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Advocacy Day Delegation Meets with Governor Doyle

by Arlo R. Reichter



Top photo: Governor Jim Doyle
Above foreground: Rev. Blake Rohrer and Dr. Peter Bakken

On Tuesday, March 10, the Wisconsin Council of Churches joined with four partner organizations to bring nearly 300 people from across the state to the State Capitol for "People of Faith United for Justice." The other sponsors of the advocacy event were the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee, the Lutheran Office for Public Policy-Wisconsin, Madison-area Urban Ministry, and WISDOM.

Participants in the day-long gathering learned, discussed, and prayed together, and met with their legislators and staff to advocate for social justice issues of importance

to all the people of Wisconsin.

Ten persons representing each of the Advocacy Day sponsoring organizations met on Tuesday afternoon with Governor Doyle to focus on two issues of common concern.

The issues addressed were: **Treatment Instead of Prison** presented by Loyd Hubbard, co-chair of WISDOM from MICAH of Milwaukee, and Linda Ketcham, Director of Madison-area Urban Ministries; and **Children's Breakfast/Lunch Funding** presented by Blake Rohrer, Assistant to the Bishop for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—South Central Synod.

Additional participants were: Nancy Holmlund—WISDOM President from Racine Interfaith Coalition, Maynard Beemer—President of Esther (WISDOM Fox Valley), Amy Johnson—Director of the Lutheran Office for Public Policy, Judi Longdon—Interim Director of Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee and Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Jamie Washam—Underwood Baptist/Wauwatosa, Barbara McKinney—SS Morris African Methodist Episcopal Church and Madison Urban Ministry, Peter Bakken—Wisconsin Council of Churches and Arlo Reichter—Executive Minister of the American Baptist

Churches of Wisconsin.

On the issue of **Treatment Instead of Prison**, the delegation expressed support to the Governor for his leadership in seeking early, earned release to a target group of low-risk inmates, and advocated for investment of resources into treatment alternatives that meet high standards. On the issue of **Children's Breakfast/Lunch Funding**, the delegation thanked the Governor for helping Wisconsin move from the last position nationally of funding for school breakfasts/lunches to 43rd, and expressed regret that the new budget calls for a 1% decrease in funding, but appreciation that funding was not eliminated or cut more substantially. The Governor's sentiments were similar to what was expressed by the group.

The delegation presented the Governor copies of each of the policy papers being considered at the Advocacy Day and explained that nearly 300 persons were visiting their representatives and senators as the delegation was visiting with him. He was very impressed and pleased to hear of this effort. When the delegation presented the policy papers, he noted the paper on Immigration and asked for support and input as he seeks to move this issue forward in the months ahead.

Toward the end of the visit with the Governor, Peter Bakken voiced a request for the group that a similar gathering might be held annually where the coalition of faith groups might have a



Dr. Michael Kinnamon

Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, addressed the March 10th gathering saying, "We are people of faith, people who act on behalf of the common good, not because it is necessarily in our self-interest but because it is the calling we have heard from the One whose gracious love is the foundation of our lives."

conversation with him on some key issues. The Governor graciously affirmed the idea and asked Larry J. Martin, External Relations Director for the Governor, to note that this should become an annual event. ●



Arlo R. Reichter, an American Baptist minister, has served as the Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Wisconsin since

March 2001. He has served actively with the Wisconsin Council of Churches and the Interfaith Conference of Greater Milwaukee.



The delegation meeting with Governor Doyle



Dialogue with the Governor



Scott D. Anderson

Executive Director's Corner

Cynics Beware: People of Faith DO Make a Difference

Advocacy work in the religious community often can be frustrating. At times we work on issues that do not find broad support within the political mainstream. We represent the concerns of lower income citizens at the edges of society who are often voiceless and powerless in the legislative process. As a result, "success" with our public witness is often elusive.

