



NEWS FROM NAEIS

April 2011



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Reflections from the President

I find it very challenging these days to keep up with the social and political challenges of our country. Efforts towards the banning of the death penalty are heating up in many states. Illinois has taken the bold decision of abolishing the death penalty and Montana is taking steps to put an end to it. Union workers have raised their voices in protest against government actions to nullify their bargaining rights in the state of Wisconsin. The list of states that want to emulate the political gambblings of Arizona increases. Kentucky and Indiana, among others, are states that have tried to pass legislation to criminalize the presence and support of undocumented immigrants. Our Federal government, in its efforts to reduce our national spending, most probably will end up by penalizing the "least of these." There should be no surprise on this last one.

Most, if not all, of the organizations we serve are working in some degree or another in these social issues. Our commitment to justice obliges us to be part of the solution. Our voice must speak loud and clear when it comes to the well-being of our fellow citizens. Our local, regional, and state councils are voices that join the voices of many other community agencies. But, our voice must always articulate the fundamental reason behind our actions. Our organizations exist because of the moral, ethical and spiritual principles of our faith. We serve, work, and sometimes even shout and denounce, because of the inherent human dignity of those we represent and serve.

As a Christian, I see Christ in the face of the immigrant worker and his or her children. I see Christ's face in the plight of the workers who challenge the systems that often side with the powerful. God's face is shown even in the face of the one condemned for his or her crimes.

We must do all we can to revitalize and strengthen our organizations. The churches, congregations, and communities of faith that support our work must hear anew the reason why we engage in this work. Our voices are needed in the public arena of our cities, counties, and states. Our work and ministry must demonstrate both the passion of God and the plight of God's beloved.

--Carlos Malavé

Save the Date

The 2012 NAEIS Gathering will be held at **Pendle Hill**, a Quaker retreat center in Philadelphia, PA from the evening of **Sunday March 18** through the morning of **Wednesday March 21** 2012.

See www.pendlehill.org for more about the site.

Join NAEIS or Renew Your Membership

NAEIS depends on individual member contributions to provide much-needed networking, resource-sharing, and professional development opportunities to the ecumenical and interfaith communities which serve our nation.

Please join or renew today!

<http://www.naeis.org/aboutnaeis/membership.htm>

Report from the NAEIS Gathering

About 40 NAEIS members and friends gathered in San Antonio February 4-7 for a time of professional and personal networking and development. The theme of the gathering was *"Welcoming One Another - The Promise of Community"* with programs on welcoming young adults, welcoming the ecumenical and interreligious other and welcoming immigrants and poor persons. A highlight for many was the trip to the Haven for Hope, an innovative campus-style environment to support services to the poor and homeless of San Antonio. The visioning conversations were very fruitful, with initiatives coming forward to develop an online resource to tell the stories of our work, efforts to commemorate the 10th anniversary of 9/11, and an initiative to include young adults in the life of NAEIS and the organizations linked to NAEIS. More specific outcomes of the gathering and reports on specific programs will appear in forthcoming newsletters.



Planning for 2012

The 2012 NAEIS Gathering will be held at Pendle Hill, a Quaker retreat center on a 23-acre wooded campus in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania -- see <http://www.pendlehill.org>. The gathering will take place from the evening of Sunday, March 18 through the morning of Wednesday, March 21.

Grant Abbott from the St. Paul Area Council of Churches is serving as Program Chair. If you would like to serve on the program planning committee for the 2012 Gathering, please contact Grant at GAbbott@spacc.org.

Find NAEIS on Facebook

To join the NAEIS Facebook group, simply:

- 1) log in to Facebook;
- 2) search for 'National Association of Ecumenical and Interreligious Staff' and select our group; and
- 3) click on the "Request to Join" button.

All NAEIS members and others who want to relate to NAEIS are more than welcome!

Contact NAEIS

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New NAEIS Board

The 2011-2012 NAEIS Board was elected and sworn in at the San Antonio Gathering in February. New board members include Grant Abbott from the St. Paul Area Council of Churches, David Fraccaro from Interfaith Youth Core, and Stan Kimer from the North Carolina Council of Churches and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Many thanks to outgoing board members Dan Krutz and Sister Sylvia Schmidt for their faithful service.



Pictured above are: *Back row (l-r):* David Fraccaro, Grant Abbott (2012 Program Chair), Stan Kimer, Ron Quay, Scott Anderson (Past-President). *Front Row (l-r):* Alice Woldt (Treasurer), Carlos Malavé (President), and Elsie Dursi (Vice-President). *Not pictured:* Clark Lobenstine (Secretary) and David Alger.

Help Develop Young Adult Leaders

by David Fraccaro

New and exciting connections were made at this year's NAEIS gathering in San Antonio between NAEIS members and young leaders in the ecumenical and interfaith movement from Interfaith Youth Core, New Fire and the Student Christian Movement - USA. It seemed everyone left the space with a greater appreciation and renewed hope for what is possible if all of our groups find innovative and effective ways to support one another.

