2020 Collins Summit explores Shalom in Divided Times
By Paul LeFever, EMO director of Development & Communication

Early this summer, my wife and I took our two young daughters to a Black Lives Matter march in our neighborhood. It was a moving experience to see our community come together in support of Black lives. I was filled with hope watching young Black leaders inspire the crowd. Our emerging generations have so much to teach us.

During the march, our 8-year-old daughter Junia saw a sign that said, “All cops are bad, even the ones you know.” She tugged on my wife’s shirt and said, “I don’t think I agree with that sign.” You see, her beloved second grade teacher is married to a police officer, and Junia knows him to be a kind and caring person.

Politics aside, we were struck how in that moment our 8-year-old was thrust into the zeitgeist of 2020. It’s hard to do anything without running into something that rattles your cage. We live in divided times.

So, the question we wrestle with is real: Can we be unified even when we disagree? The Judeo-Christian concept of shalom captures the time is now, by Jan Elfers

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Increasing access to affordable housing, p. 5

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Inside... Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

SOAR celebrates 40 years of resettling refugees in Oregon
—Serving over 20,000 families from more than 25 nations
By Lisa Westarp, EMO Development officer

Jean-Claude fled his home in the Democratic Republic of the Congo when his father was killed by a militia. He was only three years old. “Hutus were killing Tutsis and they chased us from Congo,” he recalls. With his mother and siblings, he fled to a refugee camp in Rwanda.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR) refugee resettlement program is celebrating its 40th anniversary. In its four decades of service, SOAR has resettled over 20,000 refugee families—including Jean-Claude—from more than 25 nations.

Refugee Act of 1980
The end of the Vietnam War and the terror of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia had unleashed a humanitarian crisis and a flood of refugees fleeing Southeast Asia. After the fall of Saigon in 1975, President Ford directed the U.S.-sponsored evacuation of approximately 125,000 Vietnamese refugees. The U.S. State Department at the time had no official policy on refugee admissions; its refugee office was staffed with only two people.

As tens of thousands of South Vietnamese from rural areas fled persecution in small boats to the South China Sea, the “boat people” refugee crisis precipitated action by the U.S. Congress. In 1980, the U.S. government moved from an ad hoc approach to a permanent, standardized system for identifying, vetting and resettling prospective refugees that is still in use today.

The Refugee Act of 1980 defines a refugee as a person who is able to demonstrate that they have been persecuted, or have reason to fear persecution, on the basis of one of five “protected grounds”: race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

When the Refugee Act of 1980 was passed, a group of concerned Presbyterians in Portland had come to The Rev. Dr. Rodney Page, then acting director of EMO, requesting that the organization create an agency to resettle Vietnamese refugees. Their church offered to act as a sponsor for the new arrivals. Given EMO’s mission to “welcome the stranger,” the idea of assisting refugees was met with enthusiasm by the organization—and the Portland community, Page recalls. Jean-Claude and his family

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The 2020 Collins Summit on Nov. 18 will feature Lisa Sharon Harper, a prolific speaker, writer and activist. She is one of today’s leading voices on the topics of poverty, racial justice and transformational civic engagement.

SOAR is one of 20,000 refugees resettled by SOAR during the past 40 years.
The time is now: Reckoning with racism in Oregon

Ascension School begins land reclamation and restoration project in eastern Oregon

By Amy Jayne, executive director, Ascension School Camp and Conference Center

Ascension School Camp and Conference Center sits on approximately 100 acres on the edge of Cove in eastern Oregon. For nearly a century, the property has been leased out for farming. Through the support and leadership of Bishop Patrick Bell of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon and understanding the discrimination of our values around creation care and racial reconciliation, we have been compelled to rethink and reclaim the stewardship of the land.

In November 2019, the land was returned to Ascension School and, we began implementing the vision to re-establish the native riparian and prairie ecosystem and build a nature trail throughout the 80-100 acres.

Knowing that this was not a simple vision and would require extensive expertise, we have entered into partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service through the USDA and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which seeks to support landowners in establishing vegetation along streambanks, protecting water quality, and restoring fish and wildlife habitat. CREP will be a primary source of funding for the restoration of the land.

