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One year into the pandemic, EMO finds new ways to serve the community

One year ago, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) pivoted overnight, responding swiftly as the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis unfolded across Oregon. Everything changed in the way we served those in need, how we worked, and what we prioritized.

Our food distribution services ramped up sharply. **Northeast Emergency Food Program** (NEFP) outgrew its basement facility, expanding to an outdoor delivery system with a loaned semi-trailer and other trailers providing extra capacity for food storage.

Overnight, NEFP went from providing food to 3,000-5,000 people a month to averaging 50,000 a month. In December alone, more than 90,000 individuals were served. Local businesses and nonprofits—especially the Oregon Food Bank—have provided mountains of additional food, refrigerated

trailers, and pallet jacks to store and move that food.

With support from local congregations, NEFP Program Manager A'Jay Scipio expanded the Service Learner Initiative job training program to include traffic control staff to handle the flow of cars sometimes stretching miles at a time.

As with all of our sites serving clients directly, NEFP has put health safety precautions in place, including goggles, masks, social distancing requirements and strict two-shift operations—no small feat for a staff and volunteer force that can number as many as 40 on a given day.

Such precaution is critically important with EMO's **HIV Services**, which provide assistance to the medically vulnerable. "Because we provide direct services, such as meals and basic essential needs, our programs have been greatly affected by the COVID pandemic," said



HIV Services Program Manager Taylor Gleffe prepares take away food boxes for Day Center clients.

Taylor Gleffe, who started in her new role as HIV Services program manager during the pandemic. "The Day Center community was especially impacted, as clients were isolated and lonely."

Early on, the HIV Day Center's indoor drop-in

services were suspended. Daily breakfasts and lunches then became take-out for clients. In recent months, following strict state guidelines, the program has offered limited-capacity indoor services.

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EMO will celebrate stories of hope and resilience from Oregon's faith community with "Light in the Tunnel"

Reflecting on his time as a prisoner in Auschwitz during World War II, Elie Wiesel said, "People say occasionally that there must be light at the end of the tunnel, but I believe in those times there was light in the tunnel." Wiesel was a fierce advocate for hope, even in the midst of unimaginably dark circumstances.

While nothing compares to what Wiesel endured, it's been a very dark time for many: a global pandemic, racial injustice, wildfires and more. When times are hard it can be difficult to see a light at the end of the tunnel. Sometimes what we get instead is light in the tunnel.

On May 19 at 7 p.m.,

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) will celebrate the remarkable stories of hope that have emerged in the last year from Oregon's faith community with a special online event called "Light in the Tunnel: Stories of hope and resilience from Oregon's faith community."

Often, all we hear about

are the negative stories and overwhelming challenges. We too often miss the simple stories of people helping one another, the remarkable stories of Oregonians living their values and serving their neighbors.

The event will feature stories and songs from across the state

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President Jan Mugrove Elfers announces retirement

Life is a series of transitions, sometimes hard and unexpected, other times perfectly natural. For Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) President Jan Mugrove Elfers, the decision to retire presents a bit of both. She is ready for her life's next season but will find it hard to say goodbye to the work she loves.

President Elfers has held many roles at EMO. She started as an intern in 2003. She was completing her master's degree in Applied Theology at Marylhurst University and was looking for an opportunity to put what she was learning into praxis. The war in Iraq was just beginning, so her interest in peacemaking took her to EMO, where she wrote the "Peace Resource Guide." Elfers' research for the guide involved interviewing interfaith leaders in the state who were engaged in local and national dialogue and relationship building between religious traditions. Later that fall, she was hired as the Peace Program associate for EMO.

Elfers later became EMO's director of Membership, forging relationships with individuals and various communities of faith. Many of those connections would later form the core constituency for her tenure as president.

Following her time as the director of Membership, Elfers became the director of Public Policy Advocacy. Here she fashioned many relationships with lawmakers and civic leaders across the state, again bolstering EMO's network in a way that would serve EMO well during her presidency.

Following the resignation of David Leslie in 2015, Elfers became the interim executive director for EMO. After a nation-wide search, she was hired as the permanent executive director (the position was later retitled president).

When she took over the reins of leadership, there were a lot of challenges. After a very difficult and deep recession, EMO was struggling financially. Elfers and colleagues Howard Kenyon (vice president) and Jillann Johnson (director of Finance), plus a very engaged EMO Board of Directors and committed donors, were together able to stabilize the finances.

