

# ONE TABLE

VOLUME IX ISSUE III

AUTUMN 2008

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## Faith Leaders' Pastoral Letter to Governor Paterson

*In mid-September, more than fifty faith leaders in New York State wrote to Governor David Paterson urging him to provide leadership in ending poverty in our state. Following are excerpts from the letter.*

**“Poverty  
diminishes hope  
and crushes the  
human spirit.”**

Go to [www.hungeractionnys.org/fhnletter.pdf](http://www.hungeractionnys.org/fhnletter.pdf) for complete letter and list of signers.

Dear Governor Paterson:

As representatives of the faith community, we urge you to provide moral leadership in ending the problems of hunger, homelessness and poverty in our communities. Specifically, we urge you to propose restoring the value of welfare

benefits to at least its 1990 level and to propose quality affordable health care for all.

We speak with urgency and embrace the biblical mandates to feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless, and clothe the naked.

Poverty diminishes hope and crushes the human spirit. The Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions speak for the dignity of people in poverty in God's sight, and that it is society's responsibility to address and alleviate such inequities. Helping people in need is a matter of fundamental principle, responsibility, righteousness and justice, not an act of charity.

We believe it is immoral that in this nation, New York leads in the ever growing gap between the poor and rich. Nothing illustrates that gap better than the decline in value of welfare benefits. The grant has fallen to less than 50% of the federal poverty level and is a significant factor in the high rate of poverty in New York, especially among children and in upstate inner cities. An entire generation of children has grown up since the last increase in the basic grant eighteen years ago; even at that point it failed to meet basic social and constitutional responsibilities. The basic welfare grant is now \$291 a month for a family of three; the shelter allowance varies by county. Both are grossly inadequate.

We know that you have long been committed to raising the basic welfare grant. We need your moral leadership today more than ever. Every week in our congregations we see a terrible loss of hope among those who depend on the State for the basic necessities of life. We appreciate the leadership you have already shown in helping to expand the Food Stamp Program and in trying to protect the poor from the impact of recent budget cuts.

The right to health care is also a moral issue. “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.” - Martin Luther King Jr.

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### CREO Members

Albany United  
Methodist Society

American Baptist Churches,  
Capital Area Association

Capital Area  
Council of Churches

Catholic Charities,  
Diocese of Albany

Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

Episcopal Diocese of Albany

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America,  
Hudson Mohawk Conference

FOCUS Churches of Albany

Interdenominational  
Ministers Conference of the  
Capitol Region

Presbyterian Church, USA,  
Presbytery of Albany

Reformed Church in  
America, Classis of Albany

Roman Catholic  
Diocese of Albany

Schenectady Inner City  
Ministry

Troy Area United Ministries

United Church of Christ,  
Hudson Mohawk Association

United Methodist Church,  
Troy Conference

## What I Really Want for Christmas

*Barbara DiTommaso, Director*  
COMMISSION ON PEACE AND JUSTICE  
ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ALBANY

Advertising by retailers and catalogs arriving in the mail won't let us forget that, in our culture, Christmas has become an economic event that for many people overshadows its observance as a religious season.

The desire to give gifts to those we love is a reflection of the divine love of the Father who gave us the unfathomable gift of Jesus, and in him, eternal life. But how can we act on this desire to give that also expresses our discipleship within a society so rich that some people must rent self-storage units because their many belongings can't fit in their homes?

While the church has always been missionary in bringing the Good News of God's unconditional love, our faith communities have also helped to make us acutely aware of life-denying poverty so prevalent in the developing world. We generously respond to natural disasters such as the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, and to chronic needs such as drought-prone areas of Africa. Yet much pervasive



poverty can't be attributed to those events or conditions. Rather, it is the result of an economic system that is out of balance because it does not put people first.

In his first encyclical letter, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II wrote that work is a key – probably the essential key – to social issues. All work has a threefold moral significance: it is the ordinary way for us to meet our material needs; it is through our work that most of us exercise our self-expression and experience self-realization; and our work enables us to contribute to the well-being of the larger community. But what happens to a person who cannot find adequate work or whose labor is not justly rewarded?