Native grass seed was already planted in early November 2019. We hired a director of habitat management, Bobby Forkey, who specializes in land restoration and indigenous studies. He oversees the project and provides leadership around environmental stewardship for all the land on Ascension School’s main campus sites.

We are driven by the constraints that our relations with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and another from the Episcopal Church’s Task Force on Creation Care and Racial Environmental Justice.

Meet Cherice Bock, EMO’s Creation Justice advocate

The Creation Justice Program of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) activates congregation seeking to involve their practices of environmental stewardship with social, economic and ecological justice. Oregon’s season of Creation Care includes loving God’s Creation through education, relationships and advocacy. We are excited to hire Cherice Bock to assist these efforts as EMO’s Creation Justice advocate.

Tell us about your background.
I grew up in a small town and moved to Eugene for my undergraduate degree, and later moved to Portland to pursue my Master of Divinity degree. I’ve worked in ecology, social justice and advocacy at a variety of places and have been interested in racial and environmental justice for a long time. My passion is to be in spaces where people can learn about and engage in creating change in their communities.

Why did you choose to work for EMO?
I’ve been drawn to the work that’s been going on at EMO for a number of reasons. For one, I’m passionate about creating spaces where people from different communities can come together and learn about one another. Additionally, EMO’s focus on racial and environmental justice is something I feel deeply connected to.

What is your vision for EMO?
I’ve been working with EMO for the last several years, and I’ve been impressed with the organization’s commitment to creating spaces for learning and growth.

What are your goals for the year ahead?
My goal is to continue building relationships and creating opportunities for learning and growth. I want to support communities in their efforts to be more conscious of their impacts on the environment and to work towards creating a more just and sustainable world.

Contact Cherice Bock at dbcock@emorg.com

Reimagining stewardship of the land: Ascension School begins land reclamation and restoration project in eastern Oregon

Meet Paul LeFever, new director of EMO’s development and communication

Tell us about your background.
I’ve been working in the field of development for most of my career. I started out as a writer, editor and translator, and then transitioned into fundraising and marketing. I’ve had the opportunity to work with a variety of organizations, both large and small, and have had the chance to be involved in a wide range of projects. I’m excited to be working with EMO, and I’m looking forward to helping to support the organization’s mission.

Why did you choose to work for EMO?
I was especially drawn to our direct service and development work. The way EMO rallies around people who are often forgotten or discriminated against is something I’m passionate about. The organization’s commitment to creating spaces for learning and growth is also something I’m excited about.

What are your goals for the year ahead?
My goal is to support EMO’s mission and help to create opportunities for learning and growth. I want to help to support the organization in its efforts to be more conscious of its impacts on the environment and to work towards creating a more just and sustainable world.

Contact Paul LeFever at pylefever@emorg.com

Creation Justice

Meet Akiyama elected 11th bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon

Akimya elected 11th bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon

In August, Episcopal diocesan elections revealed The Rev. Dr. Akimya as the 11th Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon. The vote concluded a year-long process of seeking a successor for Bishop Michael Hanley, who began his service in the Diocese in 2010 and will retire in January 2021.

Akimya currently serves as vicar at St. Augustine’s Episcopal Church in Kapaa, Hawaii, and is dean of Waialua’s Bahai School for Formation.

Throughout her diocesan work, Akimya has been called to create spaces for learning and growth. She is committed to creating spaces where people can learn about and engage in creating change in their communities.

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Contact Paul LeFev
New Americans Initiative celebrates 10 years of helping Oregon's low-income immigrants become US citizens

SOAR Immigration Legal Services (SOAR Legal), a program of EMO, has provided culturally competent immigration-related legal representation and education to Oregon’s low-income immigrants since 1992. About 110,000 Lawful Permanent Residents (Green Card Holders), live in Oregon, and 400 of those new citizens are eligible to apply for U.S. Citizenship.

