



INTERSECT

Massachusetts
Council of
Churches
Fall 2010

Words from Our President...

The Reverend Joel Matthew Anderle
East Coast Conference, Evangelical Covenant Church



Balance proves a daily challenge, doesn't it? We run afoul betwixt and between the mundane and emergent, family and work, rest and exercise, silence and speech. This edition of the Intersect may help.

In early August, Cornel West was interviewed on NPR's "Talk of the Nation." One of the many majestic thoughts he shared was on the subject of the public education and best practices. He speaks to the need for a good education system (at any level for any age) and the need to be "courageous" and that we must be "maladjusted to injustice and mediocrity." His words are marvelous and prophetic for those who would take the Gospel and the Kingdom seriously.

As we seek to balance our lives in faith, the urgency to be courageous abides with us. Whether it's the gambling issue in the Commonwealth — which so many find boring, distasteful, inevitable — or the issue of justice in housing, or the importance of thoughtful and principled stewardship of our material possessions, our call is to faithfulness which must be courageous. We cannot accept the mediocre alternative of lowest common denominator. We cannot accept the hopelessness of political expediency.

May we pray together, as our friend John Stendahl has prayed in part for the Gulf of Mexico's environmental catastrophe, "In Jesus' name, hear our grief, forgive our folly, give us courage for action and sacrifice..."

And may your autumn prove faithful and balanced.



A candlelight gathering for the Gulf in Boston's Copley Square.

The Gulf Tragedy: A Call to Transformative Prayer

Ian Mevorach, Boston University Doctoral Candidate,
Massachusetts Council of Churches Intern

The phrase "God saw that it was good," repeated six times, is the refrain of the creation story in the first chapter of Genesis. Yet, it is not until God creates humanity in his own image that we hear that everything created is not just good, but *indeed very good*. The foundational story of the Bible, then, honors humanity as a uniquely important and valuable part of God's good creation. Ideally, according to Genesis 1, humanity crowns the goodness of creation — as stewards and caretakers of the rest of creation, we image the will of the life-giving Creator. However, when we consider the devastation that has recently taken place in the Gulf of Mexico — the direct result of human activity — the idea of humanity adding to the goodness and beauty of creation strikes us as rather counterintuitive.

In a June 1, 2010 article in the Christian Century, leading

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Gathered to pray for healing in the Gulf.

The Gulf Tragedy, from p. 1

environmental activist and author Bill McKibben, reflecting on the disaster in the Gulf — and the overarching problem of our unsustainable fossil fuel economy — puts it this way: “Here’s a profound theological way of thinking about all this. God spent six days making the earth, which God pronounced ‘good.’ On the seventh day God rested, and we took over and have spent the last few decades screwing it up.” What is so frustrating is that our nation has not yet owned this event as a sign that our exploitation of Earth’s resources is leading us, and the rest of God’s creatures, to ruin.

Our Lord Jesus once said, “Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.” (Matt 12:33, NRSV) Jesus does not plead with bad trees for them to bear less bad fruit. Jesus calls us to repentance in hope that we can be transformed by God — remade in the divine image — so that we positively bear good fruit as responsible stewards of God’s creation.

There are many ways that the Massachusetts Council of Churches seeks to answer God’s call to care for creation, and to involve churches in the work of environmental justice. We are engaging congregations in activism and starting conversations between Christian leaders and elected officials, we are partnering with secular environmental organizations, and are providing educational resources for congregations; but our most recent activity, in response to the overwhelming situation in the Gulf, has been to call Christians together to pray. The transformation we seek, if we would become caretakers of creation, begins with heartfelt prayer, which has power to restore the cast down soul to a living hope in God, to a positive outlook that can sustain us through trials and allow us to rejoice when we make progress in overcoming them.

