

# Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

## Oregon Faith Movement

### Board Members

The Rev. J.W. Matt Hennessee  
*Co-chair*

The Rev. Linda Jaramillo  
*Co-chair*

The Rev. Michael Grogan  
*Chair-elect*

The Rev. Paul Belz-Templeman  
*Treasurer*

The Very Rev. Nathan LeRud  
*Secretary*

The Rev. Catherine Allard

The Rev. Vicky Brown

Shawn Daley

The Rev. Roberta Egli

The Rev. Ernestine Flemister

The Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr.

Charles Hudson

Alaide Ibarra

The Rev. Dr. Mark Knutson

The Rev. Sean Langdon

The Rev. Terry McCray Hill

The Rev. Nancy McGrath Green

Barbara O'Hare

Peter Sergienko

The Rev. Dr. William Sinkford

Jane Snyder

Pedro Sosa

Gary Withers

The Rev. Dr. Rodney Page

*Lifetime Member*

Jan Musgrove Elfers

*President*

Interchurch Center

245 S. Bancroft St., Ste. B

Portland, Oregon 97239

phone (503) 221-1054

fax (503) 223-7007

email [emo@emoregon.org](mailto:emo@emoregon.org)

website [EMOregon.org](http://EMOregon.org)

To: Members of the Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
From: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon Interfaith Power & Light

Re: **EMO/OIPL supports SCR 17**

March 18, 2021

Dear Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Findley, and members of the committee,

Through eight service programs and a membership of 15 denominations and over 150 congregations and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) and Oregon Interfaith Power & Light (OIPL) serve hundreds of thousands of Oregonians across the state. Our work is guided by our mission statement and our Statement of Social Principles and Concerns, and it is because of these documents that **EMO/OIPL supports SCR 17, a long overdue statement of principles centering environmental justice in Oregon's planning and action.**<sup>1</sup>

In our Statement of Social Principles and Concerns, EMO/OIPL expresses our desire for "a government and social order that is founded on principles of human dignity and political equality ... and furthers social justice and the common good." However, as outlined in the coalition letter submitted by NAACP Eugene-Springfield and Beyond Toxics, our state remains a remarkably unjust and unequal place. Historically, Oregon's government, businesses and institutions have caused tremendous harm to communities of color through exclusion laws, hate crimes, segregation, and unchecked pollution. Despite courageous and sometimes successful resistance by BIPOC communities, and despite progress within Oregon's institutions, these intersecting structures of oppression continue to deny institutional power to Oregonians of color.

A central reason for this is a widespread unwillingness to listen to the lived experiences of BIPOC and low-wealth Oregonians. Those who know best about the threats of pollution and climate chaos, like the Latinx communities uprooted by the 2020 Alameda fires, too often are not represented at agency meetings dedicated to addressing these crises.<sup>2</sup> We are happy to see signs of progress on this, like the Governor's Environmental Justice Task Force. However, more can and must be done, and although representation is just a start, we cannot hope to create a better state without it. **Representation matters, and meaningfully including frontline communities in formal decision-making affirms human dignity and makes for good policy.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, "About Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO)," <https://emoregon.org/>; Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, "Statement of Social Principles and Concerns," last revised 2012, [https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public\\_Policy/EMO\\_Statement\\_of\\_Social\\_Principles\\_rev\\_2012.pdf](https://emoregon.org/pdfs/Public_Policy/EMO_Statement_of_Social_Principles_rev_2012.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Noelle Crombie, "Southern Oregon Wildfire Razes Close-Knit Latino Community, Thousands Face Housing Crisis," *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, September 27, 2020, <https://www.oregonlive.com/wildfires/2020/09/southern-oregon-wildfire-razes-close-knit-latino-community-thousands-face-housing-crisis.html>.

Faith traditions across the world proclaim the need to center the voices of the marginalized. They claim that the measure of a society's success isn't how well it treats the average citizen, but how well it attends to the least powerful. Historically, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, people with low wealth, and nonhuman members of the environment have been the least powerful and the most vulnerable to harm. As we face the injustices of racial inequity and environmental degradation, we must remember to "hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor."<sup>3</sup> That is, the harm we do to the planet is inextricably linked with the harm we do to marginalized communities, including BIPOC communities, and we cannot address the one injustice without addressing the other.

This last year, our entire state has suffered a pandemic, catastrophic weather and constant reminders of ongoing racial injustice. But, these events have not affected everyone equally, and if our state hopes to emerge from these disasters stronger and more resilient than before, we need to commit ourselves to listening to those hurting most. **As our state ramps up its investments in mitigating and adapting to environmental degradation, we urge the Legislature to pass SCR 17 and make our state's investments more community-informed and equitable.**

We thank you for the opportunity to comment today. We hope and pray your legislative deliberations maintain focus on caring for marginalized Oregonians, especially environmental justice communities, and we pray for your health and safety in this time of pandemic.

Sincerely,

The Reverend Cecil Charles Prescod, OCC  
*Incoming Chair of the Public Policy Advocacy Committee*  
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon Interfaith Power & Light

---

<sup>3</sup> Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si': Of the Holy Father Francis on Care for Our Common Home* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, July 2015), §49.