

# Ecumenews

Volume 17  
September, 2010



## Voting: a Gift, a Right and a Responsibility

By Peter Bakken

This summer, I had the odd and ironic experience of being with my family on Tiananmen Square in Beijing on the Fourth of July. Tiananmen Square, of course, is the place where Mao Zedong announced the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 – and where pro-Democracy protesters were brutally suppressed in 1989.

I was reminded that living in a democracy is a precious gift, exceedingly rare when viewed from the perspective of world history. As Christians, we understand ourselves to be stewards of the gifts God has given us. With the gift of the right to participate in the political process – of which voting is one (but only one) form -- comes the

responsibility to exercise that gift on behalf of the common good.

As we approach Election Day 2010, we again have the opportunity to help shape the public discussion about the goals and values we want expressed in our national, state, and local government. So, the Wisconsin Council of Churches is again offering a **Voter Education Guide** to help congregations and their members reflect and act on this opportunity. Included in the Voter Education Guide are:

- A list of things your congregation can do, with suggestions ranging from holding a prayer service to providing child care and transportation to polling sites;

- Principles that express the values of peace, social justice, and care for the earth that Christians expect to be promoted by the holders of public office;
- Policy Priorities that guide the Wisconsin Council of Churches' public witness activities;
- Recommendations for organizing an adult education forum on the election issues;
- Guidelines for holding a candidate forum; and
- Instructions for conducting a voter registration drive.

The Voter Education Guide is available online at the Wisconsin Council of Churches website under "Advocacy." Additional

material for reflecting on the public policy issues we face can be found in the public policy statements of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, available on the WCC website under "Resources." Or, contact the Wisconsin Council of Churches office at 608-837-3108 to request the materials you want. ●



Dr. Peter Bakken is the Public Policy Coordinator for the Wisconsin Council of Churches



## Power and Light – Faith and Energy

by Peter Bakken

Power and Light: two words full of meaning in Christianity and other world religions – and in our monthly household bills.

Is this just coincidence, or is there a connection between our affirmations of faith in the God of love and justice, and the electricity that keeps us comfortable, powers our appliances, and illuminates our homes?

For increasing numbers of people of all faiths, the connection is clear. The energy that we use in our homes and houses of worship has impacts that are religiously and morally significant.

From the Deepwater Horizon oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico and destructive coal mining practices devastating Appalachia,

to the air pollution and climate disruption caused by burning oil and coal for electricity and transportation, our standard ways of producing and consuming energy are both unsustainable and unjust. There are better ways: more energy efficiency, energy conservation, and clean, renewable energy sources – but there is no time to lose.

Our faith calls us to care for God's earth and to defend those whose health and livelihoods are threatened by our waste and careless disregard of creation.

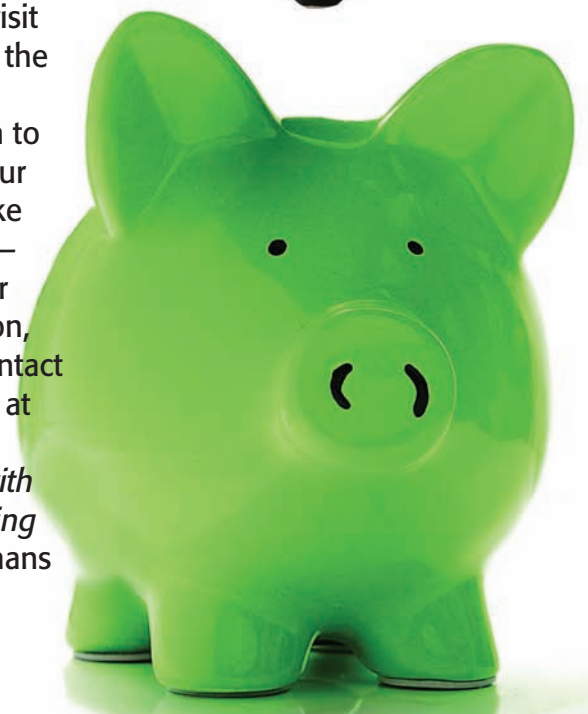
**Wisconsin Interfaith Power and Light** offers one avenue by which individuals and congregations can join together to make a difference. Formerly Wisconsin Interfaith Climate and Energy Campaign, Wisconsin IPL is one of more than thirty state affiliates of the national organization Interfaith Power

and Light.