On July 7th at Old South Church in Boston, we gathered over 100 Christians from diverse traditions to pray for the ongoing tragedy in the Gulf. Episcopal Suffragan Bishop Gayle Harris led us in a prayer of confession for our careless and destructive lifestyles, and the inflated pride that sustains them; The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal, Massachusetts Conference United Church of Christ, Minister and President, charged us to love future generations as we love ourselves by reducing our carbon pollution and becoming advocates for environmental protection and restoration; prayers were offered by representatives from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant traditions; we closed the evening with a candlelight vigil in front of the church, to symbolize the light of God that the body of Christ brings to the world. At the center of our prayers was the “Prayer for the Gulf of Mexico”. [A copy of the bulletin for the service, with a full list of participants and cosponsoring congregations, may be found at our website: www.masscouncilofchurches.org]

We live in a world governed by consistent and predictable natural laws, without which life would be nonsensical and meaningless; but there is also great mystery in the universe, and God has been known to intervene time and again in history to weigh the balance of the world order towards justice and right,

and the flourishing of all life. We must forge ahead, together, on the path God calls us to in Christ Jesus, to live into the biblical vision of humanity as responsible steward of God’s good creation. So we wait, and hope, and pray, and seek a better way — and in doing so we are transformed by the power of God.

Host a Creation Care Workshop

The Council’s staff working with Seminarian Ian Mevorach would be delighted to come to your church and lead a Creation Care Workshop. This one and a half hour session engages congregants in theological, ethical, environmental, and energy issues. The workshop is an opportunity for your community to learn and act as stewards of God’s creation. Contact Ian at council@masscouncilofchurches.org.



Prayer for the Gulf of Mexico

The Rev. John K. Stendahl

Holy God,
out of the waters you brought forth life:
plankton and fish, grasses and birds,
dolphins and whales,
leviathan for the sheer joy of it,
and us as your stewards of your creation.
But now our greed and carelessness
have despoiled it,
death belches up into the water,
your creatures are perishing,
the coastlands befouled.
We pray for all this disaster’s victims.
In Jesus’ name, hear our grief,
forgive our folly,
give us courage for action and
sacrifice,
and, please, let not your
beautiful creation
be forever lost.

Amen

Christians Called to Care for the Sacred Creation

Our Environmental Justice Task Force continues to focus their efforts in advocating for comprehensive energy legislation that will put a price on carbon and provide incentives for robust clean energy development. While our United States Senator, John Kerry, has been a key advocate in addressing this issue, it is our newly elected Senator, Scott Brown, who may yet play a most decisive role on this critical issue.

Your Council task force and staff, working with Massachusetts Interfaith Power and Light and Clean Energy Works has been seeking to address the issue with Senator Brown. Meeting with the Reverend Canon Sally Bingham, founder and President of Interfaith Power and Light and Nancy Cole, Director of Climate Outreach for the Union of Concerned Scientists in late May a strategy was developed under the leadership of Nancy Banks, convener of the Council's Environmental Justice Task Force and Executive Director of the UU Mass Action Network to engage Senator Brown in conversation around the environmental issues. Petitions to Senator Brown were delivered in late June at a meeting with a number of clergy and members of Senator Brown's staff.

In mid July Associate Director, Laura Everett, Task Force convener Nancy Banks and the Rev. Angela Freeman of First Lutheran Church in Malden met in Washington with a coalition of over two hundred faith leaders, business people, labor union members, national security experts and environmentalists from around the country urging their Senators to support comprehensive energy legislation.

As Congress reconvenes this fall it does not appear that comprehensive legislation will move forward before Congress adjourns. The Council will continue to work with our faith communities and other working groups addressing this issue. Over the next few months each of us can persevere in this work by contacting Senator Brown by phone at (617) 565-3170 or by email through his website <http://scottbrown.senate.gov> and clicking on "Contact Scott" and urge his support

of comprehensive energy legislation. Engage your congregations by inviting them to sign the petition which can be downloaded at www.masscouncilofchurches.org.

Pictured are Council Associate Director, Laura Everett, the Rev. Angela Freeman of First Lutheran Church in Malden and Task Force convener Nancy Banks advocating for clean energy in Washington, DC.



