



# INTERSECT

Massachusetts  
Council of  
Churches  
Winter 2009

## MCC's 107th Annual Meeting January 24, 2009

### "New Beginnings: Our Faith Witness in this Historic Moment"

On January 24th Christians from the Council family will gather but four days after a most historic moment in our nations history, the inauguration of America's first African American



*The Reverend Dr. John Thomas, Annual Meeting preacher for the day.*

President, President-elect Barack Obama. We should and we will celebrate this moment in history. As people of faith we are especially grateful that the moment marks an historic significance in the long journey of racial injustice in these United States.

But this historic moment is also a troubling moment in time. An open letter from the leadership of the National Council of Churches noted "only rarely in our history has a president-elect faced immediate challenges of such fierce magnitude." Such

is the case in a gloomy forecast of economic hardships, a "World at Risk" report on terrorism and mass destruction, an environmental melt down, and global poverty, that challenge all of us. In

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## Annual Meeting Round Table

Our annual meeting this year will engage a distinguished group of leadership to address the issue of our faith witness in this historic moment. The panelists will lend their voices to delegates gathered addressing our theme which will be a part of information gathering for the Council's vision Development and Strategic Planning Process. As Council leadership plans for the future, critical to this process will be a serious reflection upon our faith, witness in the context of the public square.

Our panelist includes Rachel Hope Anderson, co-founder and Executive Director of the Boston Faith and Justice Network (BFJN). A lifelong Lutheran, originally from Milwaukee, Anderson has served in the Lutheran Volunteer Corps in Baltimore in the late 1990's. There she came to see service and justice as a lifelong calling. Prior to starting the BFJN, Anderson graduated with a dual degree from Harvard Law and Divinity Schools, worked in legal aid, and led public policy advocacy at the Episcopal City Mission in Boston.

The Rev. Dr. Jim Antal is Minister and President of the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ, the larg-

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*Round Table Members: Father Bryan Hehir (top left); Rachel Hope Anderson (top right); Rev. Dr. Jim Antal (lower left); and MA Representative Byron Rushing (lower right).*



**YOU ARE INVITED TO  
MCC's 107th ANNUAL MEETING  
Saturday, January 24, 2009**

**Annual Meeting: Registration  
8:30 AM Wilson Chapel**

**9:00 AM Prayer Service for Christian Unity,  
Wilson Chapel**

**10:30 AM Round Table  
12:30 AM Business Meeting  
1:00 PM Luncheon Reception**

**Andover Newton Theological School  
210 Herrick Rd., Newton Centre, MA**

## Annual Meeting Preacher



The Reverend Dr. John Thomas will be the preacher for the day at our prayer service of Christian unity at our 107th Annual Meeting. We are excited to welcome Dr. Thomas who is General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Thomas is the presiding officer of the Collequium, is charged with the care and nurture of the spiritual life of the

church, is the principle spokesperson of the General Synod and is the official representative of the church in ecumenical and interfaith relations.

Thomas is a noted ecumenist. Under his leadership he was instrumental in the development of the full communion relationship between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and three Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Church of Christ.

Thomas' prominence would remind us of a challenging moment in this past year's presidential campaign when Barack

Obama's pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, a noted United Church of Christ pastor, was cited for his rhetoric of preaching that challenged our thinking.

Thomas' word for the moment was one of honoring diversity and respecting the prophetic voice by maintaining the freedom of the pulpit. Thomas noted, "Not every pastor in the United Church of Christ will want to share Pastor Wright's rhetoric or his politics. Not every member will rise to shout 'Amen!'"

*Thomas' word for the moment was one of honoring diversity and respecting the prophetic voice by maintaining the freedom of the pulpit.*

But I trust we will all struggle in our own way to resist the lure of respectable religion that seeks to displace evangelical faith. For what the nation needs is not so much polite piety as the rough and radical word of the prophet calling us to repentance."

We look forward to hearing the proclamation of the word by Dr. Thomas. Our service of prayer for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be planed by members of our Commission on Christian Unity focused on prayers that will unite us as persons in Christ.