Many corporations have moved production to the developing world because of the lack of government regulation and absence of workers' rights: low wages that keep them trapped in poverty, poor working conditions, and often some kind of environmental destruction, such as poisoning a community's water supply with toxic industrial chemicals. These are aspects of free trade, in which capital and goods can cross borders freely, but workers cannot.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## The Details...

Deadline for Submission  
*One Table* Winter Edition  
Jan/Feb/Mar..... December 15

Please help us by updating your contact information. We mail our newsletters Third Class for a first-class reason – to save money. While some newsletters may arrive late, we hope the message will always be timely. **This newsletter was mailed the week of October 12.**

*One Table* is published quarterly by the Capital Region Ecumenical Organization on recycled paper. Circulation: 600 per issue. *One Table* serves as an ecumenical voice in our region and is supported by CREO members and the Northeastern New York Chapter of Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. Only motions duly passed at Board meetings reflect the official actions of the entire Capital Region Ecumenical Organization. Opinions expressed by contributing writers are not necessarily those of CREO.

Letters, news items, and announcements are invited. Publication cannot be guaranteed, but all submissions will be reviewed for use. The Coordinator reserves the right to edit material to conform to editorial policy, style and length. Unless otherwise attributed, all articles are compiled and/or written by the Coordinator. ■

## Temporary Shelter Opens for a Sixth Year of Operation

*Pastor Vernon A Victorson*

FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH, ALBANY

It is hard to believe that the Emergency Overflow Homeless Shelter housed at First Lutheran Church and run in cooperation with Evangelical Protestant United Church of Christ and the Capital Area Council of Churches is opening for yet another winter season. Not only is the need still with us, given the current economic state of affairs, it will be for some time.

In First Lutheran we were fortunate to have the facility and the desire to put that facility to work on behalf of those with very little. We were also blessed to have the support of the faith community throughout the region; you have rallied to the aid of the shelter with support and resources and volunteer hours which keep it in operation seven days a week. Without your prayers and support this shelter would not exist.

We decided to expand this year's program by adding two weeks at each end of the season. We will open on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and close the end of April. While this adds to our expenses we feel confident because of the support we have re-



ceived from individuals and congregations who have joined with us to be part of this ministry. This year our expenses will run about \$72,000.

We operate on the principal we started with six years ago from Matthew 25 where we learn if we do something for the least of these, our brothers and sisters, we are truly serving Jesus.

If you can help us, we need volunteers to greet guests and help with laundry and other tasks. We welcome groups to prepare meals for shelter guests. Donations of sturdy paper products (cups, bowls, and plates, and plastic silverware) and laundry detergent are also needed. Call the CACC office @ 462-5450

for more information. Financial gifts are also welcome and may be sent to CACC ("CACC Shelter Fund") at 646 State St., Albany, NY 12203.

At the end of each season, some of the men who have stayed with us a number of times seek me out and shake my hand and tell me how grateful they are to have this shelter. I want to pass their thanks along to all of you who help us make this shelter possible. ■

*(Continued from page 2)*

During the past two years' immigration debates, what we didn't hear often enough was how to make life more humane in workers' home countries so that they wouldn't be forced to risk their very lives in attempting to come to the U.S. in search of work. One of those ways is the growing phenomenon of fair trade. In fair trade, workers are paid a living wage and often work in cooperatives in which each member is a part owner of the business, and therefore involved in decision making.

Here is where we can use our buying power to help our brothers and sisters in poor countries to rise out of poverty and live with the dignity befitting children of God. We can choose to purchase fair trade coffee, tea and chocolate in the supermarket or food co-op, rather than another brand. Perhaps your congregation sells fairly traded items on a regular basis.

