

Mark Your Calendar!

Events are open to the public. Please check for updates at www.mainecouncilofchurches.org.

Local Foods Bean Suppers- Saturdays in October

10/3 - Cape Elizabeth United Methodist Church, Cape Elizabeth
10/17 - St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church, Scarborough
10/24 - Windham Hill UCC, Windham
10/24 - Gorham Ecumenical Council at Cressey Road United Methodist Church, Gorham
10/24 - Casco Village Church UCC, Casco

Sun. 10/4 7:00 - 9:00 pm. **THE GREAT STORY - THE GREAT WORK** - A Celebration of the life and work of **Thomas Berry** (1914 - 2009) a great teacher and advocate for the Earth whose work grasped the creation of the Universe as both a scientific and sacred story. Includes film and live music from the time of St. Francis. First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church, 425 Congress St, Portland. Free, donations welcome.

Wed. 10/28 8:00 am - noon. **"Spirituality and Healthcare: A False Dichotomy."** **Dr. Daniel P. Sulmasy: "Is Medicine a Spiritual Practice?"** MCC Executive Director **Rev. Jill Job Saxby**, panelist. Maine Medical Center, Portland. Free.

Fri. 11/6 - **Maine Council of Churches Annual Assembly.** Dinner and Business meeting at 5:30. Guest speaker at 7:00: **Chuck Collins "Sustaining the Common Good in Hard Times."** First Parish Church in Saco, 12 Beach St.

Mon., 1/25 - Wed. 1/27 - **Bangor Theological Seminary 105th Annual Convocation: "What's Close to Your Heart?"** Speakers include **Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches.** MCC Executive Director **Rev. Jill Job Saxby** will preach at opening worship on Jan 25th.

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Maine
Council
of Churches

UPDATE

Seeking the Common Ground,
Working for the Common Good.

Fall 2009



A New Thing

by *The Rev. Jill Job Saxby, Executive Director*

If you ever need a reminder that we live in an endlessly changing universe, try visiting a "biosphere" filled with 1,000 species of butterfly in various stages of their life cycle. You might do what I did this summer and bring along a baby on the verge of toddlerhood. Then, just stand back and absorb the wonder of transformation: things ceaselessly becoming themselves.

Perhaps this always-in-flux nature of the world is why so many spiritual practices come down to the same imperative: Pay Attention.

Certainly, profound transformation is at the heart of Christianity, the faith heritage shared by MCC's members. A new way of being human arises. New life. A new creation.

This year, when institutions of all kinds are struggling for ways to cope with and respond to the "Great Recession," many want nothing more than to survive and "return to normal." But for the church—local, global, ecumenical—so much more is required than survival. Everywhere and in all times we are meant to be a vessel of transforma-

tion, changing lives, changing the world. *"I am about to do a new thing: now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19)*

Some—perhaps more than ever—perceive that when so many lives are impoverished and the planet itself damaged, something about the old "normal" was broken and wrong. Now is a perfect time to try out new ways of being together, as the church, as citizens, as neighbors with one another and with all of life.

MCC is offering several opportunities to get involved in the ministry of transformation to which the ecumenical church is called. In this newsletter you can read about: the special program with Chuck Collins (founder of the "Common Security Groups" movement) at this year's annual meeting; our Sustainable Bean Suppers Project; our advocacy and education efforts to transform the "old ways" of doing things in the areas of health care, human rights, environmental health and economic justice.

Change is inevitable, of course. This economic crisis, too, shall pass. But, in good times or hard times, there is no better time than now for the church—local, global, ecumenical—to be about the ceaseless task of becoming itself, a "new wineskin for new wine," the intended container for the transformative power of Love.



Save the Date!

Maine Council of Churches
Annual Assembly

Friday, November 6, 2009

First Parish Congregational
Church UCC
Saco Maine

Keynote Speaker:
Chuck Collins

**"Sustaining the Common
Good in Hard Times"**

Open to the Public

Details & registration form on page 3

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Maine Religious Campaign Against Torture

Our last newsletter introduced readers to MCC's partnership with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT). A major goal of the campaign is to increase the number of people in the U.S. who believe that torture is always wrong—without exception.

In June, MCC organized, with Maine Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International, an event at Portland's First Parish Church (UU) called "Out of the Shadow of Torture: How to Move Our Nation Forward with Accountability." Attended by over 150 people, the evening featured four nationally prominent speakers on the topic, including author Matthew Alexander, a former military interrogator in Iraq; Rich Killmer, Executive Director of NRCAT; ACLU attorney Ben Wizner; and Tom Parker, Policy Director for Terrorism, Counterterrorism and Human Rights at Amnesty International USA.

Also in June, MCC's Associate Director Eric C. Smith joined religious leaders from around the nation for a Day of Witness in Washington, DC including a meeting with White House staff on the issue of the moral imperative to ensure the US never tortures again. MCC Executive Director Jill Saxby, along with MCLU Executive Director Shenna Bellows visited with staff for Senators Snowe and Collins this summer. We've collected hundreds of signatures on our call for a Commission of Inquiry to fully investigate interrogation policies and practices since 9/11.