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### 107th Annual Meeting, from page 1

a December 2nd editorial in the "Christian Century" words in response to this reality affirmed that "religious communities can take heart from the fact that Obama seems to understand that many of the problems facing our country and world, including the economic ones, have a moral component."

As people of faith we would underscore our moral principles in addressing these critical issues. The words of the prophet Micah remind us as to what the Lord does require of us "but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God." (Micah 6:8)

*We affirm the principal of separation of church and state, yet we do affirm that our religious faith can and should impact public policy*

As people of faith in these United States we affirm the principal of separation of church and state, yet we do affirm that our religious faith can and should impact public policy. So we gather, in this historic moment, to discern and to affirm how we as people of faith witness in this challenging and most problematic of times. We need to challenge ourselves and those whom we have elected to lead us to be a more compassionate and just people. We have a credible social justice witness that affirms as people of faith, working together, we can make a difference. We invite you to join us at our Annual Meeting, be a part of sharing your faith witness. For registration form and additional information go to [www.masscouncilofchurches.org](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org) or call 617-523-2771.

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### Round Table, from page 1

est Protestant denomination in the Commonwealth. In addition to leading churches in Newton, MA and Shaker Heights, OH he served as Executive Director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (USA), an interfaith pacifist organization. His major interests as an activist are the environment and interfaith dialog. Antal has been a motivating force in engaging communities of faith in addressing the environmental crisis.

Father Bryan Hehir presently teaches at the Kennedy School as the Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice in Religion and Public Life. Father Hehir serves as the Secretary of Health Social Services for the Archdiocese of Boston. He was educated at Harvard, St. John's Seminary, and King's College. Hehir has served as President of Catholic Charities U.S.A., Dean of Harvard Divinity School, with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and teaching at Georgetown University. Hehir has twenty-five colleges and universities honorary degrees and has published a broad range of works on faith and international issues.

Representative Byron Rushing was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1982, coming to the House with a work background of community organizing and of Afro-American history. He is Second Assistant Majority Leader of the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

In the legislature, Rushing's priorities are human and civil rights, and the development of democracy; local human, economic, and housing development; and housing and health care of all.

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### Religious Summit on the Triple Crisis on Energy, Global Warming and Economic Crisis

by Joshua Griffin, Ecumenical Intern

On November 20th over 100 religious leaders from across New England gathered at Plymouth Church in Framingham to open a new chapter in religious environmentalism. The



Activist Bill McKibben.

“Religious Summit on the Energy, Climate, and Economic Crises” featured the legendary writer and activist Bill McKibben, who along with a host of other speakers, made clear the interconnection between these three inseparable issues. McKibben’s new movement [350.org](http://350.org) is an attempt to sound the alarm about the world’s most important number. 350 parts per million (ppm) is the safe upper limit for the concentration of

atmospheric carbon dioxide, but right now we’re clocking in at 387 ppm. “It’s like the doctor telling you that your cholesterol is way too high,” McKibben noted, “and if you don’t bring it down right away, you’re going to be in trouble.” But hope is not lost. Churches across the Council’s member denominations are joining the movement by ringing their bells 350 times — a series of actions which, if supported by education and media coverage, will raise awareness. The sound of bells across New England is an urgent prayer for a 350 world. [350.org](http://350.org) hopes to put pressure on international leaders to reach a just, science-based climate agreement in Copenhagen in 2009. The MCC continues to pursue a broad environmental agenda by establishing an e-advocacy Environmental Action and Advocacy Network, and by teaming up with the Boston Faith and Justice Network to host “Gratitude and Creation,” featuring Shane Claiborne, on February 21. We invite you to join us in this important work.

### Ecumenical Advocacy Days: March 13-16, 2009



The theme for Ecumenical Advocacy Day 2009 is “Enough for all Creation,” an opportunity to learn about the connections between climate change, migration, and poverty in the United States and around the world. The dates are

March 13–16 and we encourage you to come together with faith-based advocates and activists from across the United States in our national capital. A luncheon hosted by the Massachusetts Council of Churches and congressional visits with Massachusetts representatives will be part of this special gathering. For more information and registration [www.advocacydays.org](http://www.advocacydays.org) or call Molly Keane, conference coordinator at 202-386-6397.