Lazarus at the Gate

Lazarus at the Gate
AN ECONOMIC DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



Throughout the New Testament, Christians are called not just to belief in Christ, but also to follow Christ by deciding to live and act as Jesus did. Some Christian traditions call this discipleship; others call it spiritual formation. For all, this process of modeling our life decisions after Jesus' provides an invitation both to be transformed by God's grace and to know Christ and his love more fully. As the Christian philosopher Dallas Willard writes, "practicing Jesus' word as his apprentices enables us to understand our lives and to see how we can interact with God's redemptive resources, ever at hand."

Since 2006, Boston Faith & Justice Network has been helping Christians engage and impact global poverty through a small group discipleship program called Lazarus at the Gate. Lazarus at the Gate invites participants into a community in which they are supported in their practice of economic discipleship. Over the course of the 12-session study, Lazarus discipleship groups support each other in making four individual commitments:

- Spend joyfully: Regularly give thanks for the blessing of wealth
- Spend justly: Make one lifestyle change to consume more justly
- Spend less: Make one lifestyle change in order to buy less for personal consumption
- Give more: Make a substantial gift to fight global poverty

Lazarus has fostered a conversation about Christian's engagement in global and local poverty throughout diverse denominations and ethnic groups. To date, over 130 people in 16 churches have participated in Lazarus at the Gate economic discipleship groups, giving over \$100,000 to global-poverty focused ministries and non-profit organizations.

Boston Faith and Justice Network is currently recruiting small groups of Christians to participate in this exciting and powerful lifestyle justice program. Training sessions will be led by the course author Mako Nagasawa. Although the materials for this course are free there is a \$25 dollar charge for the two-session training, which includes lunch. The first session will be held at Park Street Church on September 25th and a follow up session will be offered in early November.

For more information about *Lazarus at the Gate* or the Boston Faith & Justice Network please visit www.bostonfaithjustice.org.

November Ballot Threatens Affordable Housing in Massachusetts: Churches Rally to Protect Chapter 40B; *The Affordable Housing Law*

Tyler Kirk, Boston University Seminarian,
Massachusetts Council of Churches Intern

Robyn D'Apolito, a social worker in Revere urges us to “Vote NO on Question 2 on November 2nd.” The single mother of 2, and now a resident of North Reading, is just one of thousands who support Massachusetts’ only affordable housing law. Thanks to Massachusetts’ only affordable housing law, Robyn was able to purchase her first home for her family. Being a single mother, Robyn never thought that owning a home would be a possibility until she began doing work with chapter 40B, the affordable housing law. Despite the enormous success of the law, a dangerous and reckless referendum threatens to repeal this law on the November ballot. Residents all over Massachusetts, including Robyn and the families that she works with every day in Revere, are threatened by those who want to repeal the affordable housing law. The Campaign to Protect the Affordable Housing Law, a grassroots movement comprised of over 300 individuals and organizations, is working to ensure the future of Massachusetts affordable housing. The Massachusetts Council of Churches is deeply concerned about the difficulties that many working families and seniors face with the high cost of living in Massachusetts and recognize our moral obligation as Christians to support equal and fair opportunities for all people to have this basic necessity: affordable housing. The MCC joined the Campaign to Protect the Affordable Housing Law to ensure that this important law stays in effect and provides more affordable housing in the Commonwealth.

Since 1969 Chapter 40B has created affordable housing in Massachusetts. Recognizing that Massachusetts’ large-lot zoning laws and restrictions on multi-family housing create an expensive state to live in; the law encourages development of affordable housing in all parts of the Commonwealth. While the Christian community is engaged in social justice through food banks and campaigns to ensure living wages for all people, we must keep in mind that if the affordable housing law is repealed, another basic need will be put out of reach for many people. The affordable housing law is a critical part of the endeavor to provide housing for some of the hardest working people in Massachusetts.

The law has created over 80% of the state’s affordable housing in the past decade. Even though the affordable

housing law is not perfect, it would be an ethical atrocity to deny thousands of families affordable housing. If the affordable housing law is repealed, more than 12,000 affordable homes in the pipeline will disappear, causing much-needed construction jobs to be delayed or lost. This is not even to mention all the families and seniors who will be denied the basic need of affordable housing.