In addition, particularly under the Trump administration, EMO's refugee and immigrant resettlement programs struggled to survive. By strengthening partnerships with other service providers, the programs were stabilized and continue to thrive today.



Jan Mugrove Elfers sat down for an interview about her retirement with Paul LeFeber, EMO's director of Development & Communications. Watch the recording on the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon YouTube channel.

Elfers' leadership style brought an empathic and listening approach to EMO's work. Thanks to her leadership, EMO is in a very positive place, poised to flourish as never before in the years ahead.

"I would frankly not leave this role if I thought that we were not in a good place," says Elfers. "I have never seen EMO more stable, led by such talented, compassionate, gifted leaders. I am one of many leaders who are so committed to this work and so capable of taking this to another level."

Elfers' decision to retire during this moment is layered and complex. With the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been an exceptionally challenging time to lead a complex organization like EMO, as the numbers of clients needing services in some programs has increased exponentially.

Additionally, racial justice has long been a passion for Elfers, and she has been intentional about learning during this moment. She has taken a deep dive into questions about diversity, equity and inclusion. Alongside the EMO Board of Directors, she has been leading the staff and board into this profound and difficult, but necessary, work. It has had an impact on her personally.

"I've seen how an organization like ours, whose top management has been white since the beginning, needs to change, it's time," says Elfers. "As I discerned and prayed about this, it's time for me to make space for a person with a different perspective and different life experiences to step into this role and run this organization."

The EMO Board has determined to first hire an interim president while a national search is conducted for EMO's next long-term president. The interim search committee is being led by

The Rev. Linda Jaramillo, former co-chair of EMO's Board of Directors and current board member. It's unclear how long the interim will be in place, and much depends on how the national search comes together.

For both positions, the board is looking for a wise, empathetic and passionate person of faith. There's no doubt there are some real challenges ahead, and the person leading EMO in the transition and in the long-term position will need to be an exceptionally gifted leader.

For her part, Elfers is looking forward to spending more time with her family and getting some well-deserved rest. Fortunately for EMO, she is planning to stay connected. "I'm not going anywhere. I love Portland, I love this state, I am more committed than ever to the work of justice, compassion and equity," says Elfers. "I am retiring, but as I step outside of this role, I'm praying about what God has next in store for me. I love this organization deeply. It is a part of my story in so many ways, and I will continue to be involved in some way to support EMO and its greater mission."

Expressing thanks

If you would like to express your gratitude to President Jan Elfers, cards can be sent to EMO (245 S Bancroft St., Suite B, Portland OR 97239) or emails can be written to emo@emoregon.org.

The 2021 Collins Match: Giving to the EMO mission

Thanks to the generosity of the Collins Foundation, your gift to EMO is multiplied. **The Collins Foundation will match all new and increased donations made to EMO by Nov. 1 up to \$70,000.** This generous addition to your support will help us meet an increased need for direct services—while continuing to bring together Oregonians for dialogue, bridge building and political advocacy.

To double your new or increased gift to EMO, please use the donation form on page 8 or make a secure online donation at emoregon.org/give.

In remembrance of The Rev. Don Frueh

The Rev. Don Frueh passed away on March 7, 2021—a loss deeply felt by many across the wider Oregon faith communities.

Frueh recently retired from his role as senior pastor of Parkrose Community United Church of Christ (UCC) in Portland, and he resettled in Astoria, Ore., with his husband Robert. Previously, he served as associate minister at First Congregational Church in Salem and minister of music at Montevilla United Methodist Church in Portland. He received a Master of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion and was both a gifted musician and minister.

Frueh served on the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) Board of Directors from 2013 to 2019, and he continued to be an active member

of EMO's Development Committee. He was also a member of the Portland LGBTQ clergy group, among many other organizations.

"I think Don was one of the kindest, most compassionate people I know. He was so committed to his faith, his community and the work of social justice," said EMO President Jan Elfers. "Everyone who worked with Don at EMO appreciated his genuine kindness, his ready smile, his authenticity. We will miss him so much."

A virtual "Celebration of Life" was held on April 10, hosted by Hillsboro UCC (where Frueh was a member after his retirement) and the Central Pacific Conference of the United Church of Christ.



Get you faith community involved in climate action

As people of faith, we are called to care for the gift of creation in which God has placed us. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Romans (8:18–24), says that creation has been "waiting with eager longing" and "groaning in labor pains," as we all participate in our transformation toward becoming a new creation. We're becoming more aware that partnering with the rest of creation is part of this work, ensuring that we leave a healthy, livable planet to future generations.