### Speaking Out... Caring for God’s Creation

Your Council is working more and more around the care of God’s creation. This past year we launched a significant effort to educate adults around the dangers of toxics and



Green Bishop Bud Cederholm.

how toxics cause harm to our kids, our churches, and our communities. Over 2,400 persons were introduced to our new adult curriculum, “Healthy Kids, Healthy Churches, Healthy Communities.”

Last year we joined with other faith communities in launching the Massachusetts Interfaith Climate Network in advocating for a “Global Warming Solutions Act.” The successful passage of the legislation will now require administrative policies to implement this new law. In November we cosponsored a “Religious Summit on the Triple Crisis on Energy, Global Warming, and Economic Crisis” where Episcopal Bishop Bud Cederholm, who some call the “Green Bishop,” proclaimed “it is time to issue a call to repentance and move toward eco-justice.” Recently we joined the Mass. Green Agenda, a collaborative effort of organizations with an environmental agenda working together in Massachusetts to further the environmental agenda while building a collective political power.

Our focused energies in the coming year will center on climate change and the effects of global warming. Part of our objective working with the National Council of Churches Eco Justice Programs will be the development of an e-advocacy Environmental Action and Advocacy Network. Members of the network will be informed of state and federal legislative initiatives that impact our environment, with special emphasis on legislative initiatives around global warming, comprehensive toxic reform, and energy initiatives. We too will be communicating environmental learning opportunities hosted by members of our Council.

If you wish to be part of our e-advocacy Environmental Action and Advocacy Network please visit our web site at [www.masscouncilofchurches.org](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org) to register.

### Gratitude and Creation: February 21, 2009 Park Street Church, Boston

by Laura Everett

This year, on the eve of Lent, join with Christians from around Greater Boston to commit to a season of gratitude and care for God’s creation. On Saturday February 21, 2009, the Massachusetts Council of Churches and the Boston Faith and Justice Network will co-host the event “Gratitude and Creation,” with workshops, ecumenical prayer and praise, and keynote speaker Shane Claiborne. All are warmly invited to

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## Martin Luther King Breakfast

The 39th Annual Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast will be held at the Boston Convention Center on Monday, January 19th. Known as “the Boston King Breakfast,” this event is sponsored by Union United Methodist Church and St. Cyprians Episcopal Church. This year’s keynote speaker will be the Reverend Dr. James Forbes, Jr., President and founder of Healing of the Nations Foundation. Forbes, recently retired as senior pastor of the Riverside



Church in New York, is a noted preacher, teacher, and national faith leader. Last year Dr. Forbes preached at the Massachusetts Council of Churches Annual Meeting on the occasion of the installation of our executive director and the celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Tickets for the breakfast may be obtained by calling the Union United Methodist Church at 617-536-0872.

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## New Sacred Opera and Interfaith Discussion Sunday Feb 22 4pm

The Prioress’s Tale, a new chamber opera in English by Boston-based composer Delvyn Case, will be performed at Andover-Newton Theological School in Wilson Chapel on Feb. 22, 2009, at 4 pm. All are welcome. The opera radically transforms Chaucer’s infamous tale of anti-Semitism into a parable about the power of forgiveness to heal the wounds of religious intolerance. A complex, powerful, and dramatic work, the Prioress’s Tale is a moving musical testament to the possibility of reconciliation between those whose differences seem insurmountable.



Presented by an all-star cast of professional singers, the hour-long opera premiered in 2008. The performance will be followed by a panel discussion with Jewish and Christian clergy that explored issues raised by the original story and the operatic adaptation. Information on the project can be found at [www.delvyncase.com](http://www.delvyncase.com).

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## Round Table, from page 2

An active Episcopalian, Rushing is a member of St. Johns, St. James Parish in Roxbury. A founding member of the Episcopal caucus, an elected lay delegate to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, he is a spokesman for the ministry of all the baptized.