In 2010, SOAR Legal launched the New Americans Initiative, a comprehensive project to support low-income immigrants with becoming U.S. Citizens. We have assisted clients from more than 70 different countries who live across the state of Oregon. Over the past decade, we have:

- Supported more than 3,000 low-income immigrants with applying for U.S. Citizenship
- Trained more than 7,500 low-income immigrants and their community partners
- Helped almost 1,000 newly naturalized U.S. Citizens register to vote

There are several components of the New Americans Initiative. Our attorneys provide free legal representation and support with filing the required applications for U.S. citizenship (naturalization) and represent our clients at the interview. We accomplish this through one-on-one meetings (both in person and virtually) with clients in our offices in Portland and Hillsboro, as well as through Citizenship Day Workshops in various Oregon locations. Over the past 10 years, we have hosted more than 20 Citizenship Day Workshops in five different Oregon cities, and our first Virtual Citizenship Day Workshop in September of this year. In addition to our in-person work, our work is supported by pro bono attorneys, law students, paralegal students, interpreters, and community members who help make our services possible. Our team of education professionals provides ESL and citizenship instruction to teach students how to read, write, and speak English as well as the required U.S. history and civics content necessary to pass the citizenship test. In addition to this, a key aspect of the New Americans Initiative is to encourage clients and students to fully integrate and participate in civic engagement activities. These activities range from the opportunity for clients to meet with their elected officials to explain the American judicial system, to visiting landladies and museums, to meeting with and giving a presentation to their elected official. Over the years, we have offered four levels of ESL and Citizenship Classes in 10 different cities in Oregon and in a distance learning online format. Additionally, we offer citizenship instruction in English, Spanish and Russian. The final component of the New Americans Initiative is the Voter Education Project, during which we engage our newly naturalized U.S. Citizens in a course during which they learn all about voting in Oregon and have the opportunity to register to vote. At 2020 an in-person election, it is important to remember that citizenship brings powerful rights and responsibilities with it. All citizens have an opportunity to shape the city, county, state and country in which we can all thrive, by voting and engaging in their communities.

Learn more about our services at soarlegal.org. If you are interested in supporting the New Americans Initiative by donating or volunteering, please contact Caroline van der Harten at cvanderharten@emoregon.org.

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Metro HomeShare developing digital tools to increase access to affordable housing

Metro HomeShare (MHS) is thrilled to announce the program has been selected to receive an AARP Community Challenge grant. The program is designed to create affordable housing opportunities created from across all 50 states, Washington DC, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The program focuses on creating opportunities for rigorous background checks by qualifying applicants to U.S. State Department of Homeland Security abroad, the first step was to obtain refugee status from the United States as all others. That personal experience is important to remember that citizenship brings powerful rights and responsibilities with it. All citizens have an opportunity to shape the city, county, state and country in which we can all thrive, by voting and engaging in their communities.

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Providing affordable legal services for immigrants benefits entire community

EMO and partners draft proactive plan to honor workers, prevent the deportation of Oregon’s DACA Ails, and rebuild Oregon’s economy

In this economic downturn, many Oregon immigrant workers cannot afford immigration legal services. The financial strain caused by the coronavirus pandemic is preventing Oregon immigrants from accessing the immigration legal assistance they need to secure and maintain employment and avoid deportation, destabilizing the state’s workforce and slowing Oregon’s economic recovery.

For many low-income Oregon immigrants, legal services are what rest assistance is to food security and what grocery service is to food security. Immigrant families and the essential services they provide to Oregonians can only function when these families have legal access to legal services.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon’s (EMO) SOLA Berlin Women’s Policy Advocacy are partnering with Immigration Counseling Service, Catholic Charities and many other partner organizations to advocate for state funding to improve access to immigration legal services. Funding proactive legal services means families don’t have to wait until the next ICE raid to file their documents, and the state receives more tax revenue.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and its partners have proposed the following four-point approach for the state of Oregon to stabilize immigrants and Oregon’s immigrant workforce.

1. Know Your Rights trainings across the state would offer crucial information and identify new clients. Legal providers would bring their expertise to underserved communities, leveraging their community ties and partnering with other community-based organizations to recruit community members to these trainings.

2. Follow-up legal consultations would identify clients who are eligible for permanent relief, such as visas for victims of crime or abuse.

3. Immigration attorneys would prepare federal immigration applications in one-on-one appointments or through express immigration application filing workshops that in the past have served up to 100 clients in a single day.

4. State funding would cover the cost of legal representation for DACA and deportation defense filings. Immigrants, because legal and application filing fees should not stand in the way of stable employment and a reliable workforce, especially now.

