

Maine Council of Churches

*Seeking
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good*



HEYWARD: “STAND UP TO WHITE CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM”

Event Generates 12 Book Groups Nationwide

Just six days after the release of [The 7 Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism: A Call to Action \(Rowman & Littlefield\)](#), Episcopal priest, theologian, and scholar Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward joined MCC and The BTS Center for a public conversation with Rev. Dr. Marvin Ellison about what she calls the most important book she has ever written. ([Watch the recording on MCC's YouTube Channel.](#))

With a registration of 587 people, the September 21st event broke attendance records for both MCC and BTS—showing how timely and urgently needed Heyward's analysis is. White Christian Nationalism, a political ideology spawned by extremists espousing a counterfeit distortion of Christianity, seeks to impose a white supremacist, xenophobic, misogynist, authoritarian vision for government and society, a vision that includes making America a “Christian” nation. “But,” warns Heyward at the end of Chapter 2, “This Christian nationalism is not of God.” Her [presiding Bishop, the Most Reverend Michael](#)

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GOING BEYOND THE RAINBOW

In an inspiring display of solidarity, generosity, and commitment to true inclusion, 15 of Maine's faith communities—including MCC—stepped up to support [Saint Ansgar Lutheran Church, Portland](#), in hosting a visit from nationally renowned public theologian [Rev. Brandon Robertson](#) and Maine author/activist [Marpheen Chann](#) (pictured at right) on Saturday, October 15, for an afternoon of conversation that carried their audience “Beyond the Rainbow.”

During the event, through sermon and informal interview, Robertson and Chann called on congregations to practice radical inclusion, which is so



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR


It was one year ago that I stood on the Eastern Prom in Portland to have this photo taken for the cover of MCC's Fall Newsletter 2021. That cover story announced the start of a 3-year journey that began with a bold leap of faith: to expand our capacity for mission and witness by increasing the Executive Director position from half- to full-time for a designated term of three years.

It's hard to believe a whole year is now behind us—time has flown, which must mean we've been having fun! We've certainly been busy, anyway. Our newly expanded capacity has allowed us to do just what we had hoped we could: show up. In more places, more often, with more impact. We heeded the wise words of Rabbi Jared Saks, our trusted colleague, who, when we asked him for advice about how MCC should spend these three years, said: "Show up where people are—go to them, don't wait for them to come to you. If there's justice work being done, be bold about MCC showing up and proclaiming, 'We're behind this and we're here,' so people see you in the spaces where they are. You want people thinking, 'Maine Council of Churches is always there! Whether it's for reproductive justice or for the environment or whatever, there they are!'"

As you read through the stories in this newsletter, you'll see the many ways and places **we have shown up**.

Thank you for being our traveling companions on this journey, as together we inspire and equip people within, through, and beyond the church to unite in creating a world where peace is built with justice and justice is guided by love.





Seeking Common Ground,
Working for the Common Good

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Resources to Help Protect Houses of Worship

Follow-up material from the Protecting Houses of Worship forum in Westbrook, 10/13/21

This link provides materials and resources from the event.

This link includes contact information for the presenters. Please feel free to reach any of them with questions or comments.

Below are resources provided by CISA

1. CISA Faith Based Organizations – Houses of Worship Support
2. CISA Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment Tool (web based) and Guide
3. CISA Active Shooter Preparedness Program
4. CISA Cybersecurity Support

Domestic Violence Resources

Resources to Help Protect Houses of Worship

Faith-Based Resources For Ending Gun Violence

White Christian Nationalism

Sabbath For Reproductive Justice

Civil Discourse

Racial Justice

Honoring Workers for Labor Day

Environment

Health Care Reform

Resources For Worship

Check out our expanded [“Resources”](#) page on our website with new content ([White Christian Nationalism](#), [Protecting Houses of Worship](#), [Labor Day](#), [Season of Creation](#) and [Domestic Violence](#))

PROTECTING MAINE'S HOUSES OF WORSHIP



Harpreet Kaur, USDOJ Program Manager, joins the panel via Zoom, along with (R to L) Jane Field, MCC Exec Dir; Falmouth PD Chief John Kilbride; Skowhegan PD Chief David Bucknam; and Department of Justice Senior Conciliation Specialist Darrick Dean.