The Council is hoping to have as many church leaders and congregations to sign on and support the Interfaith Statement of Support as possible. E-mail your declaration of support to council@masscouncilofchurches.org. Please provide your name, title, contact information, organization/affiliation, and city or town. Support affordable housing in Massachusetts by voting “No on 2” this November. Your support of affordable housing is essential.

Visit: www.protectaffordablehousing.org; and www.masscouncilofchurches.org.

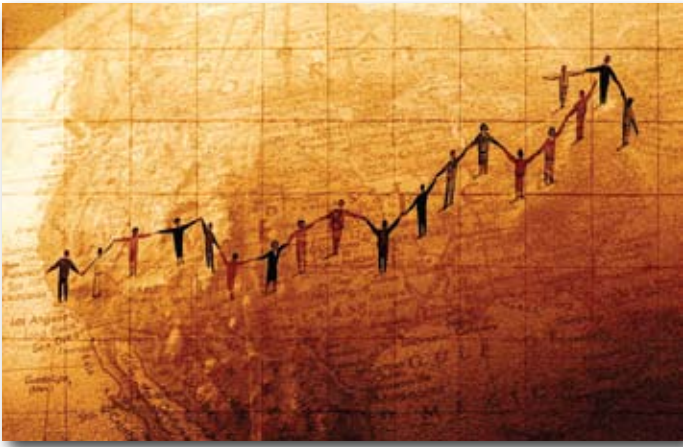


Interfaith Statement of Support for *the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law*

We stand together against efforts to repeal the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law, a critical means of expanding affordable housing opportunities for thousands of people who need it.

Housing is a basic human need. The Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law, also known as Chapter 40B, has created affordable homes for tens of thousands of Massachusetts residents. Seniors, working families, veterans, and people with disabilities are just a few examples of people who need more affordable options to own or rent a home. Without this law, fewer people will be able to attain an affordable home to serve as a foundation for human dignity, health and well-being.

Social justice and the dignity of all persons are fundamental values for communities of faith and they call us to speak out: All people should have the opportunity to live in affordable, safe housing. We stand in solidarity to protect the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law and invite members of all faiths to join us and Vote ‘No’ against repealing this critical law in November.



Human Trafficking

In 2010, twenty seven million people around the world are enslaved in situations of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Trafficking in persons is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world and one of the greatest human rights challenges of our time. Many think that this problem happens “somewhere else”. Yet the United States ranks among the highest as a destination country for trafficked women. An estimated 200,000 American children are at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year. Living on the streets, one out of every three runaway teens will be lured into prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home. A recent sting operation this spring uncovered brothels operating in Quincy, Newton, Medford, Peabody, Stoneham, Malden, Burlington and Wellesley.

The Massachusetts Council of Churches recently convened a working group around the issue of Human Trafficking and members are currently collaborating with a number of organizations to determine what steps we can take to have an impact on this issue. This effort is being led by Major Patricia LaBossiere, a member of the Council’s Board of Directors and Program Secretary of the Salvation Army of Massachusetts.

God’s Word calls us to, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless and see that they get justice.” Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT)

Upcoming events include a Walk-a-Thon along the Freedom Trail in Boston on September 18, 2010 organized by Not For Sale and a Weekend of Prayer and Fasting for Victims of Human Trafficking, September 24-26, 2010 at The Salvation Army, 25 Shawmut Rd. Canton, MA, which will include information and training on the issue of Human Trafficking.

Our fall, September 23rd Board of Directors Meeting begin at 3:00pm with a Forum on Human Trafficking. For more information and registration visit our website at www.masscouncilofchurches.org.

If you would like to host a workshop on Human Trafficking in your congregation for an adult study group, or a men’s or women’s group, please contact the Human Trafficking Working Group at council@masscouncilofchurches.org.

For more information please visit the following sites:

www.salvationarmyusa.org/trafficking

www.abwmbreakthechains.org

www.notforsalecampaign.org

www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

Trafficking Information and Referral Hotline

Tel: 1.888.3737.888.