Wisconsin IPL provides support for persons who want to learn about climate change and clean energy issues, advocate for a just and sustainable energy economy, and practice responsible energy stewardship in their homes and congregations.

To find out how you and your congregation can become part of the Wisconsin IPL network, visit [www.WisconsinIPL.org](http://www.WisconsinIPL.org). Join the mailing list and download a Covenant Congregation form to complete and return with your church's commitments to take simple – or more ambitious – steps to express your care for creation in worship, education, action, and advocacy. Or, contact Peter Bakken, WIPL Director, at 608-837-3108.

*"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God"* (Romans 8:19). ●



# Reflection on the Washington Island Forum

by Staci Marrese-Wheeler



on the island. In recent years, I have taken to describing some folks as 'my Washington Island family,' as I offer insight to how I have become connected with a wide, ecumenical swath of people. It doesn't seem like much of a stretch to do this. It seems that life is more easily connected on the island, with more space to converse. Making sure you have time to stop in at the Red Cup Coffeehouse before the Forum in the morning, or finish dinner in time to make it to Sunset Resort for nature's show on

I cannot begin to think about a week on Washington Island without thinking about the ferry. That is where it all starts for me. It is just another car trip until we get to the jetty at Gills Rock, and then it becomes a departure from the norm. The Washington Island Forum is more of a retreat than a conference. The island provides separation from communities, and yet the creation of community.

I am a ferry 'profiler,' looking for likely Forum candidates on the passage to the island. Conversations are struck up on the windy decks and I look for familiar faces of past Forums among the passengers. 2010 was my 10th year of attending the Forum. It started as a place for me and my nuclear family, but 'family' has grown to mean something quite different to me

## Island Charm & Beauty



West Harbor, can easily become the day's priority.

The island is a gem. Those who live 'on-island' are down-to-earth and welcoming. The Forum brings speakers from larger venues to an intimate setting. The speakers become part of the community for meals and respite, casual conversation and worship. From Eugene Peterson to Joan Chittister, William Willimon to Barbara Brown Taylor, Tom Long to Kenda Creasy Dean, a spectrum of theology, spirituality and wisdom has been shared in the decade I have experienced on this island. As it is shared in this community, it is received as the faith stories of journeying pilgrims being met along the road. I have found the speakers that come to the island to be not only knowledgeable and inspiring, but also accessible and appreciative of the community which is created there.

To be honest, I have thought of looking for another educational event. But the Wisconsin Council of Churches Washington Island

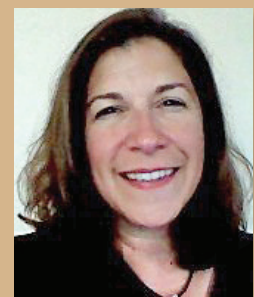
*A Trinity Lutheran Church Welcome*



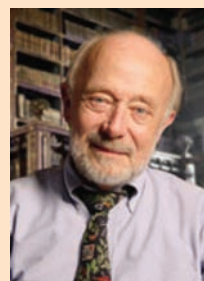
*Above, Rev. Dr. Kenda Creasy Dean speaks at the conference. To the right, Rev. Creasy Dean signs her book for a conference attendee.*



Forum has ruined most other events for me. It is too difficult for me to take a week to retreat in a hotel or convention center. I can't be renewed by mere academia any longer. No, let me strap on my sandals and bike to the morning session with my senses full of island air and sky. By the time I've had my head and spirit filled to the brim, the water will be warm enough for an afternoon of reading and swimming. ●



*Rev. Staci Marrese-Wheeler is pastor of the Lakeview Moravian Community Church on Madison's Eastside and a member of WCC's Peace & Justice Commission.*



*Rev. Dr. Marcus Borg*

## Register now for the 2011 Forum (June 27 - July 1)

Enjoy four and one half days of study, worship, community and fun off the tip of Door County. Each day begins with worship, followed by a plenary session with renowned Biblical and Jesus scholar, Dr. Marcus Borg. Optional discussion groups, worship, group meals and other Island opportunities combine to make it a great retreat experience. Register early at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org)! We may reach full capacity by early 2011. ●



Scott D. Anderson

# Executive, Director's Corner

## Caught in the Middle

I've just finished *Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism* by former Chicago Tribune writer Richard C. Longworth. For anyone interested in understanding the mission field that is our unique Midwestern context, this is a worthy read.