You are invited to join this important day and lend your voice to inform our conversation of how we as people of faith may witness in this historic moment.



St. Paul’s Episcopal Cathedral was but one of many sites where parishioners gathered on Sunday, October 5th, to celebrate the Feast of St. Frances of Assisi and “Bless and Protect Dogs.” The Council affirmation of the Greyhound Protection Act helped pass a voter referendum that will end greyhound racing in Massachusetts.

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## Tribute to The Reverend Dr. James A. Nash

by Rev. Dr. Norman Faramelli

Jim Nash died on Nov. 5 after a long bout with leukemia. I met Jim 40 years ago when he worked at the Mass Council of Churches. Jim served as Executive Director from 1975 to 1988.



After the Council, he moved to Washington DC where he led the Center for Theology and Public Policy, taught at Wesley Theological Seminary, and became a renowned environmental ethicist. His book *Loving Nature* has become a classic in the field.

When Jim returned to the Boston area he taught at his alma mater, Boston University School of Theology and for over seven years coordinated a Sustainability Dialogue between environmental ethicists and members of the chlorine chemistry industry. It was a joy to share these experiences with him.

Jim was an avid bird watcher and hiker, and his love for nature was interwoven with his intellectual pursuits. Jim is survived by his wife, Millie, two daughters, a granddaughter, and brother. Although he will be missed, we are thankful to have been graced by the life of a visionary leader, mentor, scholar and good friend.

(Rev. Faramelli is Lecturer in Social Ethics at Boston University School of Theology and Adjunct in Christian Ethics at Episcopal Divinity School.)

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## Craigville Colloquy

Craigville Colloquy (July 13–17, 2009): “Spirituality and the Holy Spirit.” For more information and registration, visit [www.craigvillecolloquy.com](http://www.craigvillecolloquy.com).

# Raising up the Next Generation of Ecumenists

## Scholarship Funds Available for the 2009 Ecumenical Institute

by Laura Everett

Scholarship funding from the Massachusetts Council of Churches made it possible for a motley crew to gather for the 2007 Ecumenical Institute. It was a diverse group of Christians, not unlike the Church itself. There was a student from Gordon Conwell Theological School, a young Lutheran pastor, a few Episcopal seminarians, a lay Baptist woman and half a dozen Roman Catholic Paulist seminarians. Scholarship funding made it possible for all of these people to gather together for four days to learn more about the ecumenical movement. The Massachusetts Council of Churches is pleased to announce that scholarship applications for the 2009 Ecumenical Institute are now available.

Who do you know who could use scholarship funding to attend the 2009 Ecumenical Institute? The 2009 Ecumenical Institute is an ideal introduction to the ecumenical movement for newly ordained clergy, new staff in ecumenical and interreligious organizations, recently appointed ecumenical representatives and interested lay leaders. Beginning on Sunday evening May 17 and ending mid-day on Wednesday May 20, 2009 at the Graymoor Spiritual Life Center in Garrison NY, the Ecumenical Institute provides instruction on the history, theory and practice of the ecumenical movement. Each day features morning and evening prayer, lectures from course leaders, small group study, group discussion and fellowship.

"Hope for the Future: The Rev. Diane C. Kessler Fund for Ecumenical Formation and Education" was established by the MCC Board of Directors to honor the former Executive Direc-



tor's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the MCC. Through the generosity of friends of the Massachusetts Council of Churches, this special fund honors Rev. Kessler by supporting efforts to "foster learning to inform and guide people in the ecumenical movement, which seeks the visible unity of Christians." Introducing curious individuals to the vibrant work for Christian unity through scholarship to the Ecumenical Institute is a fitting way to pay tribute to Rev. Kessler's ministry.

Scholarship applications and general applications are available at [www.masscouncilofchurches.org](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org).

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. With a limited amount of funding available, interested individuals should apply early. All scholarship applications must be received by April 17, 2009. The purpose of the scholarships is to stimulate, through participation in the Northeast Ecumenical Institute, understanding of councils of churches by persons who intend to participate in the ecumenical movement, either as volunteers or professionals. Seminarians and recently ordained clergy are especially encouraged to apply.