On March 11 at 11 a.m., over 400 faith communities all over the world participated in GreenFaith's global day of climate justice action to "sound the alarm" about the climate emergency. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) and our partners at EcoFaith Recovery organized people of faith from around the state to host virtual and COVID-safe events to sound church bells, drums and other liturgical instruments. Oregonians from 16 faith communities—over 300 people—participated in these events. Groups also voiced support for HB 2021, Oregon's proposed "100% Clean Energy for All" bill.

There is much to be done to repent and turn from our profligate use of resources and our untenable levels of resource extraction. This can feel overwhelming. There is much to do to move toward a sustainable planet, where people and other creatures can live in the shalom community to which God invites us.

What can our faith communities do? We can begin by lowering the greenhouse gas emissions of our buildings and grounds, and by helping our neighborhoods and cities weather intensifying climate emergencies with resilience, equity and care.

The following are some immediate opportunities for you and your faith community to be involved.

Join the Creation Justice Action Team

Changing public policies is one of the most high-impact actions we can take to shift our community toward a more just and sustainable future. EMO is hosting a group focused on environment and climate-related bills during the



On March 11, 16 faith communities and organizations throughout Oregon joined online and safely in person to shout, bang, clang and make some holy noise to "sound the alarm" on our climate crisis. One community to participate was the Great Vow Zen Monastery in Clatskanie, Ore.

2021 Oregon Legislative Session. Training and lobbying opportunities will be included.

Start a Green Team or Green Circle

Are you interested in starting a Green Team with your faith community, or do you want to connect with people of faith across the state working on environment and climate issues? EMO will launch Green Circles in June 2021, providing training, education, worship resources and practical information about care for creation, as well as opportunities for building relationships with others in your region working on similar goals.

Restore native habitat

Many faith communities hold significant amounts of land. This land can be used to restore native ecosystems, encourage the health of pollinators, and cycle water more effectively to mitigate drought and floods. If your faith community is interested in restoring native habitat or planting pollinator gardens, EMO/OIPL can help you create a plan. Those in the Portland metro area can participate in the Backyard Habitat certification program.

Install solar panels

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is partnering with the Oregon Clean Power Cooperative to help faith communities explore the feasibility of installing solar panels on their buildings.

This co-op helps faith communities and nonprofits access funding for solar projects and offers opportunities for investment in non-fossil fuel energy production. For more information, contact info@oregoncleanpower.coop.

For more information about any of these opportunities, contact Cherice Bock, EMO Climate Justice advocate, at cbock@emoregon.org.

Help plant one million chestnut trees in Oregon



Build Soil is giving away edible chestnut trees to faith communities and individuals across Oregon. Their goal is to plant one million chestnut trees in community settings, helping create tools for food and climate resilience, while also addressing climate change. Why chestnuts?

- Chestnuts grow well in Oregon.
- Chestnuts are nutritious and can be used as a grain.
- Mature trees each produce half of the grain a person needs in a year and take up much less land and resources than other agricultural grains, and they only have to be planted once.
- They create shade and habitat, cycle water and build soil.

Would you like some chestnut trees to plant on your faith community's land or at the homes of your members? Contact Cherice Bock at cbock@emoregon.org for more information, and specify how many trees you want. Build Soil currently has hundreds to give away!

Stories of hope and resilience

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that highlight the kind of work being done in communities of faith to serve others and carry the banner of hope and love for all people.

This event will inspire and encourage while offering support for the ongoing work of EMO—both the direct service programs as well as advocacy, education and unity building. Also at this event, we will honor our Ecumenists of the Year: Randy and Edith Woodley.

Register today for this free event at EMOregion.org/event/spring-event.

2021 Ecumenists of the Year: Randy and Edith Woodley

The Woodleys are the co-creators and co-sustainers of Eloheh - Indigenous Center for Earth Justice and Eloheh Seeds. Through Eloheh, they invite people to a new relationship with

creation and model sustainable farming practices and earth justice.

The Rev. Dr. Randy Woodley (Keetoowah Cherokee) is a public theologian, author, activist, farmer and wisdom-keeper. He is a recognized leader in the fields of Indigenous and Intercultural Studies, Ecology and Missiology. A professor at Portland Seminary and a public intellectual, he invites Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to decolonize and indigenize their theology, worldview and practices so they can learn to walk in a good way.