If your congregation would like to host an **adult Bible study or discussion forum**, we have **video/discussion resources** we'd be pleased to send you. Contact us if you would like an MCC staff person to visit your church to facilitate this conversation. Please take a minute to join the **Call for a Commission of Inquiry**. Go to: www.mainecouncilofchurches.org and follow the links to the on-line petition.

Youth Environmental Summit - April 22, 2010 – Saco

This fall Maine Council of Churches will be gathering youth from across our member denominations to plan an ecumenical youth event focused on environmental justice. A team of high school youth and adult advisors will select speakers, develop workshops, and plan worship for an all-day event to help other young people explore how their faith, values, and religious traditions ground their commitment to protecting the environment and all creation.

We hope to gather some of the many passionate and visionary young voices in support of justice and the environment to design this event and engage their peers in one of the most difficult and promising struggles of our time. If you are interested in participating in planning this event, please contact Eric C. Smith at esmith@mainecouncilofchurches.org.

The Youth Environmental Summit is scheduled to take place on Earth Day, during school vacation, on April 22, 2010 at First Parish Church UCC, Saco. Save that date on your congregation or parish youth group calendar. This new initiative is made possible by generous grants from the Maine Community Foundation Cumberland and York County Funds.

Health Care Reform Update

It has been a very busy summer working on the issue of health care reform, beginning with our *Interfaith Week of Prayer for Health Care for All* in June. Maine Council of Churches celebrated the beginning of the week at Mercy Hospital in Portland with a special prayer service in Our Lady of Mercy Chapel where Executive Director Rev. Jill Job Saxby joined Rev. Mark Wendorf (PCUSA), Rev. Kenneth Wish (Nazerene) and Sister Patricia Moody (RSM) in praying for health care that is inclusive, accessible, affordable, and accountable.

In August, Associate Director Eric C. Smith joined thousands of other religious leaders from across the country in a conference call with President Obama hosted by Faithful Reform in Health Care and other national partners.



Participants in the June Interfaith Week of Prayer for Health Care for All include (from left to right) Rev. Carolyn Coleman, Cathedral Church of St. Luke, Portland; James Corbett, Vice President, Mission Effectiveness, Mercy Hospital; Rev. Mark Wendorf, Faith Community Liaison, Mercy Hospital; MCC Executive Dir. Rev. Jill Job Saxby and MCC Associate Director Eric C. Smith.

The national debate on health care has been front page news for several months, but MCC has been advocating for quality, affordable care in Maine for more than two decades. We offer resources for congregations to engage in dialogue about how our values are and should be represented in our health care system. For more information, contact our office or visit the health care reform page of our website.

Join us on Wednesday, October 28 from 8:00 am - noon at the Maine Medical Center's Dana Auditorium, Portland for the annual Alexander Cairns Symposium. This year's topic is "Spirituality and Health Care: A False Dichotomy?" with Dr. Daniel P. Salmsay's keynote speech, "Is Medicine a Spiritual Practice?" MCC Executive Director Jill Saxby will be one of the several panelists participating in the discussion.

The Maine Council of Churches is a proud member of

Your Voice, Your Social Justice Mission—Amplified by Martha Stein, Dev. Dir.

"If only we had more time/information/volunteers/resources..."

Imagine the social justice voice your church could project if your members had regular access to political and community, state and national leaders, as well as newspaper editorial boards. Or, what you could accomplish if your church had more people working on the issues you care about – the plight of the poor, the environment, or human and civil rights.

That's where the Maine Council of Churches comes in. As you read this newsletter you'll see that the Council, through our strong relationships with churches, community, state and national leaders, is raising the voice of the ecumenical community.

Nearly every day we are called upon by the media, non-profits and other groups to speak for Maine's faith community—to speak as the voice of the faithful and morally conscience.

MCC also offers a range of resources to connect church members to each other and to the greater world. The new bean supper program and our upcoming youth conference are two current examples of our work expanding efforts already underway in many of Maine's churches that are exploring the connections between faith and economic and environmental justice.

If you agree that the Maine Council of Churches' ecumenical ministry of justice is meaningful to you and your church, please consider a financial gift to us. Only about 15% of our operating income is provided by denominational dues. We rely on individuals and churches to keep our doors open and our social justice voice strong. The Maine Council of Churches: **Your Voice, Your Social Justice Mission—Amplified.**

Maine Council of Churches Annual Assembly

Friday, November 6, 2009

First Parish Congregational Church UCC, 12 Beach Street, Saco Maine
(with satellite locations in Northern Maine – FMI, please contact the MCC office)

Open to the Public

Featuring: Chuck Collins “Sustaining the Common Good in Hard Times”

The Maine Council of Churches is delighted to announce that **Chuck Collins, Director of the Program on Inequality and the Common Good at the Institute for Policy** will be the guest speaker at our annual meeting. The topic for his program is “**Sustaining the Common Good in Hard Times.**” Attendees will hear Collins’ philosophies and ideas on this topic, and will participate in small discussion groups over the course of the evening. The goal of the program is to provide ideas for churches and other groups seeking to meet their own and their communities’ needs during these ‘hard times.’