In the wake of a recent uptick in hate-based disruptions and crimes targeting Maine's faith communities, MCC is partnering with federal, state and local agencies to present a series of forums around the state entitled, "Protecting Houses of Worship." The first forum, held in Westbrook on October 14, drew more than 130 faith leaders who came together to learn about safety planning, risk assessment, and federal grant programs to help congregations make security upgrades to their facilities. The next forum is tentatively scheduled for January 26 in Augusta. In the meantime, [resources from the October forum, including contact information are available on our website.](#)

Representatives from the FBI, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Attorney's office, Maine Emergency Management Agency, presented at the October forum, where MCC Executive Director, Rev. Jane Field, spoke on a panel along with police chiefs from Falmouth and Skowhegan and staff from USDOJ. "There is always a tension for worshipping communities between our impulse to welcome unknown visitors into our buildings and our commitment to protecting the safety of those already there, especially our members who are part of marginalized groups frequently targeted—LGBTQ+ people, immigrants,

people of color," she told the audience. "What we have heard here today, again and again, is how important it is to empower ourselves with information and safety planning, and to build strong relationships with neighboring faith groups and with local law enforcement now, rather than in the aftermath of a hate-based incident or crime. But even when the worst does happen, what all of us people of faith know and believe is that God's Spirit is with us and among us, to bring healing, hope, resiliency, and a better tomorrow."

"Stand Up to White Christian Nationalism"

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Curry, agrees, stating in an [interview at Georgetown University's Center on Faith and Justice on October 26](#), "What we're actually describing is an ideology that's not really a religion...you lay it alongside Jesus of Nazareth and we're not even talking about the same thing."

As these extremist ideologies move increasingly into the mainstream of American culture and politics, Heyward makes this plea: "The time has come for other Christians to speak out—not only on behalf of this nation but more importantly on behalf of a God of justice, love and peace."

Thanks to the generosity of so many registrants, the event's free-will offering raised \$3,500 for [Faithful America](#), a national organization working to challenge Christian nationalism and white supremacy.

As a spin-off project from the event, over 100 attendees formed 12 book groups nationwide (from Washington and California to Kansas and Ohio, to New Hampshire and Maine!) to read [The 7 Deadly Sins of White Christian Nationalism](#) together. Heyward will be meeting with these groups in February.

[The BTS Center](#) and [MCC](#) are deeply grateful to Rev. Dr. Marvin Ellison for his vision and leadership, and for the generous support of these cosponsors, who made the event possible: [The Haney-Leighton Fund](#); [First Congregational Church, South Portland](#); [Saint Alban's Episcopal Church, Cape Elizabeth](#); [Maine Conference UCC Social Action Committee](#); the [Episcopal Diocese of Maine](#); [St. Luke's Cathedral](#); [Maine Conference New England Synod ELCA](#); and [HopeGateWay](#).



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MCC ADVOCATES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

In a Post-Roe Reality

Protesting Deaths of Imprisoned



Sign carried by MCC Board members at June 24 rally in Portland



Tanja Hollander, Susan Johnston and Sarah Mahoney co-facilitators of “Stories Over Stigma”.



Faith leaders for Reproductive Justice at June 24 rally, Portland City Hall

Within hours of the June 24 Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, more than 1,000 people poured into Portland’s streets and marched to City Hall expressing outrage, dismay, and a fierce determination to ensure reproductive justice for Mainers. MCC Executive Director, Rev. Jane Field, joined other faith leaders, activists, and politicians, including Governor Janet Mills, on the steps of City Hall to assure the crowd that we would do all that we can to protect their right to access safe and legal abortions in this state.