Edith Woodley (Eastern Shoshone) is a teacher/mentor on issues concerning Native American spirituality and creation. A full-time mother, grandmother and activist farmer, she has developed a unique relationship with the land, as well as insights concerning how to raise a family on a small farm.

The Woodleys are members of EMO's Common Table.



Randy and Edith Woodley will be honored with the "Ecumenists of the Year" award at EMO's virtual spring event, "Light in the Tunnel," on May 19.

Meet our newest direct service program managers

Taylor Gleffe, HIV Services

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) HIV Services create a community that addresses the basic needs of individuals living with HIV/AIDS with respect, compassion and safety. Our programs include the HIV Day Center, Daily Bread Express, and Long-term Survivors Program.

Tell us about your background.

I grew up in Texas until my family moved to the Northwest. I studied public health at Oregon State University. Shortly after graduation, I joined the Peace Corps as a community health educator in rural northern Ethiopia. I worked on water and sanitation hygiene and malaria, and HIV prevention. For one project, I partnered with teachers to educate primary and high school students about HIV prevention through soccer! I learned the local language and culture of the people, taught them about American culture, and traveled throughout the country. After serving in the Peace Corps, I moved to Portland and found my way to EMO.



in place. HIV Services has been privileged to continue to support our clients throughout these vulnerable and challenging times.

What can volunteers do to assist your programs?

At the HIV Day Center, volunteers can assist by providing kitchen support and serving meals to clients. If volunteers have specialized skills they would like to share with the community, we can create specific activities or groups to share those skills. Examples include performing Reiki, leading a meditation group, mending clothes, providing chair massages, forming a reading group to practice literary skills, or crafting with clients. For the Daily Bread Express, volunteers can assist by delivering meals to clients. To view a current list of volunteer opportunities, visit our web page at hivdaycenter.org.

Anya Stepanova, Russian Oregon Social Services

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Russian Oregon Social Services (ROSS) serves the needs of Russian-speaking refugees and immigrants, particularly survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault.

Tell us about your background.

I came on board when ROSS reopened in March 2020. Prior to that, I've worked with culturally and economically diverse populations, helping people process and overcome trauma. Many of my clients have suffered childhood sexual and physical abuse, intimate partner violence, and the horrors of war in their homeland. Some have been dealing with life-threatening illnesses in their families.



Why did you choose to work for EMO?

As a first-generation Russian immigrant and member of the Slavic community, I am aware of strengths, barriers, experiences and opportunities prevalent among Russian speaking re-settlers. As a culturally/language specific program of EMO's, Russian Oregon Social Services provides a unique opportunity that fits with my cultural and professional background, as well as my values. I'm proud to be a strong advocate for women's rights, autonomy,

cultural identity and empowerment. Providing access to resources, support and services to people in crisis is my life's passion. EMO strives to build a culture of inclusion that offers safety, transparency and choices to those who need our help the most.

What do you find most rewarding about your work?

As a healer, it's rewarding to witness people find their own language and somatic expression to relieve trauma so they can heal and grow. As a community leader, it's rewarding to manage a program that offers equitable, low-barrier access to services and resources. As a supervisor, it's beyond rewarding to have such an incredible team of dedicated, forward-thinking, synergetic and compassionate advocates.

How has the pandemic affected your program?

Calls to domestic violence hotlines and reports of intimate partner violence have drastically increased. Barriers to accessing safety have increased substantially for immigrant and refugee survivors, and we are experiencing higher demand for services. ROSS staff are now set up to work remotely. This is true for many agencies in the domestic violence/sexual assault continuum. Clients report that wait times for most referrals are long and sometimes difficult to facilitate, particularly if access to technology or a safe place is limited. Our staff take clients' limitations into consideration (such as access to internet/technology, work/parenting schedule, transportation) and are now meeting with clients in the community as needed. Receiving state and county COVID funds early last spring was extremely helpful. With so many Slavic families disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, we spent nearly \$50,000 in eight months to help our clients with housing, mental health and legal needs.

What can volunteers do to assist your program?

Volunteers can provide individual and trauma informed mentorship to Russian-speaking survivors of intimate partner violence and support through cultural assimilation. The range of support and mentorship will focus on each survivor's identified needs: life skills, English language skills, professional development, and understanding of laws, systems, and traditions in the United States. This mentorship is an opportunity for cultural exchange and mutual learning. If interested, please call (503) 777-3437 or email ross@emoregon.org.

Dining Out For Life returns to Portland on Sept. 30!