Collins co-founded both **United for a Fair Economy** and **Responsible Wealth**. He is the co-author of several books, including *Economic Apartheid in America* (2005), *The Moral Measure of the Economy* (2007), and a comic book called the *Economic Meltdown Funnies* (2009). He works with both religious and secular groups to advance ideas and policies that benefit the common good.

5:00 – 5:30 Registration for Annual Assembly
5:30 – 6:30 Buffet dinner and Annual Assembly (*non-delegates are invited to join us for dinner*)
6:30 – 7:00 Displays (*MCC & partner organizations*) and fellowship
7:00 – 9:00 Program: “*Sustaining the Common Good in Hard Times*”

Tear off and return to Maine Council of Churches, 19 Pleasant Avenue, Portland ME 04103. On-line registration and updated information are available at www.mainecouncilofchurches.org. Please contact us at 207-772-1918 or info@mainecouncilofchurches.org with any questions.

Dinner (during Annual Assembly) and Program - \$20. Pre-registration **required by 11/2.**
Program only: Suggested donation: \$5. Pre-registration preferred; walk-ins welcome.

Annual Assembly Delegates **must** register in advance, **no later than November 2nd**. Checks should be payable to the Maine Council of Churches. MasterCard and Visa also accepted.

Name: _____ Day time phone: _____
Full mailing address: _____
Email address: _____
Denomination: _____ I am representing my Denomination as a Delegate.
(for program planning purposes)

- I/We will be attending the Annual Assembly and Program. My payment of \$20 is enclosed.
 I/We will be attending the Program only. My payment of \$5 is enclosed.

VISA/MasterCard # _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature (as it appears on credit card) _____ Date _____

Please use additional pages if registering more than 1 person.

A New Twist on an Old Favorite

The Maine Church “Bean Suppah” Gets a Makeover

MCC Environmental Justice Consultant Anne D. “Andy” Burt has found yet another creative and meaningful way to connect food, the local economy and the environment to our faith with interesting new additions to the traditional church bean supper. The Maine Council of Churches, in collaboration with PROP’s (People’s Regional Opportunity Program) Healthy Maine Partnership—Communities Promoting Health Coalition, the Eat Local Foods Coalition, Slow Foods Portland, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) and others, is working to advance the concept of including more locally produced foods in our diets by demonstrating how these foods can be part of the traditional Maine bean supper.



These suppers, which are often church fundraisers and social gatherings, will incorporate some new ideas that we hope will deepen the experience for attendees. These events will:

- support local growers by including homegrown foods;
- provide food available locally, including delicious, healthful recipes;
- encourage community support for and distribute information about the positive impact locally grown products have on the environment;
- provide interesting historical information and food facts about Maine heirloom beans and bean supper traditions; and
- explore what “living our faith” means in terms of taking care of the planet and our neighbors whose livelihood depends on the earth and its gifts.

As this newsletter goes to press, planning for five suppers is underway. On Saturday, October 3rd, the Cape Elizabeth United Methodist Church will host a Bean Supper from 4:30 – 6:30. A portion of the proceeds from the event will benefit the South Portland Food Pantry. On Saturday, October 17th, the youth ministry group at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church, Scarborough will host their Supper.

Saturday October 24th is a busy day! At 2:00 pm the Gorham Ecumenical Council kicks off its event, “Harmony and Harvest: Great Local Talent, Great Local Food” at the Cressey Road United Methodist Church with a concert to benefit Habitat for Humanity and food to follow. Also on the 24th, Casco Village Church will host a Harvest Supper From 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Finally, the Windham Hill United Church of Christ will offer a “Chowda and Chilli Suppah.” Please be sure to check www.beansuppah.org and MCC’s website, www.mainecouncilofchurches.org for updates.

Keep our Neighbors Warm

by Martha Stein

I am writing this on a glorious early September day—the early morning sweater is shed by midmorning, but by dinner time we are scurrying around the house closing windows. By the time you read this, we will undoubtedly be experiencing brisk fall temperatures and before we know it, we’ll be pulling out the big comforters getting ready for another Maine winter.

But, for many Mainers, this is a time of anxiety. It’s been a tough year for many—unusually challenging conditions for farmers and fishermen, and the economic environment remains uncertain.

It is at times like these when faith communities in Maine join forces to share ideas and resources to keep as many of our neighbors warm and fed as we possibly can. In our last newsletter, we told you about Dolores Vail’s meetings with churches, non-profit groups and government agencies to identify problems and solutions various organizations have come up with to care for their neighbors.

We will be sharing detailed information via email and on our website about challenges faced and successful strategies as Dolores concludes her meetings this fall. We also want to hear from communities throughout the state. How did your community address last winter’s challenges? What will you be doing this year to help your neighbors stay warm? What good ideas do you have to share with other faith communities about how to serve neighbors in today’s economic environment? Please drop us a note or call our office and we’ll share your information with our wider community.