Another way to support a dignified life for workers abroad is to host a fair trade sale at church, at which members can purchase Christmas gifts. While fostering a sense of community and solidarity, this activity can also be a way of involving youth, who can focus their energy and idealism on a fun project that has immediate benefits for the people who made the goods.

For more information on fair trade, see [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org). For an online catalog of products, see [www.SERRV.org/](http://www.SERRV.org/) or [www.agreatergift.org](http://www.agreatergift.org). To receive a lesson plan on fair trade for youth, or to arrange for a sale in which all your church needs to do is invite members to come, contact me at (518)453-6695 or [barb.ditommaso@rcda.org](mailto:barb.ditommaso@rcda.org). ■

## Thanksgiving Fast and Action Against Hunger

*Mark Dunlea, Executive Director*

HUNGER ACTION NETWORK OF NYS

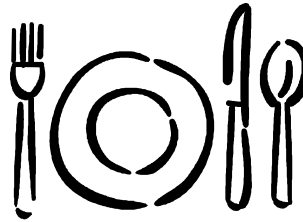
Every year the *Thanksgiving Fast and Action Against Hunger* is held the Monday before Thanksgiving. This year it falls on Nov. 24th.

Fasting is part of the tradition of most of the world's religions. Fasting is a transforming act, "it has the moral power to bring about political change worthy of our state," notes Bishop Howard Hubbard, Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany and Co-Chair of the Labor-Religion Coalition.

Fasting has been a spiritual undertaking and sociopolitical tool for centuries. The power of fasting, personal and political, feels especially strong in NYS, where many of the streets, beginning with Wall Street, seem to be awash in money and an obsession with wealth and excess.

We encourage fasting this year to strengthen the moral message in light of the tremendous economic problems we are facing both in NYS and nationally.

The large and growing state budget deficit will make it even more difficult to win needed investments in initiatives, such as raising the welfare grant. The Governor is now planning to release his budget in mid-December, so Thanksgiving Action may be one of our last chances to show public support for action.



New York's basic welfare grant has not been raised in 18 years and its value has fallen to less than 50% of the federal poverty level. And since the shelter allowance part of the welfare grant is so low, most welfare participants are forced to divert some, if not all, of the basic grant (\$291 a month for a family of 3) to help pay their rent. Governor Paterson has supported raising the

grant in the past but his staff are arguing that there is not political support for raising it, especially with the state budget deficit growing every day.

Our state now gets more than a billion dollar surplus annually from the welfare rules enacted in 1996. Many states have used these extra funds to raise welfare benefits; New York has not.

Fasting helps us to become aware of the tenuousness of life. When your belly aches with hunger, with emptiness, it helps you to see what it is you really need to live well. And as your fast extends, you begin to learn what you can do without.

Please help spread the word about the Thanksgiving Fast. We ask that if people are going to fast, they contact us so we may report on the number of people who are fasting and also connect people in the same community who may wish to work together on related activities. Contact (518)434-7371 or [info@hungeractionnys.org](mailto:info@hungeractionnys.org) for more. ■

## New York State Council of Churches Invites You...

*Mary Lu Bowen, Executive Director,*

NYS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Every year the New York State Council of Churches Public Policy Commission holds a two day planning event that has come to be known as the Work Party. This year's theme, the gap between the rich and the poor, was chosen months ago.

Now with financial institutions failing, companies laying off workers, home foreclosures climbing, and state government cutting back on funding services for the vulnerable, the gap be-

tween the rich and the poor becomes ever more obvious. And it is even more important for the voice of the church to be in the public square reminding those who make decisions that with every decision they make there is a life to which that decision will bring hope, fear or even panic.

The event begins at 1:00pm on Friday, October 24 and ends at noon on Saturday. Meetings and accommodations will be at the Clarion Hotel in Albany. Registration is \$35 (plus overnight room if needed). This includes materials, meeting

*(Continued on page 5)*

## Christian Principles in an Election Year

Mary Lu Bowen, Executive Director,  
NYS COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

“Our Christian faith compels us to address the world through the lens of our relationship to God and to one another. Public discourse is enhanced as we engage civic leaders on the values and ethics affirmed by our faith.” (National Council of Churches Christian Principles in an Election Year).

