western Oregon. Every corner of our state is impacted by decisions about our corrections system.

Oregon's one women's prison is close to capacity. It is only under the limit because of a new approach called Justice Reinvestment. Without this reform, a second women's prison would need to be opened, to the cost of \$10 million per year – plus the incalculable impact on more families. Lawmakers can move for more just sentencing, to reduce prison growth and find effective alternatives for public safety.

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT in Oregon

In 2013, the Oregon legislature made a bold step to fund "Justice Reinvestment:" directing funds that would have gone to open a new prison, to instead fund victim services, more community supervision, specialty courts, and treatment. This shift addresses the roots of crime.

This year, the Justice Reinvestment Accountability and Equity Act sustains the progress made with Justice Reinvestment, while strengthening programs by putting in place accountability measures to make sure funds go to the places most committed to success. Equity is considered, to ensure that these measures advance racial equity instead of furthering racial disparities of mass incarceration.

RAISE YOUR VOICE: Support HB 3064, the Justice Reinvestment Accountability and Equity Act
- Call (800) 332-2313 to tell your state senator and representative to vote for HB 3064, and to fully fund Justice Reinvestment.
- Learn about the bill at SafetyandJustice.org.

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WHY IT MATTERS to people of faith

Justice is a value shared by many faiths: religions understand that the law of the land is not the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong.

In the Christian Gospel of Matthew (Ch. 25), Jesus encourages believers to “visit the prisoners.” This command is about more than providing charity to the vulnerable: it invites the faithful to radically shift how they define who is in their community. It delineates a community that is united in spirit, even when bodies are apart.

Prisons put up walls that divide families and communities. We are called not only to cross those prison walls to visit, but to resist the pressures to think those walls can separate us as one community. We are called to enact policies that treat all members with compassion and dignity.

PRAYER for restoring justice (Source: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon)

Just and Merciful Creator;

You gave us the law of love - a law to make the whole world renewed.

We are called to imitate you in mercy, not judgment. We are called to live as examples, not enforcers. We are called to trust there is enough, and to share. We are called to visit the prisoners and hear their cries.

Restoring justice takes hard work from the whole community, and often, we fail to live up to the dreams you have for us.

We confess that too often we judge others, to justify our own actions. We confess that too often we content ourselves with privilege, instead of seeking solidarity. We confess that too often we scapegoat others, instead of looking at complexity, and our own complicity in systems of oppression and violence. We know that you have seen our errors and have equipped us to make amends.

Help us face ourselves and our human frailty with humility and not fear. Help us become healers, though wounded, and restorers of justice where it has been breached.

CONNECT and ACT

Attend EMO's **Hearing the Cries for Justice** on March 22-23, 2019 at First United Methodist Church in Eugene.

This regional gathering will equip and inspire faith communities to act for justice, by serving alongside those in prison and coming home from prison. Join us for advocacy training, reentry mentorship, and plenty of time for networking. Learn more and register at www.emoregon.org/events

Learn more and connect at EMOregon.org or (503) 221-1054

ADVOCACY TIP

State legislators don't hear from constituents as often as federal officials do. A thoughtful letter or call goes a long way. You can also write to agency officials, such as administrators at the Department of Corrections or your District Attorney.

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Climate Justice

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Climate justice is a movement to acknowledge that one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today is the climate crisis. Global temperatures are rising, causing a cascade of impacts on ecosystems.

But climate change isn't just a global concern. Our region has experienced unprecedented patterns of consecutive warm summers in the past decade; hot, dry summers exacerbate forest fires, dangerous storms, heat-related deaths and drought. Disasters impact low-income families most directly.

This crisis has ramifications across borders; it is a justice issue as much as an environmental one, because the people facing the burden of coping with it are those who are both least responsible and least equipped to face its effects. The climate crisis exposes our world's existing social injustices in need of transformation.

WHY IT MATTERS to people of faith

Religious traditions worldwide encourage a loving relationship with the Earth. In his groundbreaking encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis reminded followers of the centrality of creation care to the life of faith: "Living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience."

CREATION CARE for Oregon now: HB 2020

The signature climate justice bill before the Oregon Legislature this Session is the Clean Energy Jobs Bill. The core principle of the bill is to cap the amount of climate pollution from the largest emitters, charge emitters for pollution over the set limits, and invest the funds in jobs that are building our sustainable, clean energy future economy: transportation upgrades, energy efficiency in homes, affordable solar power, and more. Over 48,000 Oregonians already work in clean energy jobs, and this bill will boost investment in these jobs for people across skill sets and training. Oregon's governor and legislative leaders have supported this effort, so we are hopeful we can see this goal reached.

RAISE YOUR VOICE

What you can do:

- Call (800) 332-2313 to tell your state senator and representative to support the Clean Energy Jobs Bill, HB 2020.
- Learn about the bill with Renew Oregon, one of EMO's partners.

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PRAYER for creation care (Source: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon)

Loving Creator, you created the Earth, you created us, and you called it good.

From mud and clay, you formed us, eternally linked to our earth. You surround us with an abundance of blessing. You have embedded us within an interdependent web of diverse creatures, our planetary family, in which we belong and have a home. You have called us to be creators like you.

