

news

FALL 2024

Maine Council of Churches

*Inspiring
Peace,
Justice &
Compassion
through
collaborative
action*

#OurFaithOurVote

VOTE
WITH  **LOVE FOR JUSTICE**

You're Concerned About

✓ The Election ✓ White Christian Nationalism

We Heard You!

A phone call. A conversation at the supermarket. An email. You told us this

election season had you worried. "What if violence breaks out?" "What if someone targets my Black, immigrant, or LGBTQ neighbors?" "What is this 'White Christian Nationalism' that's hijacked our faith and what role is it playing in the election?"

We heard you, loud and clear!

So, we asked a few friends of MCC if they could help fund a response. And they came through! Eight wonderful givers, along with the Sam L. Cohen Foundation, provided

Generous donors make pre-election programs possible

funding so we could get to work.

And we did! In August and early September, we created

a series to inform you about the threat White Christian Nationalism poses to our faith and our democracy. It's available on our website along with other updated resources.

Open this newsletter to check out all the other pre-election programs underway this fall.

Thanks to you, in communities all around the state, people of faith and good conscience are now better prepared to take action for the common good, no matter what may come.

We're in it together—thank God!

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Why I give to MCC

Merle Marie Troeger transforms outrage into generosity

She's inspired by our response to legislators' toxic theology



I have supported the Maine Council of Churches for a number of years and it is one of the yearly contributions I make to various good causes. But MCC has moved to the top of my giving list recently. I am impressed with the public advocacy that MCC does. Lots of organizations do good work, and yet I appreciate the source behind the advocacy – our loving God.

This became particularly profound for me when MCC issued its statement in response to the cruel remarks of Representatives Michael Lemelin and Shelley Rudnicki in connection with the mass shooting in Lewiston. They had claimed that the injuries and murders there were instigated by God in punishment for passage of a law these lawmakers had opposed. The implication was that Robert Card, a man terribly disturbed by mental illness, was God's chosen instrument for inflicting retribution.

I was outraged by their comments. That God would be viewed as a revenger made my theological blood boil. I didn't have the words, but MCC did. Its statement condemning the legislators' "horrific, harmful theology" said exactly what needed to be said. The statement insisted on the loving and compassionate nature of God. And the statement went further. It insisted that we cannot play God or explain tragedy as the result of God's action. God's action is always, always loving and compassionate.

The victims of the Lewiston shootings and murders are not pawns in the hands of an angry God. They suffered unspeakable tragedy for which our loving God mourns. I am heartened that MCC's reaction was swift and explicit.

MCC will continue to be an agency I support with my money and my prayers.

One year after Lewiston mass shooting

We remember, we grieve, we heal...together

Leaders of ten faith traditions conduct a Service of Remembrance

The sound echoed around the granite “canyon” between the Cross Building and the Maine State House as faith leaders read victims’ names aloud. Part of a multifaith service of remembrance held on October 1, the litany commemorated that this October, Maine is marking one year since the tragic mass shooting in Lewiston.

Governor Janet Mills wrote in a letter that was read to those assembled, “May today’s service be a powerful reminder of the commitment of Maine people to envelop each other in comfort and compassion and everlasting community. May it be a symbol of our promise to continue to walk hand in hand down the long road to healing,”

At the end of the service, sound once again echoed between the buildings as



ASL interpreter Marisa Zastrow translates the service honoring those who died, including a number of victims from Maine’s deaf community. L to R: Zastrow, Rev. Anne Roser, Rev. Laviola, Rev. Rick McKinley

Photo :UCC News Digest

those gathered in remembrance and hope sang, “We Shall Overcome.”

Your generous support, in prayer and in financial gifts, makes it possible for the Council to offer these unifying opportunities for all faith traditions to come together at moments when spiritual comfort is needed most. Thank you.



Leaders from the Unitarian Universalist, Quaker, Islamic, Jewish, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic faith communities officiated at the service co-hosted by MCC, the Maine Conference of the UCC, and Multifaith Justice Maine.

Photo: Joe Phelan, Kennebec Journal

“In the aftermath of tragedy, we find comfort, strength, courage and hope by coming together. Ten different faith traditions provided a powerful display of unity at a time when so much in our world seeks to drive us apart.”

Rev. Dr. Marisa Laviola, Maine Conference Minister, UCC

Fall Pre-Election Programs

Book groups study Bonhoeffer

Sacrificial Love of Neighbor



Throughout October, several book groups studied Keys to Bonhoeffer's Haus by Laura Fabrycky, seeking lessons for today from the life of the German Lutheran pastor who led a resistance movement against the Nazis. You can join us online in early November to hear what these groups learned and how they plan to take action.

Active Bystander & De-Escalation Training

34 Trainees Now Ready to Respond

This four-hour program, offered in partnership with Prevention.Action.Change., trained participants to keep our communities safer and more peaceful this election season by effectively responding as active bystanders to incidents of hate, and by successfully de-escalating potentially violent situations.

Living Peace, Practicing Nonviolence: The Lessons of Jesus, Gandhi and King for Today

A day-long workshop with Father John Dear

Nobel Peace Prize nominee Father John Dear encouraged participants to embrace “militant nonviolence as a strategy to change the world.” MCC, The Center for Faith and Spirituality, The BTS Center, and Unity Church of Casco co-hosted the event at St. Joseph's College.



Samantha Smith (1972-1985)
Peace activist from Manchester, Maine

Portraits of Peacemakers

An author talk with Maine artist Rob Shetterly

Shetterly's latest book, Portraits of Peacemakers, contains portraits and profiles of fifty peace activists, of whom he says, “They resist, resist, resist. They act with love.” You can watch a recording of this October 24 event on our YouTube channel.

Kudos to everybody who participated in these programs. You are inspiring!

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Sneak Peek

Our Biennial Faith-Based Advocacy Program

How you can get involved in 2025

When the legislative session gets underway in Augusta this January, check out our new tutorial video, “Faith-Based Advocacy 101” to learn the basics. Then join us for a keynote lecture exploring separation of church and state; scripture and civic engagement; and policy advocacy vs. political partisanship. Stay tuned for more details!

