



Rev. Scott D. Anderson

Executive Director's Corner

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our new electronic newsletter, EcuNews! This version replaces the printed edition of EcuNews which was snail-mailed to you twice a year. The first few paragraphs of each article are listed in the electronic version, with a hyperlink to the WCC's website where you can read the full article. And, you can print out the entire newsletter at:

http://wichurches.org/sitecontent/pdf_files/ecu_news/2016FallEcuNews.pdf

We have lots of great resources for you and your congregation this fall. A new study-action guide addressing the stark racial disparities in our state should be in your mailbox by now. *Faithful Citizenship*, our collaborative poverty initiative, will introduce you to a new congregational study resource focused on our goal to reduce child poverty in this state by half in the next decade. We also have some incredibly useful materials to equip you to be faithful voters in this fall election season. Finally, download our Peace and Justice Commission's reflections on the fall lectionary readings, which has become a very popular resource for pastors and Bible teachers.

We also have several exciting events in the near future: The WCC Annual Meeting December 6th featuring UW Madison Chancellor Rebecca Blank; our 2017 Winter Forum in early March focused how the church addresses racism and our Washington Island Forum next June with world-renowned Biblical scholar John Dominic Crossan. I hope you can join us!

Loving our Interfaith Neighbors

Coming Soon: A Study-Action Resource for Wisconsin Congregations



According to a recent national poll conducted by the Pew Research Center, only 52 percent of Americans know a Muslim, and far fewer can claim any as friends. Since most Muslim communities are in urban areas, many of us who live in small towns and rural Wisconsin just haven't had the opportunity for this kind of interfaith relationship-building.

And, because so many of us don't really know our interfaith neighbors, it is no surprise that unfair and inaccurate stereotypes take root, fueled by the secular media and especially this year on the Presidential campaign trail. The Islamic faith, for example, gets painted—unfairly and inaccurately—with the broad brush stroke of terrorism.

The WCC's Unity and Relationships Commission has produced a superb ecumenical statement detailing the "why" and "how" of interfaith relationships for Christians, which was adopted by our Board of Directors in 2014. You can download a copy from the WCC Policy Statement page at www.wichurches.org/advocacy/wcc-policy-statements/

In the "Invitation to Action" at the conclusion of our statement, the WCC:

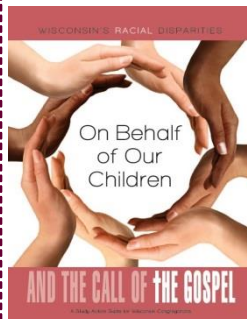
...to condemn all forms of intolerance which turn religious differences into excuses for defamations, stereotyping, and violence; to defend their victims; to challenge and to rebut statements about other faith groups or individuals that embody religious stereotyping, prejudice and bigotry...

The *Loving our Interfaith Neighbors* study-action resource for Wisconsin congregations is written with these goals in mind. But our first step on the journey is to actually get to know those of other faith traditions, which is what this new resource will help us do across the state.

Loving our Interfaith Neighbors will be available in final draft form on the Council's website later this fall. Watch for details on our homepage at www.wichurches.org/! We are currently raising funds to print and mail it to every WCC member congregation in the state.

On Behalf of Our Children:

Wisconsin's Racial Disparities and the Call of the Gospel A Study-Action Guide for Wisconsin Congregations



Wisconsin ranks last among the states in the well-being of African American children, according to a nationwide study conducted by Annie E. Casey Foundation. Asians and Hispanic children also ranked lower than Caucasians in Wisconsin.

What's driving these dismal statistics? And how can congregations play a constructive role in addressing these disparities at the local level?

On Behalf of Our Children, a four-session study guide produced by the Wisconsin Council of Churches, is a good place to start. The study guide leads you and other adults in your congregation through a thoughtful discussion about race and white privilege, the data from the Casey Foundation study, and concludes with some action planning for you and your congregation to plot your next steps.

On Behalf of our Children is designed to be used in an adult education class, as a mid-week resource (such as a Lenten series) or a half-day retreat.

This new resource was mailed to every WCC member congregation in the state in mid-August. A PDF version, handouts and more resources are available on the Council's website at www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/on-behalf-of-our-children-wisconsins-racial-disparities-and-the-call-of-the-gospel/

Faithful Citizenship

Campaign Calls on Wisconsin to Commit to Cutting Child Poverty in Half



Two years of dialogue across the state among religious leaders, congregants, and policy experts have led to a consensus that poverty in Wisconsin is a moral crisis that demands action.

Since 2014, Wisconsin Council of Churches, WISDOM, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, and the Citizen Action Education Fund have sponsored a series of “Faithful Citizenship” conversations on poverty. Out of these have emerged a policy paper and a theological statement affirming a bold,

but attainable, goal:

The faith community believes that the people of Wisconsin need to set a goal of cutting childhood poverty in half in the next ten years. To guarantee greater equity, we also need to cut racial disparities in childhood poverty in half. These goals need to be accompanied by a commitment to evidence-based evaluation of progress.

