

## Bill McKibben Retreat

By Andrew Plambeck, OIPL Intern, Summer 2009



*Participants in the retreat posing for a 350 photo*

Oregon Interfaith Power and Light was excited last month to host author and activist Bill McKibben, founder of the 350 movement, for a workshop at St. Philip Neri Church about climate change and caring for Creation. This is the third time that EMO has hosted an event featuring him, but this time the setting was intentionally more intimate and reflective.

McKibben, who wrote the [first book on global warming](#) back in the 1980s, joined presenters from various faith traditions to help motivate and sustain our local activism. “It’s a quiet revolution,” he has said about the 350 movement, “begun by ordinary people with the stuff of our daily lives.”

A panel discussion of what motivates and sustains environmental action included Sister Pat Nagle of [St. Philip Neri](#), Rabbi James Greene of [Temple Beth Shalom](#), the Rev. Ross Miller, Courtney Demko of the [Muslim Educational Trust](#) and Phil Carver, organizer of the [Oregon 350 Climate Crisis Walk](#).

Participants reflected a sincere and motivational energy that consistently raised themes of kinship, spiritual connection to our natural surroundings and the importance of social justice. The small group dialogues about what motivates and sustains environmental activism introduced ideas of faith, love of nature, hope for a brighter future, an understanding that all life is connected and a feeling of responsibility to our children.

The workshop was a preface to McKibben's keynote speech that evening to kick off the Muddy Boot Organic Festival, a three-day celebration of all things sustainable, also hosted by St. Philip Neri Church. The festival boasted music, food, nonprofit and craft vendors, panel discussions and Mayor Sam Adams' introduction of Portland's Climate Action Plan.

The workshop was an exciting jumping-off point to refocus and reconsider our efforts, especially with the International Day of Climate Action, October 24, around the corner. Attendees left feeling motivated, inspired and connected to like-minded activists in both

the faith community and the environmental movement.

We, as human beings, are facing a brush with mortality that is already causing increased poverty, excess drought and famine, widespread displacement, mass emigration and destruction of our natural resources. The next few years will determine the fate of the next thousand years, so it is important to continue interacting with other concerned humans around the world.

As OIPL steering committee member Jim Metcalfe wrote in a recent [letter to the editor](#) of *The Oregonian*, the book of Proverbs claims that “one who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.” We can all remember this as we seek to fulfill our mission in creating a healthier planet to pass on to future generations.