The 2009 Ecumenical Institute is presented by: Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute; Massachusetts Council of Churches; Paulist Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations; Sisters of Our Lady of Sion- with our partners, the National Council of Churches in Christ, USA, the Boston Theological Institute, and many state councils. More information will be available at [www.graymoorcenter.org](http://www.graymoorcenter.org) or email [council@masscouncilofchurches.org](mailto:council@masscouncilofchurches.org). Tuition, room and board with cost \$280 before March 31, 2009; \$300 after April 1, 2009.

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### Gratitude and Creation, from page 3

attend. We will gather to support each other in spending less, buying justly, and treading lightly on the earth. It all begins with a spirit of gratitude.



Author Shane Claiborne.

On February 21 at Park Street Church in Boston, we will begin at 4:30pm with hand-on workshops, with take-home Lenten practices for your family and your church. Following the workshops will be a simple dinner and time for fellowship. Afterwards, we will gather for ecumenical prayer in the spirit of repentance and recommitment. Shane Claiborne will be the keynote speaker. Claiborne, the author of *Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*

and *Jesus for President*, is the founder of an intentional service community in North Philadelphia. To learn more about Shane and his ministry, visit <http://thesimpleway.org/shane>.

If you are a pastor or lay-leader looking for ideas for your congregation this Lent, come. If you want to make things clean without toxic chemicals or feast without injustice, come. If you are looking to form your life into a posture of praise in Lent (and you like a little upright bass), come. All are welcome. Suggested donation \$12. RSVP encouraged but not required to 617-523-2771 or [council@masscouncilofchurches.org](mailto:council@masscouncilofchurches.org).

The Boston Faith and Justice network is group of young(ish) evangelicals creating economic discipleship groups at area churches and working to make Boston a fair-trade city. The MCC is please to be working with the BFJN as a further sign of the churches' commitment to uniting Christians of all backgrounds. For more information on "Gratitude and Creation," visit [www.masscouncilofchurches.org](http://www.masscouncilofchurches.org) or [www.bostonfaithjustice.org](http://www.bostonfaithjustice.org).

**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**



*We are Churches Together!  
All Who Follow Jesus,  
All Around the World!  
Yes, We're the Church Together!*

Lyrics from the hymn by Avery and Marsh remind us of Jesus' fervent petition in his prayer to God for the unity of all believers, a unity that is informed and empowered by all believers, a unity that is informed and empowered by the unity of God and Christ.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18–25, 2009) is indeed an occasion to share in earnest prayer with Christians in your community. It is a time not only to pray together, but act together. We encourage you to reach out to other churches in your community planning to come together in prayer and discernment for witnessing together in the year 2009.

Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity may be found at [www.geii.org](http://www.geii.org).

We invite you, too, to lift up in your order of worship during this week the 2009 Prayer for Christian Unity. We would pray together:

*"O God, may we become one in your hand.  
As your daughters and sons we are joined to by our common baptism.  
Make us one in faith and keep us one in the fellowship of your love.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen."*

**DIALOGUE**

Friends of the Council are always welcome to participate in our on-going dialogue groups. Our winter and spring occasions of dialogue are:

**Muslim/Christian**

February 12, 2009 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

*Topic: Philanthropic and charitable practices for uplifting the poor*

May 20, 2009 from 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

*Topic: Moderation challenges by religious fundamentalism*

**Jewish/Christian**

*Theme: Exploring the language of faith, through the lens of contemporary issues*

February 10, 2009 from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM

*Topic: Dominion and Creation*

May 12, 2009 from 1:00 PM to 3:30 PM

*Topic: The role of the prophetic in our religious tradition*

**Evangelical/Christian**

January 15, 2009 from 2:00 PM– 4:00 PM

March 5, 2009 from 2:00 PM– 4:00 PM

May 21, 2009 from 2:00 PM– 4:00 PM

If you wish to join one or all three of these dialogue groups please register with the MCC today at 617-523-2771 or [council@masscouncilofchurches.org](mailto:council@masscouncilofchurches.org)



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