Providers already serve low-income clients statewide—whether they live along the coast or in the Columbia River Gorge, the Willamette Valley, or Medford and Ashland in the Portland metropolitan region. This proposal would enable more of our families and neighbors to access these services.

The death of George Floyd and the rise of Black Lives Matter revealed that faith leaders have a unique and necessary role to play in creating a kairos moment for communities of faith here in Oregon: a moment of change when everything changes. A moment when change is possible. A moment when all things ‘come together’ and align.

This was a moment for the Common Table to act. This collective of faith leaders from across Oregon—of which Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a partner—of many of diverse races, representing many different belief systems—has already taken action to advise our elected officials how to respond with respect, unity, and faith to the need for racial justice in our institutions.

The Common Table has invited representatives of organizations from across the state to participate in “Reckoning with Racial Cohesion”—a deliberate process of dismantling racism inside one’s own faith community or institution, as well as in the public square. For those who want to grapple with Oregon’s racial heritage and to strengthen allies throughout our state, this nine-month journey is a unique opportunity to learn, to talk, and to listen.

Together participants will work not just to deconstruct racism but to build an objective phenomenon, but to deal with it “in here,” inside our own institutions, our own ecclesiastical cultures, and in our own hearts.

What does it really mean to reckon with the history of racism? The Common Table organizers suggest that it means we hold ourselves accountable to keeping the walking path towards racial justice.” The Common Table’s goal is to create a container for mutual discernment and accountability, so each community can be held responsible for listening to issues raised in this conversation and for taking the first step towards racial justice in its own local context.

The nature of this engagement will vary widely. It could involve community conversations, sharing articles or videos, participating in the Parliament discussion, attending an event. It could be a unique opportunity to learn, to listen and learn from each other’s experiences.

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This language is Hebrew word that means wholeness, harmony, prosperity and peace. In the Hebrew Bible, we read about Israel’s struggle to overcome sin on the way to becoming a holy nation. Shalom is at the center of this struggle. It’s a complex idea, often oversimplified, similar to the way “justice” is a synonym for fairness.

We frequently talk about unity and shalom in this country. In Oregon, we have marginalized groups that we cannot forget. How can we take our relationships with these marginalized groups for granted?

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As we can see, there’s a lot of work to be done to bring this to life. We must continue to engage with the Common Table in our local communities to push this conversation forward.

In Oregon today, over 4,000 legally permanent residents are eligible to apply for naturalization. Naturalizations help create a community’s sense of civic and political response to the threats of federal immigration actions. Those able to naturalize are paid higher wages on average than legal permanent residents, actively engage in their communities, vote, and are more secure from deportation.

Immigration legal services stabilize families and drive state economic growth. When legal support leads to a work permit holder obtaining a green card, a green card holder becoming a citizen, families are strengthened, the social safety net is strengthened, wealth is created, and the state receives more tax revenue.

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We frequently talk about unity and shalom in this country. In Oregon, we have marginalized groups that we cannot forget. How can we take our relationships with these marginalized groups for granted?
There is still time to double your new or increased gift to EMO! Please use the 2020 Collins Match to maximize your impact. As a thank you, you will receive a $70,000 challenge grant.

We are deeply grateful to the Collins Foundation for leading the way in matching donations to EMO. With the Collins Match, your gift can double in value and support those who need it most, and advocacy addressing the root causes of poverty and environmental degradation.

**The 2020 Collins Match:**

A challenge worth taking

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**Gifts in Honor (March - August)**

