

# EcuNews

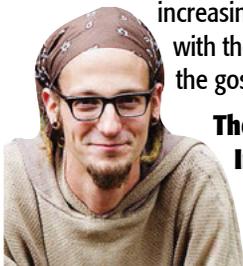
Volume 22  
January, 2015



## Another Way of Doing Life

**2015 Winter Forum  
with Shane Claiborne  
February 27-28, 2015 in the  
Wisconsin Dells**

Christians are meant to be radical non-conformists, interrupting the patterns of our world with prophetic imagination—a holy counterculture. Join the Wisconsin Council of Churches and Winter Forum Presenter Shane Claiborne for a weekend of exploration around what it means to be both disciples and church in a culture that seems increasingly at odds with the heart of the gospel:



**The  
Irresistible  
Revolution**  
– Using

biographical stories to animate biblical truth, Shane will invite us to join God's revolution where we are.

**Christian Troublemakers** – The Kingdom of God is not just something we hope for when we die, but something we are to bring on earth as it is in heaven, creating "holy mischief." Shane will share stories of contemporary communities who are living with beautiful creativity and sometimes getting into a little trouble for it.

**The Economics of Rebirth** – Does God's economy look like Wall Street? Can the world afford the American dream? Or does God have another dream in mind? Shane will help us re-imagine the biblical vision of Jubilee and to internalize the responsibility that

*-Continued on page 2*

## Washington Island Forum

**Re-Appropriating the Word with John Bell  
June 22-26, 2015**

There is a fascination, particularly among protestant denominations, to discover 'what the Bible really means'. It is, perhaps, the legacy of the exaltation of the intellect in the post reformation churches. However, what this attitude can do is diminish scripture to a series of propositions and thus undervalue its intentionally diverse and polyvalent character. In this series of talks, John Bell will draw on his experience of opening the Bible in seminaries and areas of social deprivation where a 'right answers' mentality has been

discarded in favor of a more holistic appreciation of the Word of God:



### **THE CURSE OF LITERACY**

It is hard to believe, but the truth is that most Christians in every age have either been unable to read scripture or have not had access to a Bible. Yet these very people can have a scriptural literacy which puts the intelligentsia to shame.

*-Continued on page 5*



## People of Faith United for Justice

**2015 Advocacy Day at the Capitol  
Wednesday, April 29 in Madison**

Join over 1,000 people of faith united for justice for a day-long gathering to learn, discuss, pray and advocate together for social justice issues of importance to all the people of Wisconsin. As a new legislature starts work on the next state budget, our representatives need to hear our values, priorities, and concerns. Together, we can ensure that our



*-Continued on page 3*

## Poverty Summits Focus on Fall Elections



Last year the WCC, along with WISDOM, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and Citizen Action of Wisconsin

hosted regional poverty summits in Madison, Milwaukee, Appleton, Eau Claire and Stevens Point before the November elections. Our goal was to mobilize faith community leaders to give voice to our commitment to end poverty and to address its root causes. Over 750 attended these half

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750 Windsor St. Suite 301  
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# Public Policy Outlook 2015: Democracy Means Paying Attention

Dr. Peter Bakken, WCC Public Policy Coordinator



As the dust settles from the fall elections and as Congress and the State Legislature prepare to get to work in the 2015-16 legislative session, it is also time for us, as people of faith in Wisconsin, to look ahead.

One remarkable fact is that 93 out of the 133 members of the State Senate and Assembly have been in the legislature for four years or less, including the 26 new members elected in November. This makes it all the more important that they learn about the needs and concerns of their constituents by hearing from them directly – and that includes you!

Until the legislative session gets underway, we can't be sure what issues and proposals will rise to the top, but there are indications. The State Assembly, in particular, has mapped out an ambitious its "Forward Agenda"

for the state. It aspires to a number of worthy-sounding goals: "Building a Stronger Economy," "Growing Tomorrow's Workforce," "Improving the Quality of Life," "[Providing a] Pathway to the American Dream," and "Preparing for the Future."