As we become participants in public discussion we must keep in mind that our churches, denominations and church organizations cannot endorse any political party or any candidate. The NYSCOC has prepared a set of principles that can help inform our discussions and decision making from a faith perspective. They were developed by the NCC Justice and Advocacy Commission.

1. War is contrary to the will of God. While the use of violent force may, at times, be a necessity of last resort, Christ pronounces his blessing on the peacemakers. We look for political leaders who will make peace with justice a top priority and who will actively seek nonviolent solutions to conflict.

2. God calls us to live in communities shaped by peace and cooperation. We reject policies that abandon large segments of our inner city and rural populations to hopelessness. We look for political leaders who will re-build our communities and bring an end to the cycles of violence and killing.

3. God created us for each other, and thus our security depends on the well being of our global neighbors. We look for political leaders for whom a foreign policy based on cooperation and global justice is an urgent concern.



4. God calls us to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable in our society. We look for political leaders who yearn for economic justice and who will seek to reduce the growing disparity between rich and poor.

5. Each human being is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth. We look for political leaders who actively promote racial justice and equal opportunity for everyone.

6. The earth belongs to God and is intrinsically good. We look for political leaders who recognize the earth's goodness, champion environmental justice, and uphold our responsibility to be stewards of God's creation.

7. Christians have a biblical mandate to welcome strangers. We look for political leaders who will pursue fair immigration policies and speak out against xenophobia.

8. Those who follow Christ are called to heal the sick. We look for political leaders who will support adequate, affordable and accessible health care for all.

9. Because of the transforming power of God's grace, all humans are called to be in right relationship with each other. We look for political leaders who seek a restorative, not retributive, approach to the criminal justice system and the individuals within it.

10. Providing enriched learning environments for all of God's children is a moral imperative. We look for political leaders who advocate for equal educational opportunity and abundant funding for children's services.

Finally, our religious tradition admonishes us not to bear false witness against our neighbor and to love our enemies. We ask that the campaigns of political candidates and the coverage of the media in this election season be conducted according to principles of fairness, hon-

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space and a buffet dinner on Friday night at the hotel.

Participants will help determine what the message of that voice will be as we advocate for the vulnerable in New York. Your attendance will enrich the discernment process. We hope you will attend, and even bring a friend! Contact the Council office with questions or to register at (518)436-9319. ■



“I am strong, and I offer sensible advice and sound judgment. By my power kings govern, and rulers make laws that are fair. Every honest leader rules with help from me.”  
(Proverbs 8:14-16) CEV

## United Church of Christ

THE REV. MARIAN SHEARER, REGIONAL CONFERENCE MINISTER  
*Hudson Mohawk Association*

In the United Church of Christ, we are sometimes accused of being politically one-sided and intolerant of variety in the political affiliation of members. On the contrary, the individual consciences of believers and the autonomy-in-covenant of our local churches would render ridiculous any attempt by church bodies to insist to voters that only one political point of view or candidate was the faithful one. Variety in practice, conviction, and opinion, held together by faith for a greater good, are what defines the United Church of Christ (for good and ill!).

Our current program to address election issues is called *Our Faith, Our Vote*, and it provides resources to churches and groups about getting involved in the elections. Here is what the resources address:

- registering everyone to vote
- arranging for candidate forums, in church buildings and elsewhere
- raising issues of fair elections and accurate balloting
- being alert for the “spins” in candidates’ advertising
- raising issues of poverty, health care, immigration justice, environmental care and the like, with ALL candidates.

Mindful of our tax-exempt status as a church, we do not endorse candidates. But our UCC history of living out our faith boldly, and taking its concerns to the public forum, have always left room for laity and clergy to run for public office and speak about public issues. Sometimes, as individuals, we do take sides. Sometimes, in our local churches, we support issues that are mostly supported by one party or another. Nowhere do we insist that taking the opposite side or voting the other way makes a person unfaithful.