Not so during the first few months of 2009:

Executive Order Banning Torture

The culmination of two years of work on the part of the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (www.nrcat.org) and many other groups led President Obama to sign an Executive Order his first week in office banning the use of torture by U.S. military and intelligence

agencies. This stunning reversal in US policy was due to a groundswell of grassroots support led by the religious community.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches played a vital role in this effort by providing educational resources to congregations, holding community forums around the state, and convening an interfaith delegation to meet with Senator Russ Feingold's senior staff in Madison and Washington DC to advocate for change.

Stimulus Package Helps Lower Wage Americans

The bill signed by the President in February includes significant increases in federal support for a variety of critical safety net programs affecting low income families and those who are unemployed, including expansion of Food Stamps, unemployment insurance, a variety of tax credits for low wage earners, and an increase in support for the disabled. States will also receive billions in support for Medicaid. While the WCC did not take a position on middle class tax cuts or infrastructure spending, the religious community led the way in securing federal support for the nation's safety net and we are generally pleased with the outcome.

There's more work to do in the coming months

With a multi-billion dollar budget deficit, a state unemployment rate surpassing 8%, declining revenues and increasing demand for services, our attention now turns to the Wisconsin state legislature as it seeks to craft a solution to the state's budget crisis that is both just and serves the common good.

Our staff will be calling upon you again in the coming months to offer a public witness to our religious faith. I hope and pray you will join us in this worthy effort. ●

"But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers...." (James 1:22)

by WCC's Public Policy Coordinator Peter Bakken

In the newspaper, on television, radio and the internet, we hear the facts again and again: unemployment is up, life savings are devastated, the state budget deficit is growing, and it's getting harder for many people to feed themselves and their families.

Demand at food pantries in Dane County is up 20% for example, and similar increases in the need for food assistance are seen throughout the state. We know that times are tough, and that empty wallets mean empty stomachs.

But it's one thing to know about hunger in Wisconsin; it's another thing to do something about it.

That's why the Wisconsin Council of Churches' resource for congregations, *Hunger on our Doorstep* is called a study-action guide.

After three sessions studying the extent, causes, and solutions to hunger, and one for studying the local situation, the guide includes a final session for participants to brainstorm ideas for what they themselves can do to respond to hunger in their own community.

Below is a story about some people who used the guide to learn about hunger in their community – and took action. If you would like to follow their example, you can download a copy of the *Hunger on Our Doorstep* from the WCC website at www.wichurches.org, or order it by calling us at (608) 837-3108.

Friends share food to help students

by Megan VerHelst - abbreviated from an article published in the Jackson County Chronicle - Wednesday, November 05, 2008

Although 42 percent of kids who attend school in the Black River Falls School District qualify for free or reduced lunch, a local group is making it their mission to keep food on these kids' tables.

The Friends Sharing Food committee currently delivers bags of foods to four different county schools and the Boys & Girls Club each Friday and is hoping to expand to five schools in the near future.

Committee member Sue Lindahl said, "Sometimes kids can get the short end, but this goes directly into the hands of these kids."

Friends Sharing Food was started in spring 2007 following a Lenten study that focused on "Hunger on our Doorstep," said Carol Anderson, a founding member of the committee. The study was published by the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Anderson then attended a session in Sparta that focused on the biblical aspect of helping the needy and hunger in Jackson County.

"The curriculum challenged us to do something and we brainstormed a lot about what could be done," said Anderson, of Black River Falls.

Friends Sharing Food was formed after those involved realized the need at Jackson County schools due to the percentage of kids on free and reduced lunch. A number of people on the committee are former teachers, Anderson said.

The committee is a non-profit organization that meets monthly and while it does not hold food drives, it does solicit private monetary donations from both businesses and individuals. Members then take the money received

by donation and purchase food at much lower prices through Feed My People in Eau Claire. The committee allocates approximately \$100 per week on food. Storage space for the food is donated.

"Our money just goes so much further that way," Anderson said.

Food is then separated into 36 bags and split between four different schools in the area.