But when it comes to public policy, the devil (and, we hope, God!) is in the details. Will attempts to eliminate fraud and waste come at the cost of depriving our neighbors of the help they need to get by? Will efforts to "streamline" regulations and boost economic growth come at the expense of protecting our land, air and water? In the end, what will we gain, and what will we lose? Who will benefit, and who will pay? As it has been said: *Democracy means paying attention.*

One issue we will be watching in Congress is reauthorization of

the Child Nutrition Act. Every five years, reauthorization provides an opportunity to improve and strengthen the federal school meal and child nutrition programs. These programs are needed so that empty stomachs don't compete for students' attention in the classroom, and so that poor nutrition doesn't hamper children's educational and emotional development. For many struggling families, school meals are essential to helping them get enough food for healthy, active, and productive lives.

No matter which party is in power in Wisconsin or nationally, we – as citizens and constituents – have an important responsibility. We have a vital role in making sure that the laws and regulations we adopt -- through our elected and appointed officials – truly serve the values of justice for all, the well-being of our communities, and the care of creation.

It is all too easy to feel that our voices or our votes don't count. But to act on that feeling is to make it a self-fulfilling prophecy. As people of faith, we know the limits of our power, but we also know we have an inescapable responsibility to use what power we have in service to God and to our neighbor. And we also know that God's grace is working in, around, through, and for us -- even when we don't know where or how.

## Winter Forum

...Continued from Page 1

comes with being "born again" in such a dysfunctional human family.

**Resurrecting Church** – With ancient stories of the early Christians and contemporary stories of ordinary radicals, Shane will invite us to re-imagine what it means to be the body of Christ. Let's stop complaining about the church we see and become the church we dream of.

Shane Claiborne graduated from Eastern University and did graduate work at Princeton Seminary. In 2010, he received an Honorary Doctorate from Eastern. His adventures have taken him from the streets of Calcutta where he worked with Mother Teresa to the wealthy suburbs of Chicago where he served at the influential mega-church Willow Creek. As a peacemaker, his journeys have taken him to some of the most troubled regions of the world – from Rwanda to the West Bank – and he's been on peace delegations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Shane writes and travels extensively speaking about peacemaking, social justice, and Jesus. Shane's books include *Jesus for President*, *Red Letter Revolution*, *Common Prayer*, *Follow Me to Freedom*, *Jesus*, *Bombs and Ice Cream*, *Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers* – and his classic *The Irresistible Revolution*. His books are translated into more than a dozen languages. Shane speaks over 100 times a year, nationally and internationally.

**Registration:** Early bird registration \$150. After February 6: \$175. On-line registration at [www.wichurches.org/events](http://www.wichurches.org/events)

**Housing:** The Wisconsin Dells offers a wide range of hotel and water park options. A block of rooms have been reserved at the Hilton Garden Inn at a rate of \$99. Please ask for the WCOC block. The hotel phone number is 608-253-1100. For more information, consult the Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau web site: [www.wisdells.com](http://www.wisdells.com)

***Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly . . . . (Isaiah 58:6-8)***

## WCC Ministry Working with Your Support

The Ministry of WCC includes many opportunities for participation and efforts working for a more just society. Please join by attending events, speaking out on justice issues and giving your financial support.

**Friends of the Council:** Be among many individuals who believe in WCC's ministry by a gift of cash – either by check or by donation on our website [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org). Other options for current support is by gift of tangible assets such as stock, bonds or other investments. Or volunteer your time for service on one of our committees or programs. And share this newsletter with friends and colleagues.

**Local Congregations:** Join others who send event participants and encourage engaging in advocacy work and send dollars. Consider making a visible commitment by adding a line item in your budget.

**Planning for the Future:** Making decisions about gifts in the future takes time and thought. Options for deferred gifts include a bequest from your estate or to name the WCC as beneficiary of an insurance policy or retirement account. More sophisticated options are gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts which can provide for a charitable tax deduction now while retaining current income. Please consult with your tax and/or legal advisors about the specifics of how this might apply to you.



For information on automatic electronic funds transfer giving or transferring assets or deferred gifts, please contact our Finance and Development Manager Rich Fluechtling, by e-mail to [rfluechtling@wichurches.org](mailto:rfluechtling@wichurches.org) or by phone at 608-837-3108.