So a program called “*Our Faith, Our Vote*” does not instruct members of the United Church of Christ whom to vote for. It invites them to be active in fair elections and widespread registration; it invites them to question candidates about the issues important to people of faith across the interfaith and ecumenical community; it invites them to be savvy listeners and watchers of campaign materials. It provides links to statements about issues which the UCC has agreed on over the years, on things like public education and health care and the links between toxic waste and poverty. It encourages us to speak boldly for those in society whose voices are not heard, for that is what is called for by our faith in Jesus Christ who said that in God’s economy, the last shall be first, and the first last.

A good many of our spiritual ancestors (from the Congregational side of our several roots) signed the Declaration of Independence and helped shape a new nation. None of them wanted a state-identified church where membership was a prerequisite for citizenship. And all of them, John Hancock and John Adams and many others, spent their lives and fortunes in the public arena building a democratic system. As their spiritual descendants, and as people of faith, we are asked to do our parts as well. ■

## Roman Catholic Church

THE MOST REV. HOWARD HUBBARD, BISHOP  
*Diocese of Albany*

Since 1976, every four years the bishops of the United States have issued a political responsibility statement designed to encourage our Catholic people to participate in the civic life of our nation by educating ourselves to the issues confronting our society, by discerning how the moral and social teachings of the church inform these issues, by examining through this prism where candidates stand on these issues and, then, with prayer and an informed conscience by casting our ballot, and by continuing to advocate with our elective representatives for policies that contribute to a just and humane society.

Voting and advocating with an informed conscience is both a civic and moral responsibility. It is also a complex challenge – because rarely, if ever, does any candidate or any political party reflect fully the church’s comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every person.

Therefore, it often requires a prudent choice on our part as to which candidate and policies will do the most good and the least harm.

It should be noted that the current bishops’ statement entitled, *Forming Consciences For Faithful Citizenship*, is not a “voter guide.” We bishops do not seek to tell people for whom to vote. Nor, is it a guide to the positions of candidates or parties. Rather, this political responsibility document is a statement which addresses key themes from Catholic social teaching, and their implications for decisions in public life. Our role as bishops, in other words, is not that of endorsing candidates or engaging in partisan politics, but it is the teaching role of helping people form their consciences so that they can make informed and sound moral judgments in fulfilling their responsibilities as voting and engaged citizens in pluralistic democracy.

Unfortunately, politics in our country often can become a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites, and media hype. The church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable.

The call of *Faithful Citizenship* affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation. As Christians, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in a way that neglects or denies fundamental Christian values.

In *Faithful Citizenship* we bishops review the seven fundamental themes of catholic social teaching: the sacred dignity of the human person, our call to family, community and participation, the basic right and responsibilities that we have as members of the human family, a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, the solidarity of our one human family, regardless of national, racial, ethnic, religious, economic or idealized differences and the need to care for God’s creation.

We bishops ask our people to view candidates and their position on public policy issues through the lens of these seven principles. The range of issues we urge voters to consider in casting their ballots range from abortion to euthenasia and everything in between: human cloning, genocide, torture, the death penalty, the bond of marriage, just wages, the need for immigration, health care, agricultural and social security reform, affordable housing, discrimination based on race, sex, ethnicity, disability condition or age, global climate change and national and international poverty, just to mention a few.

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The call for health care reform is rooted in the biblical call to heal the sick and to serve the least of these. How provision is made for children in the dawn of life, the elderly in the twilight of life, and the sick, needy, and those with disabling conditions in the shadow of life are clear indices of the moral character and commitment of a nation. While good health cannot be assured to everyone, good health care can and should be guaranteed.

The Hebrew Bible says we are all created 'b'tzelem Elohim' --in the Image of God. This makes every human life as precious as the next. In this light, we can say that, by 'pricing out' a portion of our population from health care coverage, we mock the image of God and destroy the vessels of God's work.