To donate or for more information about Friends Sharing Food, contact Anderson at (715) 284-2456 or Lindahl at (715) 284-5156. ●



Don't Miss These WCC Events in 2009

The Art of Parables

Experience of the parables of Jesus as never before!

April 20-22, 9:00 am – 3:15 pm

Apr. 20 - Emanuel Church, Hales Corners (United Church of Christ), 10627 West Forest Home Avenue, Hales Corners (Milwaukee area)
Apr. 21 - First Presbyterian Church, 406 Grant St., Wausau
Apr. 22 - Bethel Lutheran Church, 312 Wisconsin Ave, Madison



Dr. Charles McCollough

Charles McCollough, Ph.D. (Drew University), served as a local church pastor, national director for adult education for the United Church of Christ, national UCC advocate for the environment, peace, native people, and social justice. McCollough also studied sculpture at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Johnson Atelier, Princeton Art Association, and Mercer College. He has served as resident artist at three seminaries, all of which have his works on permanent display. Charles is author of seven books, including *The Art of Parables* (2008).

Note that on April 18, 2009, McCollough will be the presenter for The Wisconsin Conference UCC Committee for the Arts Spring Workshop at First Congregational UCC, 120 Kuckkan Lane, Watertown (920) 261-6213. ●

REGISTRATION

The Art of Parables

April 20 - Hales Corners April 21 - Wausau April 22 - Madison

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Denomination: _____ (optional)

Registration fee is \$55 by April 13, \$65 after April 13. Fee includes lunch.

Call (608) 837-3108 for student discount.

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 under "Events"

Embracing Aging in the Church

A Conference with Susan and John McFadden

May 29-30

Conference begins at 6:30 pm on Friday and ends at 11:45 on Saturday
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 2330 E. Calumet Street, Appleton, WI



John and Susan McFadden

Susan and John will help clergy and lay leaders understand the demographics of aging, social attitudes toward aging, importance of religion and spirituality to older adults, late life spiritual pain, and the challenges of dementia, bereavement and loneliness. They will equip church leaders for effective ministry with older adults and offer

resources for meaningful worship.

Dr. Susan McFadden is Professor of Psychology, University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh, with a specialization in gerontology (the study of the social, psychological and biological aspects of aging). Susan is author/editor of a number of books, including *Aging, Spirituality, and Religion: A Handbook* (Fortress).

Rev. John McFadden is Workplace Chaplain for Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin. He is an author and former senior pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ, Appleton.

Together Susan and John are writing a book called *Aging Together: Community, Friendship & Dementia* (Johns Hopkins University Press). ●

REGISTRATION

Embracing Aging in the Church

May 29-30, 2009, Appleton, WI

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Denomination: _____ (optional)

\$60 full conference by May 21 \$70 full conference after May 21

\$35 one-day registration. Check one: I will attend Friday Saturday

Call (608) 837-3108 for student discount.

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 under "Events"

Washington Island Forum

Encountering the Unsung Jesus

June 22-26, 2009

Don't miss this four and a half day experience of study, worship, community, and fun off the tip of Door County, Wis-consin designed for clergy, church musicians, and lay persons.

Presenters are the Rev. John Bell, a Church of Scotland minister, a member of the Iona Community, and author of the Church of Scotland's Church Hymnary (2005), and Dr. Marlene Kropf, Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, and the author of *Singing: A Mennonite Voice*.

Each day begins with Morning Prayer led by Rev. Brad Pohlman and Mr. Bruce Bengtson, of Luther Memorial Church, Madison, followed by

sessions with our guest presenters. Afternoon discussion groups are optional, as are other evening activities. Other Island attractions are nature walks, museums, crafts, marine activities, etc. The Island also has a number of restaurants, a grocery, general store, post office and coffee shop. A pedestrian ferry is available for tours of Rock Island.