## WCC Welcomes Coptic Orthodox Church as New Member

Delegates at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the WCC on December 8<sup>th</sup> voted



unanimously to welcome the Coptic Orthodox Church as its 18<sup>th</sup> denominational member. The Coptic Church, with roots in Egypt, traces its history to some of the earliest Christian communities. Two Coptic congregations are in Wisconsin, located in Sun Prairie and Oak Creek.



## Advocacy Day

...Continued from Page 1

commitment to compassion and justice is reflected in that budget.

### Keynote Speaker: Hannah Rosenthal

CEO and President of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, has spent her career as a change agent and successfully advocating for Jewish causes. Prior to her appointment with the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Hannah served as Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism at the US State Department. She has also served in the Executive Director role for the Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW), the Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), and the Wisconsin Women's Council



### Keynote Respondent Rev. Everett Mitchell

His life focus has been examining the relationship of the church to social issues, such as poverty, war, incarceration and immigration. His favorite quote, "Do not follow the path that has been given, instead go to where there is no path and leave a trail" exemplifies his community leadership and passion for social justice.



**Co-Sponsors:** Wisconsin Council of Churches, WISDOM, Faith Voices For Justice, Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, Lutheran Office for Public Policy, Madison Area Urban Ministry, Milwaukee & Madison Jewish Federations, and the Wisconsin Jewish Conference.

**Registration**, including lunch and a participant packet: \$25 Registration opens January 15. Go to [www.wichurches/events](http://www.wichurches/events) and register on-line or download a brochure.

# *Thanks to the following who gave financial support to the ministry and mission of the Wisconsin Council of Churches.*

(December 1, 2013 through November 30, 2014)

## **MEMBER DENOMINATIONS**

African Methodist Episcopal Church  
American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin  
Church of the Brethren  
Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac  
Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee  
Episcopal Diocese of Eau Claire  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
East Central Synod  
Greater Milwaukee Synod  
LaCrosse Area Synod  
Northern Great Lakes Synod  
Northwest Synod  
South Central Synod  
Mennonite Church USA  
Moravian Church Western District  
John Knox Presbytery  
Presbytery of Milwaukee  
Presbytery of Northern Waters  
Winnebago Presbytery  
Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ  
Wisconsin Annual Conference –  
United Methodist Church

## **CONGREGATIONS**

Advent Lutheran Church ELCA- Madison  
Ascension Lutheran Church- Minocqua  
First Congregational Church UCC- Madison  
First Congregational Church of Ripon-UCC  
Immanuel Presbyterian Church- Milwaukee  
Lake Edge Lutheran Church ELCA- Madison  
St Dunstan's Episcopal Church- Madison  
St Johns Lutheran Church-Madison  
St Luke's Episcopal Church-Sister Bay  
Zion Lutheran Church ELCA- Madison

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Scott Anderson  
Betty Baer  
David Baker  
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Walter Bauldrick, Sr  
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*We pray and work together for the unity and renewal of the church and healing and reconciliation of the world.*

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#### **WCC OBSERVER MEMBERS AND OTHERS**

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee  
Roman Catholic Diocese of Green Bay  
Benedictine Women of Madison  
Servants of Mary - LaCrosse

## Washington Island Forum

...Continued from Page 1

### **RETELL ME THE OLD, OLD STORY**

In terms of worship, familiarity may not necessarily breed contempt, but some of the texts which are most commonly read and expounded may owe, in their interpretation, so much to the cultural norms of a previous era that they fail to excite, incite or bless.

### **MISSING WOMEN**

Finding a monogamous Jewish patriarch requires almost as much though as finding a virtuous woman in the Hebrew Scriptures. Is there a reason for these irregularities, and – if so – can things be redeemed?

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE IMAGINATION**

For reasons which shall be explored, the imagination is sometimes seen as the bogus gift of the Holy Spirit. Yet without it, our lives, our culture and our understanding of scripture will most certainly be diminished.

### **WHAT SHALL WE TELL THE CHILDREN?**

Must it always be Moses in the bulrushes, Daniel in the Lion's Den and the Baby Jesus asleep in the hay, or are there more pertinent scriptures to which the attention of young people might be directed?