Save the date for a chance to support our HIV community and our favorite restaurants. Dine in, or order takeout from, a participating restaurant on Thursday, Sept. 30, and a percentage of your payment will be donated to EMO's HIV Day Center and OHSU's Partnership Project—two vital Portland organizations that deliver essential programs and services to people living with HIV. At the same time, you will give much-needed business to the local restaurants that contribute so much to the vibrancy and diversity of our neighborhoods.

For more information, visit diningoutforlife.com/portland or email tgleffe@emoregon.org.



Patton Home transitions ownership, maintains affordable housing mission

For the past quarter century, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) Patton Home has offered safe, affordable single resident occupancy (SRO) housing to low-income individuals.

The Patton Home, which occupies an entire city block in north Portland, was built in 1887 as the Home for the Friendless, and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A home for those in need from the very beginning, the former owners entrusted the property to EMO in the early 1990s. At that time, the Patton Home was a state licensed residential facility for elderly and young adults with disabilities.

In the next few years, EMO ran a major capital campaign to renovate and update the Patton Home as a drug- and alcohol-free living environment for 63 low-income individuals.

With the Patton Home transformed into a



Established in 1887, the Patton Home originally served as a retirement home for those in need.

stable operation serving those in need, EMO realized it was time to turn the Patton Home over to an organization with specialized experience in affordable housing management. This past

year, EMO completed the process of transferring ownership of the property and operations to Community Development Partners (CDP), a B-corp with extensive experience in affordable housing. EMO's stipulations with the transfer were that CDP continue the mission of serving those in need and keep existing residents in place.

"On behalf of all the hundreds of residents who have found a safe home over the years, we thank all the supporters who made it possible, and we are delighted the mission will continue," said Carla Starrett-Bigg, former director of EMO Development and Communications.

Our Food Services continue to operate from the Patton Home kitchen, directed by Russ Miller, EMO's longest serving employee at 25 years. His team prepares meals for Patton Home residents and meals for EMO's HIV Services clients.

One year into the pandemic

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Meanwhile, Daily Bread Express (DBX) has doubled the number of meals prepared and delivered. In addition to serving homebound HIV-positive clients, DBX began providing meals to houseless individuals sheltered in hotels by the county and to Day Center clients.

Anya Stepanova of EMO's **Russian Oregon Social Services** (ROSS) also joined the team just as COVID-19 hit. Bringing ROSS back from a short operational hiatus, Stepanova has hired and trained four other client advocates to work with her in serving the needs of Oregon's large Russian-speaking community.

The ROSS team has found creative ways to remotely serve clients who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault—a need intensifying with the prolonged stay-at-home measures. "With the ongoing pandemic, we see calls to domestic violence hotlines and reports of intimate partner violence drastically increasing," said Stepanova. "Even before the pandemic, immigrant and refugee survivors faced additional barriers to accessing safety. Now those barriers have increased substantially, and we are experiencing higher demand for services."

One program that was already operating remotely was the seven-member staff of EMO's **Second Home**. Under the leadership of Jenny Pratt-Hale, this team has maintained vital services to unaccompanied and unhoused high school students in four counties and 16 school districts. The number of such unhoused students has increased dramatically as a result of the economic crisis. The ability to meet the needs of these students has grown much more difficult with in-school learning suspended. But Second Home continues to find host homes for students in need—homes that not only provide good food and safe housing, but also much-needed internet and computer access to online classes.

When COVID-19 hit, EMO's **Metro HomeShare** (MHS) was already shifting to a remote operation model in order to serve a larger geographical region. The program, serving clients in both Multnomah and Washington Counties, has found it very difficult to connect home

providers with home seekers during the pandemic. While people have found it harder to move, the crisis-in-making is that as rent and mortgage restrictions are lifted, people will find themselves unable to pay housing costs. Andrew Brown, MHS program manager, is seeking additional funding to prepare for the impending crisis.

At EMO's **Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees** (SOAR), Program Director Vesna Vila and her team had already been facing a critical challenge in recent years due to the previous administration's federal restrictions on refugee resettlement. Funding from the state of Oregon in 2019—thanks in large measure to the work of EMO's Public Policy team led by Britt Conroy—secured the stability of the program through mid-2021. Vila and her team have continued to meet the needs of refugees who arrived to the United States before the pandemic hit. With expectation that the Biden Administration will restore the federal refugee resettlement program, SOAR is anticipating increased arrivals as the international resettlement infrastructure is rebuilt.