New Immigration Working Group

The Massachusetts Council of Churches has recently convened a new Immigration Working Group in response to an increased concern that the recent legislation to come out of Arizona may very well spur the passage of similar legislation in the Commonwealth and beyond. The goal of this Working Group will be to consider how a coordinated effort amongst the member congregations of the MCC might be best brought to bear in advocacy of immigrant rights at both the local and state level. Working Group members have decided to begin their work by researching what various denominations are already doing, across Massachusetts, around the issue of immigration as well as identifying significant ministries to new immigrants. This initial fact-finding coupled with an active effort to partner with the National Council of Churches and other state councils of churches, who are dealing with issues of immigration in their state, will help to better inform the direction that the task force ultimately takes moving forward.

This new effort is being led by the Rev. Adam Shoemaker, an Episcopal priest who serves as the Assistant Rector of Christ Church in Andover. Rev. Shoemaker, who served as a missionary in Brazil, has been motivated to work on this issue given his personal experiences with the struggles of Brazilian immigrants, and those from other immigrant communities, that he’s worked with since returning to Massachusetts.

The Immigration Working Group is still in its early stages and is hoping for as wide a representation as possible of MCC member congregations. If you have a passion for this issue, are interested in participating in the work of this new Working Group or have ideas to share, please be in touch with Rev. Adam Shoemaker at council@masscouncilofchurches.org.



Clergy and laity gather at the State House to support immigration reform.

Don't Take That Call, Take Back Your Time



**Take Back
Your Time Day
Sunday
October 24, 2010**

Years ago, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin then of New York's Riverside Church, lifted up in a sermon *"In Praise of Rest"* how incredibly important it is to our spiritual well being to take some time off. Coffin's words, grounded in a theology of God

resting, remind us that Sabbath rest restores our soul.

Much has evolved in Sabbath observances and Sunday celebrations that underscore a theology of resting as an antidote for the tired soul. Far more has happened in our culture that pays little heed to the notion of Sabbath and its multitude of benefits.

Ours is a culture of 24/7 aided but often controlled by gadgets that consume our every private moment. Bob Herbert in a July 16th 2010, New York Times Op/Ed writes, "Enough already with this hyper-active behavior, this techno-tyranny and non-stop freneticism. We need to slow down and take a deep breath."

Each year the Council through a program, "Take Back Your Time" encourages you to do just that. We would suggest that the occasion of Sunday, October 24th be one in your congregation to lift up the theme of Sabbath keeping. Place this year's poster in a prominent location as a reminder of the importance of Sabbath time. Check out our website for the details of our Forum on the Sabbath that is taking place on

December 2nd at 3:00pm at the Pastoral Center of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. This gathering will include the introduction and book signing of the fall published book: *"Sunday, Sabbath and the Weekend; Managing Time in a Global Culture"*, edited by Massachusetts Council of Churches Board members, Father Edward O'Flaherty and Dr. Rodney L. Petersen. The book discusses how Christians and their Churches find meaning in the concepts of Sunday and the Sabbath in relation to the pressures of contemporary 24/7 global culture. Local contributors to this edition include Massachusetts Council of Churches Board member Ruy Costa, as well as Horace T. Allen, Jr., Harvey Cox, Gloria White Hammond, Thomas Massaro and Aida B. Spencer.



**Annual Meeting 2011
Saturday Morning
January 22, 2011**

**Elms College
Chicopee, Massachusetts**

**Preacher: Bishop Peter Weaver
New England Conference — The United
Methodist Church**

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011
January 18 – 25, 2011**



Governor Patrick signed the historic CORI Reform Bill on Friday, August 6th. The Council joined with many other community groups advocating for this reform. This change will help those who have turned away from crime return to the workplace. The Rev. Jack Johnson, Executive Director of the Council is pictured addressing a demonstration in favor of CORI reform earlier this year.