Following up on this potential, Rev. Robyn Fickes from New Fire, Heraldo E. Kane-Osorto from SCM - USA, Rev. David Fraccaro from Interfaith Youth Core, and Ammon Ripple from the National Council of Churches worked diligently together to present the "Young Ecumenical/Interfaith Leaders Initiative."

The goal of the initiative is to connect NAEIS members with a local student faith leader in their region. These student "ecumenical/interfaith fellows" would be directly supported by their local ecumenical or interfaith organization, and trained by IFYC, New Fire and SCM-USA, to build a movement of young ecumenical/interfaith leaders that will make a significant impact

through education, dialogue and service on their campuses and in their communities.

Please view the proposal at <http://www.nccusa.org/lre/Ecumenical-Interfaith-Leaders-Initiative.pdf> to find out more and be among the first to pilot this exciting initiative. We will investigate supplemental funding for agencies who may not be able to cover all costs.

Faith Advocates for Jobs: Help Local Faith Communities Support the Unemployed and Underemployed

Your ecumenical or interfaith organization is invited to become a coalition member of Faith Advocates for Jobs, a campaign initiated by Interfaith Worker Justice to support congregation-based initiatives which provide personal support to the unemployed and underemployed, educate about the causes of joblessness, and encourage advocacy on public policy issues which impact the availability of jobs in our nation.

Members of the coalition already include Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the West Virginia Council of Churches, the Poverty Initiative of the National Council of Churches, the Arkansas Interfaith Alliance, Bread for the World, and a number of national religious bodies and local Interfaith Worker Justice groups.

For more information, including the organizational and congregational pledge forms, download the toolkit at: <http://www.iwj.org/doc/jobs-toolkit.pdf> .

Please contact Rev. Paul Sherry for further information: psherry@iwj.org or 202-525-3055.

AmpleHarvest.org Connects Food Pantries with Fresh Produce

Please consider connecting any food pantries in your area with **AmpleHarvest.org** - an online resource which links local gardeners with community food pantries. Many local gardens produce more food than can be eaten by a single family or given to friends -- this linkage provides a way to help avoid wasting food while also providing nutritious, fresh produce to those who need it.



For more information, see the National Council of Churches press release at <http://www.ncccusa.org/news/110214ampleharvest.html> or go straight to <http://AmpleHarvest.org>. Note that they also have a page for Christian faith groups at <http://www.ampleharvest.org/LFish-Loaves.php>.

Register for the 2011 NAINConnect Gathering

The North American Interfaith Network (NAIN) will gather in Phoenix, Arizona July 24-26, 2011 with the theme "*Many People, Many Faiths - One Common Principle, THE GOLDEN RULE.*" The keynote speaker will be Mussie Haillu, an international advocate and activist for a culture of peace and interfaith harmony.

For more information, go to <http://nain.org/connect11reg.htm> .

Passings

Members of the NAEIS community mourn the loss of three bright lights in recent months.

David Bos was a pioneer of ecumenical community ministries. He started one of the first such organizations, Smith Haven Ministries, on Long Island in 1967 and later served St. Matthews Area Ministry in Louisville and Interfaith Community Ministry in New Albany, Indiana. He was a founder of the Interfaith Community Ministry Network and wrote two books on community ministry: *A Practical Guide to Community Ministry* (1993) and *Bound Together: A Theology for Ecumenical Community Ministry* (2005).

David's full obituary can be found at:

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/louisville/obituary.aspx?n=alvin-david-bos&pid=148652532>.

Oeita Theunissen was a community leader in Dallas since she moved there in 1969 to work for the Dallas Community of Churches. Her hunger advocacy work led to the creation of North Dallas Shared Ministries which continues to provide a spectrum of ministries to the marginalized today. Oeita was a founding member of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in the early 1990s and contributed to the founding of the Dallas Women's Foundation which has invested more than \$13 million in the Dallas community.

Oeita's full obituary can be found at:

[http://www.dallasnews.com/obituary-headlines/20110301-oeita-theunissen-involved-in-religious-and-women_s-issues-dies-at-87.ece](http://www.dallasnews.com/obituary-headlines/20110301-oeita-theunissen-involved-in-religious-and-women-s-issues-dies-at-87.ece)

(subscription required - full obituary available upon request from aripple@nccusa.org).

Mimi Dortch was the director of the Arkansas Interfaith Conference for 20 years and was known as a tireless advocate for the acceptance of all. She also founded a homeless shelter and a repertory theater in Little Rock. During her time at the Arkansas Interfaith Conference, she expanded the membership from Christian and Jewish communities to also include Muslim and Baha'i faith communities and she also served as the AIC Choir Camp director for 22 years.

Mimi's full obituary can be found at:

<http://www.ruebelfuneralhome.com/obituaryindividual.php?id=988> and <http://epaper.ardemgaz.com/WebChannel/ShowStory.asp?Path=ArDemocrat/2011/03/01&ID=Ar01203>

Share Your News

Please send articles with news, events, or resources that may be of service to the NAEIS community to Newsletter Committee member Ammon Ripple at aripple@nccusa.org. The deadline for the next issue is May 9.