At the same time, MCC has been working with a team of trained facilitators from the highly successful “[Bridging the Gap](#)” project to develop the Stories Over Stigma program for local congregations in Maine. This small group workshop for facilitated storytelling and respectful, compassionate, and non-judgmental conversations about abortion helps people talk and listen to each other even when they hold very different beliefs and opinions. For more information or to book a workshop for your congregation, contact Tanja: [abortionconversations\[at\]gmail\[.\]com](mailto:abortionconversations[at]gmail[.]com).



To call attention to the 16 people who died in Maine’s jails and prisons during the first 8 months of this year, the Maine Council of Churches joined the [Maine Prisoners Advocacy Coalition](#) and the [National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls](#) on September 10 in Augusta’s Capitol Park for a rally entitled “Stop Killing Us.”

The names of 121 incarcerated Mainers who died during the past 10 years ---- some who were mentally ill, held on drug charges or simply unable to post bail -- were read as a tribute and in recognition that they did not have to die, and they should not have died in jail.

Relatives told story after story about their loved ones whose lives ended in senseless deaths that might have been prevented had they received care before they were arrested and while they were incarcerated. One mother talked about her son who struggled with drugs and depression. She held up a photo of the message he wrote on his cell wall. “I am going to kill myself,” it said. And he did.

Speakers, including representatives from the [Maine Prisoners’ Advocacy Coalition](#), the [ACLU](#), and the [Behavioral Health Community Collaborative](#), as well as former MCC Board member and forensic psychologist Rev. Dr. Bill Barter, all advocated for more mental health facilities, access to medical care, and more social workers. Clergy lamented the need for the gathering, and legislators said the criminal justice system needs to be changed to provide a better and more humane future for people who are mentally ill or suffering from drug and alcohol addictions.

PRIDE PARADE IN PORTLAND



MCC member churches showing some pride on June 18!

GOING BEYOND THE RAINBOW

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much more than just posting a sign that says “All are welcome” or flying a rainbow flag on your church lawn. “Radical inclusion” involves leaning in to Christ’s command to make space at the table for all those who are being oppressed and marginalized, embracing and incorporating all people, in all of their diversity, into our community, church and society.

Robertson gained notoriety during the pandemic as “The TikTok Preacher” and [Rolling Stone magazine named him to its “Hot List”](#) of creatives, artists, and influencers. He was already an award-winning author of seven books on LGBTQ+ justice and theology and has spoken at The White House and Westminster Abbey.

“If the gospel is true, then the world must be transformed by the radically subversive inclusiveness of Jesus,” Robertson told the audience. “True inclusion calls us beyond mere welcome, beyond outward signs of celebration, and even beyond the LGBTQ+ conversation itself... to recognize who we are, identify our privilege, and willingly give up our positions of privilege for the good of the silenced, marginalized, and oppressed—and, in so doing, maximize the light and power of the Divine in and through us and our communities.” He concluded, “We need to help the Church reject the false gospel that excludes, and instead tap into the message of radical inclusion at the heart of the biblical narrative.”

At the conclusion of event, he signed copies of his latest book, [Dry Bones & Holy Wars \(Orbis, 2022\)](#), along with copies of [True Inclusion: Creating Communities of Radical Embrace \(Chalice Press, 2018\)](#), which sold like hot cakes, as did copies of the memoir by Maine’s own Marpheen Chann, [Moon In Full: A Modern Day Coming of Age Story \(Islandport Press, 2022\)](#).

Attendees and sponsors donated \$600 to the [Equality Community Center Capital Campaign](#) in support of their effort to create affordable housing for LGBTQ+ older adults and other vulnerable members of the Greater Portland community.

MCC was proud to join the impressive list of co-sponsors for this special event: [Saint Ansgar Lutheran Church](#); [First Parish UCC Brunswick](#); [First Parish UU Portland](#); [Episcopal Diocese of Maine](#); [Haney-Leighton Fund](#); Religious Society of Friends (Quakers): Falmouth Quarterly Meeting, Narramissic Valley Meeting, and Winthrop Center Friends Church; [Trinity Episcopal Church Portland](#); [St. Luke’s Cathedral](#); [Williston-Immanuel United Church](#); [State Street UCC Portland](#); [HopeGateWay](#); [St. Bart’s Episcopal Church Yarmouth](#); and [Westbrook-Warren UCC](#).