The list of issues that need to be addressed in alleviating poverty in our state is unfortunately long: rising energy costs, affordable housing, quality education, living wage jobs, child care, and more. We encourage you to look at the solutions being promoted by the national campaign



to cut poverty in half in America in the next 10 years.

We call on you to increase funding for our state's 3,000 food pantries and soup kitchens, which feed more than 2 million New Yorkers annually. The lines keep growing every year and will overflow once again this winter with the rising costs of heat and fuel. We recognize that such programs are not a long term solution; instead, they are stark symbols of our society's failure to share the bounty of the richest economy in the world.

The state budget is about our choices. The state budgetary needs should be met through tax fairness that restores the principle that those who can most afford it bear a greater share of the burden.

In language that resonates with a deep understanding of religious values, one of your gubernatorial predecessors, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." We urge you to take up this challenge. ■

"The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and the critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

—MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. *Strength to Love*, 1963.

## Bishops cont'd...

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In sum, through our public policy statement, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship we bishops are calling for a renewed kind of politics: one focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls; more on the needs of the weak than on the benefits to the strong; more on the pursuit of the common good than on the demands of narrow self interests.

Hopefully, our catholic community and all people of good will will bring the religious values and their prayerfully informed consciences to the ballot box this November 4.

This, I believe is the kind of political participation which reflects both the social teaching of our faith and the best traditions of our nation. ■





## Resources and Announcements

### *For your newsletter or bulletin*

#### **Ecumenical Advocacy Days**

This annual conference brings together lay and clergy from all parts of the United States to explore the background of key issues facing the nation and then to meet with their members of Congress. It is co-sponsored by the National Council of Churches, Church World Service, denominations and other Christian partners with strong witness programs in DC.

#### **“Enough for All Creation”**

Coming together March 13-16, 2008, participants will focus on climate change, immigration and poverty in the US and around the world. The opening session begins at 6:30 pm on Friday. On Saturday and Sunday there are a variety of workshops and advocacy training events as well as time for ecumenical worship and denominational fellowship. Monday, participants spend time on Capitol Hill visiting with their representatives with whom they have made appointments.

You can look over the information about Ecumenical Advocacy Days on the web (<http://advocacydays.org/>) for details on housing, registration, etc. Many churches and/or denominations will provide partial scholarships for interested participants. ■

The publishers of the **Poverty and Justice Bible** went looking and highlighted more than 2,000 verses in the scriptures to show that God has something to say about injustice and oppression.

With bright orange highlighting, a quick glance is all you need to see that God cares about the poor – a lot.

Reliable, readable, and relevant Contemporary English Version translation. Includes a 32-page study guide to help you and your group discover, dream, and do things to make poverty history. Published by World Vision and Bible Society.

*“Be warned... the following pages change everything.”* - Rob Bell, Mars Hill Bible Church ■

#### **Strained Glass**

Up to 50 percent of the average household’s energy consumption goes to heating and cooling the home. But properly sealed windows can help insulate your home, reducing the energy consumed-and money spent-to maintain indoor temperature. A new Web site, [www.HeatSmartNY.org](http://www.HeatSmartNY.org), is available to give New Yorkers tips for lowering heating bills and help them determine if they are eligible for assistance. The state is also hosting 630 workshops around the state to educate the public about reducing energy costs. ■

#### **“A Common Word Between Us and You”**

The Episcopal Commission for Interfaith Dialogue of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops recently released a response to “A Common Word Between Us and You,” a letter drafted in late 2007 by prominent Muslim leaders and scholars addressed to Pope Benedict XVI and other Christian leaders calling for mutual understanding.

In the response, the Commission encourages greater interreligious communication, calling for dialogue and collaboration on issues relevant to members of Christian and Muslim communities. The Commission also makes notable mention of how members of these faith communities share a common responsibility towards the needy and value mercy, forgiveness and the practice of almsgiving, among other things.