**Presenter:** John Bell has a global reputation as a musician and liturgist, representing the Celtic Christian tradition of the Iona Community in Scotland. He has produced over 15 collections of songs and octavos, and a wide range of liturgical materials, particularly for use by lay people, and he oversaw the production of a substantial hymnal for the Church of Scotland which, in North America, goes by the title *Hymns of Glory, Songs of Praise*. (Canterbury Press). John travels extensively in Europe and North America.

**Forum Setting:** The Forum is a 40 year tradition and is sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Churches and *The Christian Century* magazine. Enjoy four and one half days of worship, workshops, discussion, and contemplation in an ecumenical retreat setting on Washington Island, just north of Door County Wisconsin.

Lodging, meals and recreational opportunities are offered by numerous Island establishments. See the Washington Island Chamber of Commerce website for information on Island lodging, restaurants and services [www.washingtonislandchamber.com](http://www.washingtonislandchamber.com).

**Registration:** Online registration is now open at [www.wichurches.org/events](http://www.wichurches.org/events).

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## Poverty Summits

...Continued from Page 1

day events, and over 1,000 people signed the interfaith statement "Faithful Citizenship: A Response to the Scandal of Poverty in Wisconsin" which was given to candidates running for state and federal offices. Look for details about anti-poverty events in 2015 in the WCC's *E-News*.



Rev. Scott D. Anderson

# Executive Director's Corner

## Loving Our Neighbors: The Why and How of Interfaith Relationships

On the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Wisconsin Council of Churches and the Islamic Center of Milwaukee co-hosted a day of dialogue with over 250 Christians and Muslims, an opportunity to get acquainted and to practice that seminal commandment from Jesus: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Our day of dialogue and relationship-building with the Muslim community in Milwaukee created energy for more such opportunities. Over the last few years the WCC's Unity and Relationships Commission has taken the first few steps on this important

journey, looking deeply at the theological underpinnings of our relationships with interfaith neighbors and the practical ways to create and sustain such relationships.

The result is a new policy statement on interfaith relations from the Wisconsin Council of Churches entitled *Loving our Neighbors*, rooted in the Great Commandment, which was enthusiastically adopted by the WCC Board of Directors last fall and shared with delegates to our Annual Meeting in early December.

From my perspective, two important insights arise from *Loving our Neighbors*. The first

is that we enter into such relationships not out of a sense of coercion or proselytizing; we enter into conversation with a deep respect and appreciation of the other, witnessing to the truth we have come to know in Jesus Christ, yet also open and humble enough to hear, respect and be informed by the truth of another faith.



Through the years I have been blessed by a number of individual friendships with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Pagans and others. All of these relationships and the give and take that happens in conversation have led me into deeper exploration of my own faith and helped me, I pray, to be a better Christian.

*Loving our Neighbors* also calls upon all of us in the Christian community not to shy away from our prophetic responsibility to work for justice

in the face of religious bigotry, stereotyping, defamations, and violence. In a world filled with too much ignorance about other faiths and far too much intolerance, I can't think of a more important mission in pursuing the common good.

You can download your own copy of *Loving Our Neighbors* on our homepage at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org). Over the next year the WCC's Unity and Relationships Commission will be developing a study guide for the document and additional resources for congregational use.



## Community Investment Program



The Community Investment Program (CIP) offers an investment option for individuals and congregations of member denominations, as well as denominational bodies, to have funds working for a brighter future for Wisconsin's low income families and communities.

The Council offers a unique opportunity to local church members, congregations and its member denominations to place dollars in the CIP Fund. The Fund then invests in selected community

development institutions (CDFI's) throughout Wisconsin. The CDFI's help distressed communities, low and moderate income people and minority populations to develop housing, employment and business opportunities. A listing of where funds are placed is in the brochure along with their websites which show more about all the work they do.

Annual interest rates for the past three years have averaged 2.30% (past performance does not guarantee future results). Oversight and management of the Fund is taken care of by the Finance and Development Committee of the WCC.

For more information, look under Programs at [www.wichurches.org](http://www.wichurches.org) or contact our Finance and Development Manager Rich Fluechtling, by e-mail to [rfluechtling@wichurches.org](mailto:rfluechtling@wichurches.org) or by phone at 608-837-3108.