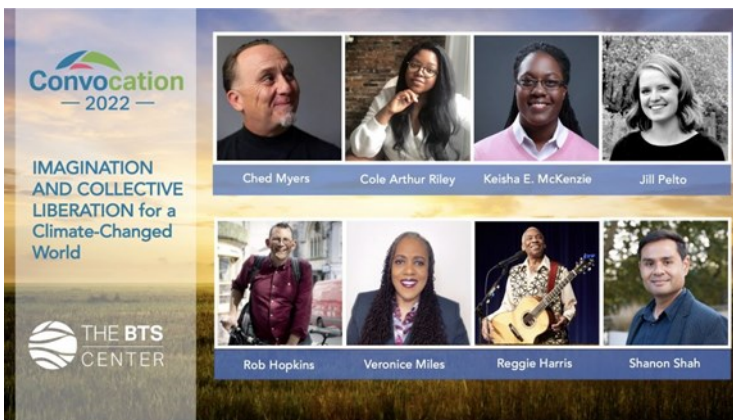
IMAGINING A MAINE WITHOUT AGEISM



MCC's partner organization, the [Maine Council on Aging](#), has welcomed MCC Executive Director, Rev. Jane Field, and MCC's Public Policy Committee Co-chair, John Hennessy, into the latest cohort of its Leadership Exchange on Ageism, a ground-breaking leadership development experience providing Maine's business, government, and nonprofit leaders with the tools needed to create a more age-positive (Age+) culture in our communities, institutions, and systems. The 14-hour intensive, participatory, peer-learning-centered program is an integral part of the MCOA's strategy to end ageism in Maine by 2032.

Ageism is holding people back, diminishing health outcomes and hurting Maine's economy. Age is a critical aspect of identity, along with a person's ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, education, culture and career, yet discrimination based on age increases health care costs by \$63 billion annually, a Yale University study found, and reduced the U.S. gross domestic product by \$850 billion in 2018, according to AARP.

MCOA invites all of us to imagine a Maine without ageism – a Maine where aging is embraced as a process to be celebrated and where all older people are valued and intentionally included in every aspect of our society.



Over the course of two days in October, MCC was proud to serve as an event partner for [BTS Center's Convocation 2022](#). Through online presentations, small group engagement, and worship that incorporated music, the arts, and contemplative practice, the event offered both challenge and respite. Inspired by a group of thoughtful presenters, artists, and leaders, participants explored what it means to nourish our imaginations toward a world of joyful possibility and embodied hope, while also holding space for the difficult realities we are facing.



MCC Board Secretary Rev. Christophor Gilbert was in Washington DC for [Bread for the World's](#) 2022 Advocacy Summit. BFW is an official partner organization of MCC. Pictured outside Senator Susan Collins' office (L to R): Cheri Andes of BFW; Maria Olson, Susan Collins' office staff; Christophor Gilbert; and Becky Burns from Saint Ansgar Lutheran Church, Portland.

MCC's Board of Directors began gathering in person again for the first time since February 2020, meeting in July at Marge Kilkelly's [Dragonfly Cove Farm in Dresden](#), and in September at Carolyn Lambert's barn in Kennebunk.



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New England Conference UMC
New England Synod, ELCA
New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
Presbytery of Northern New England
Unitarian Universalist Association
Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting of Friends

Churches and Organizations

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Maine Equal Justice
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Mid-Coast Presbyterian Church
Narramissic Valley Friends Meeting
Portland Friends Meeting
Raymond Village Community Church
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Save the Dates for MCC's 2023 Faith-based Advocacy Series

Last week of January: Online kickoff with keynote address by Rev. Dr. Marvin Ellison

Advocacy 101 and 201 breakout sessions

February: In-person tour of the State House

Feb 14 and 16 - Policy and Theology Online Workshops for current legislation pending in Augusta

2023 Faith-Based
Advocacy Series



[View the 2021 Faith-Based Advocacy Series on our YouTube Channel](#)