SOAR Immigration Legal Services has faced a different challenge. How do you help immigrants needing legal assistance when court deadlines do not budge in the face of quarantine and stay-in-place orders? In addition to masking, social distancing and adding plexiglass guards in our Portland and Hillsboro offices, SOAR Legal has added a third site at Bridgeport United Church of Christ. At that location, staff meet clients twice each week in person to process paperwork and assess legal issues. Also, our popular citizenship classes are now conducted online. Caroline van der Harten oversees this multifaceted operation.

Thanks to our amazing donors and EMO's outstanding Development, Finance and Public Policy teams, EMO's direct services have grown in staff and scope over the past year as client needs have skyrocketed. Our staff alone has grown eight percent, but this pales in comparison to the multifold increase we have seen in clients served. Working with these direct services, Community Ministries Administrator Chris Eves and the EMO Board's Community Ministries Committee ensure that funds, logistics, staff and needs are all aligned.

NEFP by the numbers



Due to the pandemic, NEFP moved to an outdoor food distribution system.

In the past 12 months of the pandemic, EMO's Northeast Emergency Food Program has:

- Served 643,855 individuals in need.
- Distributed more than 32 million pounds of food—equal to 400 semi-tractor trailers full of food end to end.
- Served 951 families on highest day (in December).
- Had cars lined up two-and-half miles at Thanksgiving.
- Recruited 341 new volunteers—in addition to the 281 core volunteers.
- Grew staff from two to eight.
- Operated day and evening shifts six days a week.
- Provided food to 16 other food programs.
- Delivered 5,000 pounds of food and clothing to fire victims in Estacada.
- Distributed 1,100 King Cakes for Mardi Gras.
- Certified (OHSA) 11 flaggers for traffic management.
- Acquired a fleet of pallet jacks—six manual and one electric.
- Received (as donations) one box truck with hydraulic lift and one cargo van.
- Increased Sustaining Partners (monthly donors) by 42 percent.

EMO sets priorities for 2021 Legislative Session

Responding to today's challenges, fighting for a stronger future

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's (EMO) public policy advocacy activities are rooted in the moral teachings of the Bible and the diverse religious traditions of our members and interfaith partners.

The year 2020 posed challenges unseen for a century. While a global pandemic assaulted our communities, we were reminded of inequities that push many into the margins and reinforce barriers to basic services and supports.

In 2021, EMO is committed to responding to these challenges by advocating for those in need today and fighting for policy reforms and investments that will lead to a stronger, more just Oregon for years to come. The EMO Board of Directors has affirmed the following priority areas for legislation.

Police Accountability

Police Use of Force Reforms (HB 2928). EMO is prioritizing the passage of police accountability legislation being drafted in the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Equitable Policing. Where equal treatment and personal safety should be the most basic outcomes of policing, whole segments of our society live in fear of unwarranted harassment and violence at the hands of their sworn protectors. EMO is supporting legislation that promotes justice and centers on equity. The Legislature is considering bills concerning the use of police munitions, qualified immunity, background checks and other measures.



During the 2019 Legislative Session, people of faith gathered at the Oregon State Capitol building to advocate for compassionate legislation.

Welcome the Stranger

Welcoming Refugees Bill (SB 718). Our coalition's renewal and expansion of the Welcoming Refugees Bill would ensure funding of crucial supports for Oregonians to access health care, education, employment and other services they need to start new lives.

Every Oregonian (SB 389). We are also part of a coalition advocating for a \$15 million plan for immigration legal services for Oregon's immigrant community. Our coalition seeks to expand immigration legal services throughout Oregon and increase our partnership with the state through direct funding to community-based organizations providing a holistic, supportive process that includes client support, navigation and legal services. The immediate needs of our immigrant population remind us of the need for this investment. One in seven essential workers in Oregon are immigrants, and immigrant workers are 58 percent more likely to have lost work due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sanctuary Promise Act (HB 3265). In 2018, Oregon voters overwhelmingly rejected Measure 105, which would have repealed Oregon's three-decade-long prohibition on state and local law enforcement using "money, equipment or personnel for the purpose of detecting or apprehending persons whose only violation of the law" is that of federal immigration law. Building on this clear electoral victory, HB 3265 would strengthen Oregon's sanctuary laws, including prohibiting public and private Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention contracts and warrantless arrests at Oregon's courthouses.

