

## Congregations Energized for Environmental Justice

A packed house of over 200 persons gathered on January 30 at Highland Christian United Church of Christ in Portland to explore “Environmental Justice and Faith” at the third annual *Earth Care Summit*. Participants represented over 50 congregations and religious groups from across Oregon and southwest Washington. The event was sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns and Oregon Interfaith Power & Light project. It began with a delicious southern style locally grown vegetarian meal prepared by Po' Shines Café—a mission of Celebration Tabernacle that provides needed training and employment.



*The Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr., gave the keynote address.*

The evening moved quickly into a powerful keynote by the Rev. Dr. Leroy Haynes, a well-known civil rights leader, pastor of Allen Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and EMO Board president elect. He fired up participants to care about our “Mother Earth who is dying,” but he added, “It is still not too late.” His presentation included both scientific and poetic insight about the continuing degradation of the earth for all its creatures, as well as the environmental injustices disproportionately suffered by people of color and the poor. He also shared his story of successfully fighting a lead plant in a poor African American neighborhood as a pastor in Dallas, Texas.

A congregational greening case study of Nativity Lutheran in Bend, Ore., focused on its orchard and community gardens, which have built community among people of diverse socio-economic levels. By being welcoming, an amazing amount of talent and resources came forth. A new door was punched from the fellowship hall to the garden. Later, participants sharpened their earth caring skills by choosing two of 18 roundtables and presentations offered on everything from making solar energy accessible to all to principles of environmental justice, from faith and the Farm Bill to environmental health. Mike Branch from the Muslim Educational Trust closed with an inspirational blessing

The mutual inspiration among congregations was powerful. Surely, the renewed vision of those attending will enrich their leadership in their local congregations, enabling them to steward Creation and address environmental injustice in creative new ways.

—The Rev. Vern Groves, United Methodist Church, Ret.