EXTENDING
THE LEGACY OF EDINBURGH 1910

2010 Boston Conference

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Edinburgh 1910 led to multiple mission movements, the development of ecumenical agencies, the growth of world Christianity, and engagement with peoples of other living faiths. In 2010 the theological community will gather together once again to discern the missional challenges of our times.

Students helped to shape the mission movement in 1910. They are central to it in 2010. We encourage not only attendance at the entire event, but participation in eight academic sessions. The academic sessions of the 2010 Boston Conference are as follows:

- o Contours of Christian Mission in Unity
- o Mission in Context
- o Discipleship and Mission
- o Education for Mission
- o Mission, Post-Colonialism and Post-Modernism
- o Mission Theology in a Pluralist World
- o Mission and Power
- o Salvation Today

For REGISTRATION, ACCOMODATIONS, SPEAKERS & PROGRAM, visit our website!

The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity

November 4-7, 2010 Boston, MA

www.2010Boston.Org

CONFERENCE HOSTED by the Boston Theological Institute & ITS MEMBER SCHOOLS

The Massachusetts Council of Churches 2010 Annual Ecumenical Dinner

**Boston College
November 6, 2010**

5:30 pm Reception; 6:30 pm Dinner



**KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Brian McLaren**

“Everything Must Change”

• Brian McLaren is an author, speaker, pastor, and networker among innovative Christian leaders, thinkers, and activists, his most recent book is “New Kind of Christianity: Ten Questions That Are Transforming the Faith.”

• Tickets are available through the Council office at \$35 per person

• For more information contact the Massachusetts Council of Churches at 617-523-2771 or council@masscouncilofchurches.org

• This year’s dinner is occurring in conjunction with the Boston Theological Institute / Boston 2010 Conference, “The Changing Contours of World Mission and Christianity” and is especially suited for clergy and laity engaged in the work and ministry of Mission through their local congregation.



Spotlight



**The Gulf Tragedy:
A Call to Transformative Prayer**
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INTERSECT Massachusetts Council of Churches

Mar Thoma Church Joins Massachusetts Council of Churches Christian Unity Dialogue

Mar Theodosius; "God is using the Ecumenical movement for the greater unity of all God's creation."

The Mar Thoma Church has only been present in the United States for a century, but the deep history of this Eastern Orthodox Church extends back to the Apostle St. Thomas traveling to India in 52 AD. The Massachusetts Council of Churches is pleased to announce that the Mar Thoma Diocese of North America and Europe has appointed a representative to the Massachusetts Council of Churches Commission on Christian Unity. Rev. Jack Johnson, Massachusetts Council of Churches Executive Director said, "We are so very pleased that this ancient church with a strong ecumenical witness is joining with the MCC's Christian unity dialogue. The Mar Thoma church has much to offer our member churches and we trust their church will be strengthened by the bonds of ecumenical fellowship in Massachusetts."

On Monday May 3, the Commission on Christian Unity hosted the annual luncheon gathering with featured guest the Rt. Rev. Dr. Geervarghese Mar Theodosius, the Mar Thoma Bishop for the Diocese of North America and Europe. The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris, Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese

of Massachusetts provided hospitality at the diocesan offices in Boston. Mar Theodosius delivered a powerful paper on the history and ecumenical witness of the Mar Thoma Church, now available at www.masscouncilofchurches.org.

Mar Theodosius appointed Dr. Jesudas Athyal, a member of the Carmel Mar Thoma Church in Hudson, MA to the Commission on Christian Unity. The Rev. KC Varughese, pastor of the Carmel Mar Thoma Church, also joined Mar Theodosius at the May 3 gathering. Members of the Commission on Christian Unity welcomed the addition of a new church to the ongoing dialogue on issues that unify and divide the one body of Christ.

Pictured from left to Right: The Rev. Dr. Frederick Moser (Moderator: Commission on Christian Unity), The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris (Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts), Mar Theodosius (Bishop for the Diocese of North America and Europe), The Rev. K.C. Varughese (Pastor of the Carmel Mar Thoma Church in Hudson, Mass.)