Go to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website ([www.cccb.ca](http://www.cccb.ca)) for details. ■

## Global Slavery and the Plague of Poverty

Twenty-eight million people in the world today are slaves: held against their will, forced to work under someone else's rule, trapped in an endless cycle of control, abuse, and injustice. Some are born, live, and die as slaves. From sex-trafficking to forced labor, across Asia, Africa, and Europe to the U.S., slavery thrives.

Poverty is the consistent soil in which this horror flourishes. Three billion people today live on \$2 or less per day; less than the price of single-shot latté. People inside and outside the Church live this vulnerable, daily nightmare. The following websites help us to understand, to engage, and to respond to these realities as an expression of following Jesus Christ:

*Call+Response* ([www.callandresponse.com](http://www.callandresponse.com)) is

a documentary about global slavery and our responses.

*Free the Slaves* ([www.freetheslaves.net](http://www.freetheslaves.net)) is a non-profit organization working to end slavery worldwide.

*International Justice Mission* ([www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org)) is a human rights agency that secures justice for victims of slavery.

*Love 146* ([www.love146.org](http://www.love146.org)) combats child sex slavery and exploitation.

*Not For Sale* ([www.notforsalecampaign.org](http://www.notforsalecampaign.org)) is a campaign to fight the global slave trade.

*The Sold Project* ([www.thesoldproject.com](http://www.thesoldproject.com)) is a documentary about sex trafficking in the US. ■



## Holding Fast

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is inviting its members to participate in a monthly churchwide fast for “repentance, reflection, and coordinated actions: to empathize with those suffering from hunger and famine around the world. The call to action comes as approximately 854 million people worldwide are going hungry and soaring food prices are putting another 100 million people at risk of starvation while others live with plenty to spare.

Food shortages and famines are nothing new. The difference now is that food, water and climate crises are converging to create what has been called a “perfect storm” causing unprecedented suffering, according to information issued by the PC(USA) regarding the churchwide fast.

Over the next year, the denomination will study aspects of the world hunger crisis, including trade policies, climate change and the rising cost of food. It will release its findings along with scriptural studies during each fasting period.

Starting the first Friday of every month and ending the next day, individuals will abstain from food for 40 hours. The fast ends with a

communal meal and a time for people to respond to the crisis by donating time and money to the cause. The year-long cycle of 40-hour fasts will end on World Food Day, Oct. 16, 2009.

Just as the people of ancient Israel fasted to discern God's will and express their grief in times of war, famine or natural disaster, we may observe special times of prayer and fasting in times of trouble and pain. And the global food crisis certainly qualifies as one of those times.

Interpretive materials for each month of the fast will be posted online at [www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/](http://www.pcusa.org/foodcrisis/). Available at the Internet site will be prayers for communal or individual use written by those who are participating in the fasts along with PC(USA) partners and theologians from the United States and overseas. There will be analysis about issues that are perpetuating the food crisis, such as global warming, flawed trade agreements, lack of access to food or loss of inherited seeds to grow indigenous crops.

For additional information about the fasts, contact Ruth Farrell, Presbyterian Hunger Program coordinator, by phone at (888) 728-7228, x5816, or [Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org](mailto:Ruth.Farrell@pcusa.org). ■



**GOOD NEWS**  
Go tell it ... EVERYWHERE!

† Following are fall courses of the Capital Region Theological Center. Pre-registration is required at (518)462-2470, or go to [www.capitalrtc.org](http://www.capitalrtc.org).