With an influx of immigrant

workers and an outpouring of manufacturing jobs, the region that defines the American self - the *Lake Wobegon* image of solid, hardworking farmers and factory hands - is changing at breakneck speed. As factory farms and global forces displace old ways of life, the Midwest is being transformed literally from

the inside out.

Longworth covers everything from the manufacturing collapse that has crippled the Midwest to the biofuels revolution that has energized it, and from the school districts struggling with new immigrants to the Iowa meatpacking towns that can't survive without them.

Longworth, in providing a roadmap for the future of the Midwest, seeks to build on the region's many strengths: rich farmland, a plethora of fresh water, agricultural and industrial expertise and excellent research universities—and a few success stories such as a reborn Chicago and the vibrant mid-size cities like Ann Arbor and Madison. He calls for more effective regional cooperation, immigration reform, and better linkages between

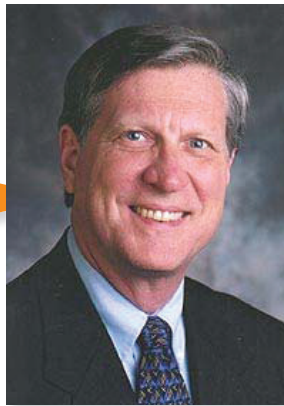
Midwest cities and surrounding rural communities.

The question, of course, is what role the religious community will play in any of this. Will we sit on the sidelines as the "new Midwest" takes shape, or will be active participants in determining the region's future? I hope and pray it is the latter. ●

*The Midwest's golden era is gone forever. Much of the Midwest is in denial. It will take courageous leadership to speak the truth.*

*--Richard C. Longworth*

# Register Today!



Rev. Dr. Tom Long

# A Weekend with Tom Long

## Proclaiming the Mysteries of Advent & Christmas

*A Workshop for Clergy & Lay Leaders*

**Friday, Sept. 24th from 9 am to 3 pm**

Bethel Lutheran Church, 312 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison, WI

Rev. Dr. Tom Long is Professor of Preaching at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He has previously taught preaching at Princeton, Columbia, and Erskine Seminaries. He is a Presbyterian minister and is the author of several books on preaching and worship as well as biblical commentaries on Matthew and Hebrews.

The following Dane County congregations & judicatories are co-sponsoring this event with the Wisconsin Council of Churches: Bethel Lutheran, Madison; Luther Memorial, Madison; First Unitarian, Madison; Grace Episcopal, Madison; Oakland-Cambridge Presbyterian; St. Matthew New Life Lutheran, Madison; St. Andrew's Episcopal, Madison; St. James Evangelical Lutheran, Verona; South Central Synod ELCA; St. Paul's Liberty Lutheran, Deerfield; McFarland Lutheran; First United Methodist, Madison; Sun Prairie United Methodist; Glenwood Moravian, Madison; East Koshkonong Lutheran, Cambridge; Monona United Methodist; Advent Lutheran, Madison; Community of Hope United Church of Christ, Madison; Deerfield Lutheran; Mt. Zion Baptist, Madison; Our Saviour's Lutheran, Sun Prairie; Cooksville Lutheran, Evansville; St. Francis House, Madison; Grace Lutheran, Cambridge; St. Luke's Episcopal, Madison; St. Stephen's Lutheran, Madison; St. Martin Lutheran, Cross Plains; and Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ. ●

## Proclaiming the Mysteries of Advent & Christmas

*A Workshop for Clergy & Seminarians*

**Saturday, Sept. 25th from 9 am to 3 pm**

First Congregational Church, 1511 Church Street, Wauwatosa, WI

## Encounters with the Scriptures

*A Luncheon and Workshop for Clergy & Lay People*

**Sunday, Sept. 26th from Noon to 3:30 pm**

St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)

1615 Wauwatosa Avenue, Wauwatosa, WI

Please note that Tom Long will be preaching at St. Matthew's on the 26th at 8:30 am and 11 am, and will lead an educational forum at 9:45 am. The morning sessions are free and open to the public.