Register online at www.wichurches.org (click "events"), or phone (608) 837-3108. Full registration fee is \$225 (by May 1, 2009) and \$250 after May 1, 2009. Full payment is due by June 1, 2009. A full refund is available if you cancel by notifying WCC by June 1, 2009. You must make separate lodging and meal arrangements (other than the opening picnic and

daily refreshments). Housing is available at Island motels, resorts, bed and breakfasts, and an Island campground. For a list of



Rev. John Bell



Dr. Marlene Kropf

accommodations, visit www.washingtonislandchamber.com. ●

REGISTRATION

2009 Washington Island Forum Encountering the Unsung Jesus June 22-26, 2009

\$225 by May 1, 2009; \$250 after May 1, 2009. Registration fee will be refunded if cancelled by June 1, 2009. Lodging and meals not included.

Name(s): _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ Denomination: _____ (optional)

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 under "Events"



Public Policy Update: Supporting Clean Energy and Protecting Creation

by Peter Bakken

Wisconsin and the U.S. have an unprecedented opportunity to transition to a job-creating clean, sustainable energy economy – while also protecting creation from the threat of global warming. Legislation is being drafted at both

the state and federal level to increase energy efficiency, develop Wisconsin's renewable energy resources, and reduce the amount of climate-changing carbon dioxide which our homes, churches, cars, and industries release into the atmosphere. The Wisconsin Council of Churches will be actively working to support legislation that is both just and effective. To learn more and become involved, visit the WCC's "Care for Creation" page at http://www.wichurches.org/commissions/care_for_creation.html. ●



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

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



Does your community typically host an ecumenical celebration during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity? Would you like to promote the event more broadly? Are you interested in hosting an event at another time of year? If so, please let us know. We are happy to assist with getting the word out about your event or to offer suggestions regarding prayer service formats. Contact kpennings@wichurches.org or call (608) 837-3108. ●

Mark Your Calendar for These WCCs-Sponsored Events!

The Courage to Lead retreat series, **Integration and Expression**, led by the Rev. Winton Boyd, Rev. Greg Eaton, and Ms. Barb Hummel, will be held at the Conference Center of University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, IL. Interested clergy and congregational leaders must attend all 5 retreats, which are designed to provide experiences of the "circles of trust" core principles and practices described in Parker Palmer's *A Hidden Wholeness*: Oct. 27-29, 2009; Feb. 2-4, 2010; May 25-27, 2010; July 13-15, 2010; Sept. 21-23, 2010. To be eligible for the series, one must have completed a full Courage retreat in the past or must complete one of the upcoming retreats: May 5-7, 2009, University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, IL; or July 28-30, 2009, ARC Retreat Center, Cambridge, MN. Contact Barb Hummel - bhummel@chorus.net, (608) 233-7400, or visit www.wichurches.org.

Ministering to the Ecumenical Family: Pastoral and Theological Considerations will be held Sept. 27-28, 2009, at Cardinal Stritch University, Kliebhan Center, and will feature keynote speakers Jason King, Jerry Folk, Ellen Wondra and Barbara Pappas. Interested clergy, students and lay leaders may register after May 1st at www.wichurches.org under "events," or call (608) 837-3108.



Rev. Everett Mitchell

The Prophetic Preacher will be held Oct. 9, 2009, 2-4 pm, at the Progressive Baptist Church, Milwaukee, and will feature keynote speaker Rev. Everett Mitchell. Clergy may register for this ecumenical workshop after May 1st at www.wichurches.org, or call (608) 837-3108.

WCC's annual Nonviolence Conference, Nov. 13-14, 2009 at Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells. Details to follow. ●

Support for WCC Now and the Future

Most people support the work of WCC financially by writing a check. Did you know that you can donate online at www.wichurches.org? You can also offer a gift of stock which may provide tax advantages for you. When making your personal financial plans, consider a gift to WCC in the form of a bequest, annuity, or as beneficiary of life insurance or retirement account. Work with your financial/tax advisor to develop a plan that works for you. Contact us for details for completing a stock gift or for any other information you may need (rfluechtling@wichurches.org, (608) 837-3108). ●



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