**Understanding Leadership in Paul: Theology, People and Practices** October 31, 9am-4pm, led by Dr. Efrain Agosto, Prof. of New Testament, Hartford Seminary. **Boundary Awareness Workshop** Nov. 8, 9am-4pm, Rev. Dr. David Olsen, Exec. Dir., Samaritan Counseling Center. Issues of power, authority, ethics, gender, and the overall setting of healthy boundaries will be set. **Generations! We're Better Together** Nov. 15, 9am-4pm, Rev. Joyce MacKichan Walker & Carol Wehrheim. Nationally renowned authors and presenters will explore the theological and educational foundations of intergenerational ministries. **World Religions**, Br. Linh Hoang, Ph.D., Siena College. Hinduism: Nov. 2, 6:30-9pm, Hindu Temple Society of the Capital District. Buddhism: Nov. 9, 2-5pm, Karma Thegsum Choling Buddhist Center, Albany. Judaism: Dec. 2, 6:30-9:30pm, Congregation Gates of Heaven, Schenectady.

† **Access to Worship**, sponsored by The NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Faith Initiative Program, and the Self-Advocacy Association of New York State, Nov. 13, Albany. This daylong Seminar will provide faith leaders with knowledge and information about individuals with various disabilities. Contact 473-6255 or [catherine.patterson@omr.state.ny.us](mailto:catherine.patterson@omr.state.ny.us).

† **Empowering Communities for Successful Aging...Housing, Neighborhood Supports, and Services** Nov. 12 & 13, Saratoga. Register at [www.empoweringnycommunities.org](http://www.empoweringnycommunities.org). New York's older population is growing rapidly, and by the year 2015 adults age sixty and over will make up 20 to 29 percent of the general population. This cohort be 50% larger than the existing senior adult population, and will also be more culturally and economically diverse.

† **"Body, Mind and Soul: Celebrating, Strength-**

**ening and Sustaining Clergy Wholeness in Small Congregations,"** June 24-July 2, Virginia Theological Seminary. Pastors of small congregations (and their spouses) are urged to apply for a nine-day ecumenical conference. All expenses, including travel, are underwritten by the Lilly Endowment. Limited to 25 clergy. Apply by Dec 15 at [www.vts.edu/education/collegium](http://www.vts.edu/education/collegium).

† **Payne Alternative Theological Education Program's** courses: Thursdays, Oct. 9 - Dec. 18, 6:30-9pm, Albany. **Parish Counseling**, Rev. Dearthrice DeWitt, incoming Protestant Chaplain at Colgate University. Equip lay and clergy congregational leaders with the basic Biblical tools, pastoral counseling techniques, & spiritual guidance for therapeutic conversations. **New Testament Survey**, Rev. Dr. Mickey Drown, Preacher & Community Organizer. Approaching the New Testament gospel, letters, and writings as if for the first time, students will learn the literary and contextual basics, and become familiar with most recent insights into how the scriptures serve as spiritual guides. Register with Rev. Eloise Frazier at 382-5430.

† **"Domestic Violence Issues in Local Church and Community Ministry: A General Overview"** Oct. 29, 12-1:30pm, First Lutheran Church, Albany. Led by Trudy Lawson from the NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and the Rev. Dr. Alan Rhodes of the Mechanicville United Methodist Church. Cost: \$20. Call the Council of Churches at 462-5450 by Oct. 22.

† **Council of Churches' 30th Annual Musical Celebration**, Nov. 9, 3pm, Church of St. Vincent de Paul, Albany. This inspiring event features choirs and musicians from various churches and traditions.

† **Council of Churches' 72nd Annual Community Thanksgiving Day Worship Service**, Nov. 27, 10am, Cathedral of All Saints, Albany. Bishop Howard Hubbard (RCDA) will preach. Music by the Cathedral Choir of Men and Boys. ■

# One Table

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CAPITAL REGION ECUMENICAL ORGANIZATION

**Autumn 2008 VOL. IX NO. III**

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## Capital Region Ecumenical Organization

### **The Covenant**

“Believing ourselves to be under God’s direction through the Holy Spirit, we feel the need for an ongoing regional, ecumenical structure as a vehicle of cooperation for and among those bodies accepting the sole lordship of Christ. We are aware of the richness of our varied religious traditions, we purpose to work together for the good of all people and to strive for reconciliation among all groups and ideologies.”

“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil. 2:4-8)