The focus on child poverty is due to the fact that children are the poorest segment of society. Racial disparities in poverty are bigger in Wisconsin than in the US as a whole, so any efforts to reduce childhood poverty overall need to reduce those as well. The negative consequences of childhood poverty and racial disparities on a child’s health, development, and life prospects can persist into adulthood and future generations, affecting the vitality and productivity of the whole community.

Faithful Citizenship’s theological statement grounds the campaign and its goal in the teachings of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith communities that all human beings are created in the image of God, for life in community, and that God’s abundant gifts are to be shared. When we fail to love our neighbors, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, God calls us to repentance and draws us forward with the vision of a world of justice, dignity, and well-being for all.

At the same time, the statement recognizes that many different faiths and philosophies share the goal of reducing poverty, and invites all people of goodwill to join in a broad public dialogue about the concrete ways to achieve the campaign’s goal of cutting childhood poverty in half. The purpose of the statement is to affirm the commitment of these faith communities to begin the conversation in their own congregations and to inspire policymakers and other stakeholders to commit to the same goal.

Too often, anti-poverty policy choices are driven by ideological preferences. Instead, policies must be evaluated by whether they result in measurable progress toward the goal. We need to find common ground, adopt evidence-based solutions, and hold ourselves accountable for concrete outcomes.

Working to cut child poverty in half is a shared responsibility. Charitable individuals and organizations, business, government, and faith-based organizations must each do their part. Moreover, this work must be done in partnerships between those experiencing racial disparities and those living with greater abundance and privilege if it is to succeed.

We invite you to join this conversation and campaign. The Council offers resources, including one- and two-session discussion guides (with a PDF slideshow) for the theology statement and policy paper. Engage your congregation in exploring the issues of poverty and racial disparities, and how your faith community can help create a brighter future for all our children! Resources available here:

www.wichurches.org/resources/combating-poverty/

Building Momentum

For a Cleaner, Safer, Fairer Energy Future



Across Wisconsin, a groundswell is under way that could mean a brighter future for our state – if we have public policies in place that will keep it growing and moving forward.

Communities, businesses, farms, schools, electric utilities and even churches are turning to renewable energy and energy efficiency for many different reasons, from improving their economic bottom line to safeguarding our children's future.

But what it all adds up to is a movement toward more responsible stewardship of our energy resources for the sake of God's creation – including the most vulnerable among us, as well as the myriad creatures who share these lands and waters. Some examples:

- Near River Falls, the St. Croix Valley Habitat for Humanity Eco-Village Project provides low- to moderate-income housing that reduces residents' long-term utility costs with solar hot water and photovoltaic panels as well as highly energy efficient construction.
- Gunderson Health System of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, has implemented energy efficiency, renewable energy, and recycling practices that not only reduce costs, but also keep toxins like mercury and particulate matter out of the air – and out of their patient's bodies.
- Faith communities, too, are providing impressive models of creation care. The Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross in Green Bay installed a 112 Kilowatt array that provides around of the third of the electricity used by the convent.

Local congregations of many denominations in Wisconsin now get some of their power from solar or geothermal sources, have installed energy-saving equipment, or practice energy conservation. By reducing their reliance on energy from fossil fuels, they save money for mission and ministry, while sustaining the health of people and the planet.

But Wisconsin, once a leader in far-sighted energy policy, is falling behind. We get around two thirds of our energy from burning coal, which not only pollutes the air and water but has to be imported from other states at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars a year. Yet of the 29 states that set a target for how much of their energy must come from renewable sources, Wisconsin's is the lowest, and neighboring states are doing a much better job of attracting clean energy jobs and investments.

We have a proud tradition of cherishing the quality of life that comes with protecting the gifts of clean water, air, and a fruitful and beautiful landscape. In addition, we have great research, development, and manufacturing capacities and a deep pool of scientific, engineering, and entrepreneurial talent. With these endowments we can again play a vital role in building a clean energy economy.

As people of faith, we have a role to play not only in improving our energy stewardship in our homes, our congregations, and our businesses. We can also be advocates for a clean energy future with policymakers to get Wisconsin moving forward again. In the coming months, the WCC will provide opportunities for you to do just that. Watch for action alerts, E-News items, and visit our Care for Creation page at www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/care-for-creation/.

Faithful Voters

Resources for the 2016 General Election



As people of faith, we are called to exercise responsible citizenship for the well-being of our communities and the good of our neighbors. Part of that responsibility is being alert, informed and thoughtful voters in local, state and national elections.

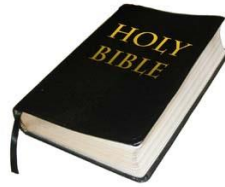
The Wisconsin Council of Churches' Voter Resources page at www.wichurches.org/resources/voter-resource/ will help you do just that – with a congregational voter education guide and election year bulletin inserts you can download and print. Also included are links to information on elections, voting requirements, campaign and candidate information, guidelines on allowable election year activities for churches, and resources on connecting faith and public issues.