Rev. Dr. Tom Long is Professor of Preaching at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. He has previously taught preaching at Princeton, Columbia, and Erskine Seminaries. He is a Presbyterian minister and is the author of several books on preaching and worship as well as biblical commentaries on Matthew and Hebrews.

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Nashotah House Theological Seminary, and the following Wauwatosa congregations and individuals: First Congregational Church, St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), Wauwatosa Avenue United Methodist Church, Trinity Episcopal Church, Wauwatosa Presbyterian Church, Calvary Memorial United Church of Christ, and two members of First Congregational Church, Mrs. Mary Law (in honor of Mr. William Law) and Mrs. Muriel Ream (in honor of Rev. Dr. Norman Ream). ●

### REGISTRATION

#### Proclaiming the Mysteries of Advent & Christmas

Friday, September 24, 2010

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

Registration Fee(s) \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation to the WCC \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: Workshop and Lunch \$25 (\$15 students and seminarians)

The pastor's registration fee will be waived for a congregation donating \$150 or more.

Send this form with a check payable to "WCC" to:

Wisconsin Council of Churches, 750 Windsor Street, Suite 301, Sun Prairie, WI, 53590

Or register online and pay by credit card at: [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org) under "Events"

### REGISTRATION

#### A Weekend with Tom Long

Saturday, September 25 and Sunday, September 26, 2010

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Denomination: \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Saturday, Sept. 25 Workshop & Lunch \$25 (\$15 students & seminarians)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday, Sept. 26 Workshop & Lunch \$20 (\$15 students & seminarians)

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional donation to WCC Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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# Other Fall Events Sponsored by the WCC

## October 1-2, Taking the War Out of Words: Speaking the Truth in Love

**Oct. 1: 9 am - 4:30 pm; Oct. 2: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm**, with Sharon Strand Ellison, an award-winning speaker, author of *Taking the War Out of Our Words*. Price just reduced! Register with host church, Columbus United Methodist, 222 So. Dickason Blvd., Columbus, WI 53925, (920) 623-3625, www.cbsumc.com. More info at www.wichurches.org, click "events." ●

## October 16, Beyond Survival: What is God's Future for the Small Church?

**10:00 am - 3:00 pm**, with Presenters: David King, Linda Kuhn, and Scott Anderson, at First Presbyterian Church, South Main & Presbyterian Streets, Shawano, WI. Register at www.wichurches.org, click "events." ●

## October 30, Church with a Mission or Mission with a Church?

**9:30 am - 3:00 pm**, A Missional Church Conversation for Pastors and Lay Leaders, with Presenters: Betsy Miller and Scott Anderson, at Community United Methodist Church, 14700 Watertown Plank Road, Elm Grove, WI. Register at www.wichurches.org, click "events." ●



## November 12-14, Senior High Convo

A huge gathering for high school students of all denominations at Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells. Featuring praise and worship with the Sidewalk Prophets and Speaker Greg Speck. Register at <http://guest.cvent.com/d/fdqffh> or call the Wisconsin Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church at: 888-240-7328. ●

## Join Our Mailing List

Receive our monthly e-newsletter by signing up at [wcoc@wichurches.org](mailto:wcoc@wichurches.org)

## 2011 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Resources Now Available



The theme for the annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2011 has been announced by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches: *One in the Apostles' Teaching, Fellowship, Breaking of Bread and Prayer* (Acts 2:42).

For 2011, the churches in Jerusalem were the initial consultants to the Joint Working Group for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Christians of Jerusalem call upon their brothers and sisters to make this week of prayer an occasion of renewed commitment to work for genuine ecumenism grounded in the experience of the early Church.

For more information about the 2011 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, including worship resources and promotional materials, go to [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org) ●



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Visit our website at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org).

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