Yet, too often we have played the role of dominion, and perverted life-giving power toward destruction. Over and over, you have woken us from our numbness and shaken us from our apathy. Through the calls of scientists, the cries of displaced persons, and the heartache in wake of unnatural disasters, we have seen the signs but refused to read what they tell us.

Yet, you have not turned your back on us. You have not abandoned this world. You still love us and call us to our better selves. You still call us good.

Strengthen us for the work ahead, for the suffering that may still befall us, for the profound shifting in values we must undertake to address the climate crisis. Ground us in the truth of our existence, as beings of earth, dust and ash, with the blessing of one chance to call your world our home.

MORAL URGENCY

“The task before us is morally urgent: we are called to live into a prophetic vision that protects God’s Creation and creates healthy, thriving communities. With the Clean Energy Jobs bill, we will safeguard the climate for future generations while making sure the transition to clean energy is a smooth one, especially for vulnerable Oregonians.”

- Jan Elfers, EMO President

ADVOCACY TIP

It’s important to thank legislators for taking action you support, as well as urging them to change positions. If your legislator tends to support bills you do, you can still write to thank them for representing you well - so they keep it up.

CLIMATE AS COMMON GOOD

Pope Francis offers a challenge to civic leaders as well as religious followers:

“There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy... International negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility.”

Scientists explain natural phenomena and develop technologies, but it is people of faith whose expertise is in identifying a moral vision for our future.

Learn more and connect at emoregon.org or (503) 221-1054

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Welcoming Migrants

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Headlines around the world remind us of the precarious experience migrants face - and the divergent ways they are received in their new homes. Whatever drove them from home, immigrants are our new neighbors - and a vital part of our communities.

Oregon has welcomed over 67,000 refugees since 1975, from countries as diverse as Iraq, the former Soviet Union, Burma, Cuba, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. 600 refugees are expected to arrive this year.

WHY IT MATTERS to people of faith

Hospitality to migrants has been a calling for people of faith across generations. Our sacred stories tell of our ancestors' wanderings.

From the Hebrew Bible (Deuteronomy 10:19): "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

From Christian Scripture (Matthew 25:35): "I was a stranger and you welcomed me..."

HOSPITALITY FOR MIGRANTS to Oregon

EMO is helping advance legislation in the Oregon Capitol this Session, to fund refugee resettlement services for our communities through HB 2508.

Together, EMO's SOAR program, Lutheran Community Services Northwest and Catholic Charities of Oregon have nearly 200 years of experience resettling refugees. But under the current federal administration, refugee resettlement has faced steep cuts, putting our agencies at risk. Investment from state funding will help sustain programs that have been serving refugees well, while embodying Oregon's welcoming values.

This investment will help thousands: with \$4.25 million, Oregon's three major refugee resettlement agencies will provide extended case management to 1,800 refugees and will support school-aged children for two years. This up-front investment is not only humane but cost-effective: refugees receiving case management are less likely to rely on public assistance.

RAISE YOUR VOICE: Support HB 2508

What you can do:

- Call (800) 332-2313 to tell your state senator and representative to vote for HB 2508, to invest in refugee resettlement services.
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LITURGY supporting immigrants and refugees

Source: Rabbi Debra Kolodny, Portland's Unshul and Portland Spirit Led Justice Alliance.

January 2019 (with deep appreciation to Rumi)

Leader: Come, come whoever you are: The lawyers and teachers, theologians and activists, dental hygienists and students, acupuncturists and occupational therapists, chaplains and administrative assistants, clergy who commit civil disobedience to free asylum seekers, the housed and the houseless people who commit civil disobedience by occupying ICE. All of us wanderers, worshipers, lovers of leaving, we will not let your caravan despair.

Response: We will not let your caravan despair! We welcome you to cross our borders. We have enough. We are enriched by your coming.

Leader: Our faith obligates us to share our abundance with you. Thirty six times the Hebrew scriptures demand that we are to welcome and love the immigrant.

Response: We will not let your caravan despair! We welcome you to cross our borders. We have enough. We are enriched by your coming.

Leader: Our own history obligates us to welcome you. If immigrant descendant we are obligated to return the hospitality shown to us. If slave or indigenous descendent, we are obligated to break the cycle of abuse that met us.

Response: We will not let your caravan despair! We welcome you to cross our borders. We have enough. We are enriched by your coming.

Leader: We are sorry. We must do better. We will atone and repair. There is no way but the way of welcoming.

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MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SOAR and SOAR Legal are two of EMO's longest-running programs. SOAR provides resettlement support for refugees; SOAR Legal provides accessible, culturally-specific legal services for citizenship, immigration, and education. These programs are supported in part by donations from the community. Clinic services are often provided by volunteer lawyers providing pro bono legal assistance. To volunteer or donate, contact us: EMOregon.org.

ADVOCACY TIP

If you are part of a religious group, be sure to identify yourself as such when you talk or write to your legislators. Knowing that you are part of a larger organization helps your legislator know your opinion is multiplied.

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