During this contentious campaign season, the WCC's Season of Civility initiative, which was launched just after the 2011 protests at the State Capitol, offers a series of resources to bring people of differing political persuasions together in your congregation for constructive and civil dialogue. If this is a need in your congregation, check out the Season of Civility webpage at www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/season-of-civility/

We hope you will use these resources to help you and members of your congregation be faithful voters on November 8!

Lectionary Texts

Fall, 2016 Reflections on the Lectionary Texts



The WCC's Peace and Justice Commission has produced a series of brief reflections on the fall lectionary texts with the theme "Making the Kingdom of God Visible: Healing, Restoration and Hope" that will be useful for pastors in sermon preparation and others who are leading lectionary-based Bible Study. You can download a copy of this resource at:

www.wichurches.org/home_page_news/reflections-on-the-fall-lectionary-texts-now-available/

Saying Farewell

WCC's Finance and Fund Development Coordinator Rich Fluechtling



After 13 years of service to the Wisconsin Council of Churches, Rich Fluechtling is retiring as the Council's Finance and Fund Development Manager. A farewell lunch is scheduled for Tuesday, October 4 from 12 noon – 1:30 pm at the United Methodist Center in Sun Prairie, where the WCC offices are located. If you would like to attend, contact Lori Denoyer for more details at wcoc@wichurches.org. Thank you, Rich for your good and faithful service!

Healthy Boundaries

Workshops for Pastors and other Religious Leaders

Healthy Boundaries 101 Workshop for Pastors and other Religious Leaders

For first call pastors, those who are new to Wisconsin and anyone interested in a review of the basics.

Wednesday, October 26—Sun Prairie

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

United Methodist Conference Center, 750 Windsor St, Sun Prairie

Facilitator Rev. Scott Anderson will utilize video presentations, case studies and small group interaction to develop healthy boundaries for clergy and other religious leaders in a congregational setting. Borrowed wisdom blended with humor is used as a tool to help us build stronger ministries with appropriate boundaries.

Topics include: boundary basics: the nature of power, friendships and dual relationships, touch, transference and intimacy, mandatory reporting in Wisconsin, and self-care.

More information and a brochure with a registration form on our web page at:

www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/healthy-boundaries-101/

Healthy Boundaries 201 Workshop for Pastors and other Religious Leaders

For those who have had previous Boundary Training

Wednesday, October 12 - Madison

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Midvale Community Lutheran Church, 4329 Tokay Blvd, Madison

Thursday, October 13 - Spring Green

9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Christ Lutheran Church, 237 E. Daley St, Spring Green

Facilitator Rev. Scott Anderson will utilize case studies and small group interaction to develop healthy boundaries for clergy and other religious leaders in a congregational setting. Borrowed wisdom blended with humor is used as a tool to help us build stronger ministries with appropriate boundaries.

Topics include: The nature of power, building and maintaining healthy boundaries, self care, social media, grace in separation and introduction, and mandatory reporting.

More information and a brochure with a registration form on our web page at:

www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/healthy-boundaries-201/

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Churches, LaCrosse Area Synod ELCA, NW Synod ELCA, Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ, John Knox Presbytery, Wisconsin Annual Conference United Methodist Church, and the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin.

Mark Your Calendar!

Upcoming Events:



WCC Annual Meeting December 6, 2016 @ United Presbyterian Church, Wisconsin Dells. Keynote speaker is Dr. Rebecca Blank, Chancellor of UW Madison and active lay leader in the United Church of Christ. The theme is *Faithful Leadership in Challenging Times*. More information and registration materials at www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/2016-annual-meeting/



Winter Forum March 3-4, 2017 @ First United Methodist Church, Sun Prairie. Keynote speaker is Dr. Drew G.I. Hart speaking on the theme: *Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism*. Early bird registration (before Feb. 12, 2017) is \$150. More information and registration online at www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/2017-winter-forum



People of Faith United for Justice Advocacy Day April 4, 2017 @ First United Methodist Church, Madison. This annual gathering brings hundreds of grassroots leaders from the interfaith community around the state together at the Capitol to witness to our faith in the public square. More information is available at www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/2017-advocacy-day/ Registration opens early in 2017.



Washington Island Forum June 26-30, 2017. Presenter is Dr. John Dominic Crossan, world renowned Biblical scholar. Cost - \$299. More information and online registration are available at www.wichurches.org/calendar/event-list/2017-washington-island-forum/

Support the WCC

Ministry as your voice in society

Ways to support current programs:

- Monthly electronic giving – download the form at: http://wichurches.org/sitecontent/pdf_files/_programs/WCC.EFT.Authorization.pdf
- Gift of cash by check or by donation on our website www.wichurches.org
- Gift of stock, bonds or other investments or property

Financial options for support long in to the future:

- Bequest from your estate
- Name WCC as beneficiary of an insurance policy
- Name WCC as beneficiary of your retirement account (401k or similar)
- Gifts with current income for you – Life-income gifts, Charitable Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts (your denomination's development office and/or your tax/legal advisor can assist)

For information on any of the above, please contact us by e-mail to wcoc@wichurches.org or by phone at 608-837-3108.