Give Shelter to the Homeless

Housing Supports for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (HB 2544). EMO is leading efforts to increase funding for services and housing for the roughly 3,700 Oregon youth who are homeless and separated from their families. The unaccompanied homeless youth population is disproportionately comprised of marginalized identities and provides the opportunity to confront systemic inequities. Students tend to separate from their families due to domestic violence, family housing instability, and family rejection of an LGBTQIA+ youth. Following trends from the 2008 recession, it is expected that the demand for services for this population—already among the highest in the country—will only continue to grow.

Extend the grace period for repayment of back-rent from July 1, 2021, to February 2022 (SB 282). The COVID-19 pandemic has

wrought havoc on the finances of Oregonians, leaving many unable to pay rent. Tenants will owe all of their back rent, plus the current month's rent, on July 1—a recipe for mass evictions and suffering. SB 282 would ensure sufficient time for millions of dollars in federal rent assistance to help Oregonians. The bill makes other important policy changes, including prohibiting eviction during the COVID pandemic for doubling-up or exceeding a home's occupancy limit.

Promote a Just and Climate-Friendly Clean Energy Economy

Permanently end water, electricity and heating shut-offs based on an inability to pay (HB 2189). Unlike in some other parts of the world, in the United States, a family that has fallen behind on their utility bills is not sufficiently supported, but rather too often must simply lose heat, electricity or access to water in their homes. EMO is leading an effort to bring together impacted community members, legislators, utilities, the Public Utility Commission and other stakeholders to make permanent the moratorium on shut-offs put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) and EMO are using our voice this session to support the communities most affected by the climate crisis. As our state witnessed during the 2020 wildfire season, climate change poses a clear and present danger to Oregonians, especially BIPOC and low-income communities. Our response to this crisis must be timely and prioritize the needs of the most affected populations.

To that end, EMO and OIPL have joined the Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity campaign, which is Oregon's first energy policy campaign led by frontline communities. This campaign has authored three bills:

- **100% Clean Energy for All (HB 2995):** Would require the state's electric grid to become zero-emitting through community-benefiting energy projects.
- **Energy Affordability (HB 2475):** Would allow utilities to create different rate classes for low-income and otherwise under-resourced customers.
- **Healthy Homes (HB 2842):** Would subsidize home repairs and retrofits that improve the quality of life for under-served households.

During the Legislative Session, learn about upcoming events and sign up for legislative updates on the issues that are most important to you at emoregon.org/2021-oregon-legislative-session.

Crisis in Warm Springs: Putting the *Chiuush* Water Fund in perspective

Sylvester "Sal" Sahme wasn't particularly shocked when the water turned off. As an elder of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs of Oregon, he grew up on the reservation and remembers how often the basic utilities we take for granted in modern society simply vanished. All this instilled a kind of "learned helplessness," said Sahme, a conditioned sense that "this is just the way it is for us Indians."

But the crisis in Warm Springs represents a serious challenge. On May 31, 2019, the Confederated Tribes declared an emergency health threat following a 14-inch water main line break. Though various temporary fixes have been put in place, rolling water outages and boil water notices continue across Oregon's largest reservation, with no permanent relief in sight.

Warm Springs tribal member and community advocate Alyssa Macy says, "Access to clean water is directly related to having an adequate standard of living and overall health. Today in my community ... over 60 percent of the people do not have access to clean and safe running water for personal and domestic use ... there [continues to be] low or no water pressure in the system and everyone has to boil water."

Water distribution centers have been set up in the community, but this is only a short-term fix. Insufficient water for livestock and fighting wildfires represents an existential threat for Warm Springs, and often the water from

distribution centers is undrinkable. Residents describe a rancid taste and terrible smell to some of the relief water, speculating that small amounts of bacteria contaminating such supplies bloomed in transparent water containers left in the sun.

The water crisis also exacerbates the ongoing realities of COVID-19. Many find it difficult to follow CDC guidelines without proper water for washing hands, showering, laundry and other sanitation needs. Sahme lost both of his brothers to COVID last year, and this reflects the larger trends of how the pandemic has disproportionately impacted communities of color, and tribal communities in particular.

All this brings us to the *Chiuush* Water Fund and what our communities can do to help our neighbors in crisis. *Chiuush* means water in the Sahaptin language of Warm Springs (*Chiuush iwa Waqishwit* translates to "water is life"). It's also a blessing of purification and an acknowledgement of mutual friendship before sitting down at a meal. The *Chiuush* Water Fund was set up with this spirit in mind: established in 2019 by the MRG Foundation in partnership with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, it was part of a larger effort to "indigenize philanthropy" by respecting and upholding tribal sovereignty.