- In honor of all workers at NEFP
- Lewis Springer
- In honor of your amazing volunteers
- Kathleen etc.
- In honor of healthcare workers
- Eileen Marma
- In honor of all working to help with COVID-19 response
- Jonathan Zwi and Keith Walters, Zachary Reuter
- In honor of Kristi Bauck, Joanne Deazley
- In honor of John Breauze
- Joan and Laurence Brousseau
- In honor of their anniversary
- Joan and Laurence Brousseau
- In honor of Dan Bryant
- Chery and John Moore
- In honor of Nicole Capato
- Kimberly Sappan
- In honor of Peggy Connolly, Amy Silliman
- In honor of Antoinette Edwards
- Jesse Herbach
- In honor of John Elizalde & Paula Johnson
- Fraser and Lynn Rasmussen
- In honor of Zoe Flanagan
- Kristina Flanagan
- In honor of Don Fresh
- Nancy Blair Lound, Barbara Nixon
- In honor of Bonnie Grohing
- Marcia Kelley, Bruce Stride
- In honor of JWC Matt Hennock
- Ellen Singer
- In honor of Maripat & Jim Heul
- Beth Brashear
- In honor of Adam Jencks, Terry Bain
- In honor of Howard Kennedy's birthday
- Guile and Don Bueck, Josh Baldwin, Gloria Cox, Esther Knyon-Marcotte and Ron Marcotte, Paul and Nina Winder
- In honor of Don Lambead
- John Kirsch and Kathy Allen-Kirsch
- In honor of Margaret Marxson
- Hannah Marxson
- In honor of Jeff Michael's 65th birthday
- Claudia and Jeff Michel
- In honor of Kathleen Markert
- Christine Grumm
- In honor of David Niederleh
- Ramona Niederloh
- In honor of Rodney Page
- Rodney Reeves and Joan Kimmoto
- In honor of Michael Pochera
- Barbara C. Peschiera
- In honor of David Pano
- Michelle Bush and Miguel Camacho
- In honor of John Schutte, James Peterman
- In honor of Kevin Shirda
- Nancy and David Scheide
- In honor of Diane Stoffer
- Susan and Michael Weidall
- In honor of Susan Van Winkle
- Jill Van Winkle
- In honor of Pat and Debbie Walsch
- Emily and Timothy Walsch
- In honor of Emily and Lisi Wiedemann
- Luann Wiedemann
- In honor of Allie Williams
- Devri Donnelly, Erik Murotozo
- In honor of Scott and Judy Wills
- Nancy and David Scheide
- In honor of Gary Witters
- Tony Liebenberg

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**Gifts in Memory (March - August)**

- In memory of Maurice and Jean Angland
- Nancy Rice
- In memory of Don and Betty Baldwin
- Thomas Baldwin & Mary Louise McCartney
- In memory of Don and Deborah Barrett
- Marsha Barrett Grojanc, Ronald Grojanc
- In memory of Trudy Bradley, Dan Bradley
- In memory of Steve Bucher
- In memory of John Casamay—Raymond Barnes
- In memory of Chuck Clark
- Randall Brooks Pratt
- In memory of John and Nancy Dennis
- Helen Dennis
- In memory of Rosamund Descart
- Ann Crockett
- In memory of Rosemary Dodds, Ruth Allen
- In memory of Helen and John Kavallis
- Sophia Kremidas
- In memory of Mark Elliott
- Katherine Elliott and Robert Graves
- In memory of George Geyer
- Susan and Michael Weidall
- In memory of Deborah Rachel Goldberg
- Marshall Goldberg
- In memory of Loo Gramm, Maria Gramm
- In memory of Mia Hartmann, Karen Faber
- In memory of Arly Herbold
- Compassionate Listening Oregon
- In memory of Marilyn Hodgson
- Robert and Gwen Elfers
- In memory of Betty Johnson
- Linda Chisholm
- In memory of Charles and Rita Knapp
- Kristan Knapp
- In memory of Henry and Dorothy Lamb
- Phyllis and Raymond Keusner
- In memory of Emily Lang
- Melody and William Lang
- In memory of Elena Lajoaye
- Patricia and Sarah Lentz-Higgins
- In memory of Michael Lambach
- Edgar and Mary Louise Brandt
- In memory of Gregory Lindstedt and Robert Lindstedt — Carol Lindstedt
- In memory of Gary Legsdon
- Audee Bratcher, Karen Legsdon
- In memory of Maurine Mclean
- Amie and John Weidler
- In memory of Gary Morris, Maria Marquez
- In memory of Robert Oga
- Rosende and Leslie Pont
- In memory of Louis Ovett
- Rebecca Pepper, Myrina Zitz
- In memory of Greg P., Charles Cole
- In memory of Carol Rohe
- Christina Adams-Brown
- In memory of John Rogers, Charlene Rogers
- In memory of Ilia May Roos, Judy Roos
- In memory of Ann Schneider
- Stephen Schneider
- In memory of Robert Kuo-Liang Wu
- Kristen Manos, Patricia Wu