It will cost an estimated \$200 million to fully repair the Warm Springs water main, so no doubt broader legislation will be required to



Residents bring empty water bottles to be filled at a water distribution site on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.

acquire such funds. EMO will be supporting the proposed Western Tribal Water Infrastructure Act, introduced by Senators Wyden and Merkley. Valuable funds raised right now help tribal leaders take action sooner rather than later, and we encourage individuals and communities throughout Oregon to contribute as they are able to do so.

Support the *Chiuush* Water Fund

To learn more about the *Chiuush* Water Fund, or to make a contribution, go to mrgfoundation.org/donate-the-chuush-fund-water-for-warm-springs. To donate by check, send a check to MRG Foundation with (Water for Warm Springs in memo), to P.O. Box 12489, Portland, OR 97212.

Race & Restorative Justice: Finding transformation in crisis

wounds, not healing them.

Although restorative justice is rooted in indigenous wisdom, those origins were not explicitly acknowledged until the turn of the century. A universal African core belief is that the individual exists only in relationship to the collective. Because restorative justice is relational, the starting point is human connection. Restorative justice expands the circle of stakeholders to include survivors and community members in addition to harm doers.

Fania Davis—a leading national voice on restorative justice and the school-to-prison pipeline—authored a 2019 handbook, "The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice." In it, she asserts that, historically, restorative justice in the United States has largely failed to address race, despite the fact that people of color overwhelmingly bear the brunt of inequities in our nation's criminal justice system.

In the past, few racial justice activists embraced restorative justice. Davis urges us to not see the two perspectives at odds with one another. In fact, the convergence of racial justice activism and restorative justice praxis complement and complete each other. It is important to note that the Black Lives Matter guiding principles include commitments to "restorative justice," working "lovingly to nurture a beloved community," and "practicing empathy ... justice, liberation and peace in our engagements with one another." These principles demonstrate a heightened awareness of the importance within the

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8b

In the Hebrew scriptures, the prophet Micah offers powerful and timeless wisdom for living faithfully: ... *And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Some have referred to the events we have experienced over the last year as "apocalyptic." Apocalypse is a term that frequently describes a situation of catastrophe and destruction. But the original Greek term is instructive, as it actually translates to an "unveiling" or "uncovering."

The disproportionate and tragic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the BIPOC community—as well as the murders of Black and Brown people by those in power—has unveiled institutional systems poisoned by the scourge of racism. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once declared, "We are now reaping the harvest of terrible evil planted by seeds centuries ago."

Transformation is possible in crisis. But it is necessary to have a container within which the transformation can occur. The restorative justice model provides such a framework. The U.S. restorative justice movement emerged in the late 1970s in response to the belief that the process of justice in our nation was only deepening societal

Black Lives Matter movement of doing the internal work of transforming self, while also transforming the world.

Davis invokes the archetypal energies of the warrior, integrating power and compassion, with the healer, aspiring to heal or transform social harm. Taken together, she contends, these two energies offer a powerful tool for healing and envisioning a more holistic and hopeful way forward.

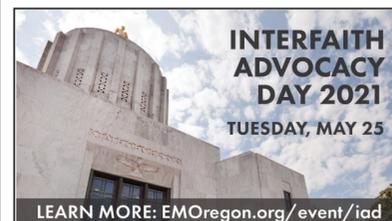
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Join us for a virtual 2021 Interfaith Advocacy Day

There is strength in knowledge and strength in numbers! Join with others from around the state at the first-ever virtual *Interfaith Advocacy Day* on May 25. Together, we can build a just, inclusive and hope-filled future for all Oregonians.

Virtually attend issue briefings and workshops on advocating for compassionate legislation on issues such as housing, hunger, health care, immigration, gun violence prevention, criminal justice reform and climate justice. Following the briefings, we will make our faith voice heard in virtual meetings with state legislators. Group leaders will provide talking points and make all necessary appointments for you.

The event is free and open to all. Learn more and register at emoregon.org/events.

8 Development + Fundraising

EMO 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*.

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Augustana Lutheran Church	NE Emergency Food Program
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Estee Lauder Co. Charitable	Annual Fund, HIV Services
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Franklin Conklin Foundation	Annual Fund
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Jouris Family Foundation	Second Home
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Oregon Community Foundation	Annual Fund, SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Oregon Jewish Community Foundation	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
Oregon Law Foundation	SOAR Immigration Legal Services
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Valley Community Presbyterian Church	Second Home
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Worksystems	SOAR Immigration Legal Services

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