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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Interfaith Summit will focus on the needs of homeless children, youth and families in Oregon as OHCS reports a 36 percent one-year increase in number of homeless children**

A broad interfaith coalition of religious organizations and congregations, joined by nonprofit providers and government agencies, is convening a statewide, full-day Interfaith Summit on Homeless Children, Youth and Families in Salem, Ore., on Thursday, June 24, 2010.

This announcement comes just as recent numbers released by the Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services (OHCS) confirm that childhood and family homelessness is not only increasing rapidly in Oregon but is also increasing more rapidly than the overall rate of homelessness.

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon and other coalition partners began organizing the Interfaith Summit on Homeless Children, Youth and Families during the fall of 2009, after the Oregon Department of Education announced that there were over 18,000 homeless students enrolled in Oregon public schools during the 2008-2009 school year. That represented a 14 percent increase from the year before, and a 122 percent increase over the previous five years.

Yesterday, the bad news about childhood and family homelessness in Oregon got worse. OHCS announced that during a one night count conducted in January 2010, overall homelessness increased 12 percent, but the number of homeless families with children increased 33 percent, and the number of homeless children increased 36 percent.

- **What:** Interfaith Summit on Homeless Children Youth and Families. (Download registration form at [www.emoregon.org](http://www.emoregon.org).)
- **When:** Thursday, June 24, 2010, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Salem First United Methodist Church, 600 State St. Salem, Ore.
- **Why:** To inspire and inform even greater religious and government response to the rising numbers of homeless children, youth and families in Oregon and nationwide.
- **Key Speakers:** *Barbara Duffield*, policy director, the *National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth*; *Claas Ehlers*, national director, Interfaith Hospitality Networks at

the organization *Family Promise*; **Heather Lyons**, senior program manager, *Corporation for Supportive Housing*; **Jean Lasater**, Homeless and Runaway Youth Initiative coordinator, at the *Oregon Commission on Children and Families*; **Galen Phipps**, director, Oregon Network for Youth; *the Rev. Paul Schroeder*, faith-based service coordinator, JOIN; **Rick Crager**, deputy director, Oregon Housing and Community Services; **Bill Hall**, commissioner, Lincoln County; and a host of religious leaders representing a variety of religious traditions.

The Summit will focus on educating and inspiring members of religious communities to become more active in response to the increase in childhood and family homelessness. Speakers will provide a detailed overview of the problem, its diverse causes, and its tragic consequences. But speakers will also focus on a range of solutions available at both the local and congregational levels, as well as policies and programs that need greater support at the state and federal levels. Key areas of focus include preventing and ending family homelessness, education of homeless children and youth, shelter and services for homeless families, and the special causes and needs of runaway and homeless teens. The day will also include interfaith prayer, song and action.

*Summit is sponsored by:*

Central Pacific Conference, United Church of Christ  
Downtown Chapel – Roman Catholic Parish  
Human Solutions  
Interfaith Committee on Homelessness (WA County)  
Interfaith Council of Greater Portland  
Morningside United Methodist Church  
Oregon Area Jewish Committee  
Oregon Department of Education  
Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services  
Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger  
OR-ID Chapter, Methodist Federation for Social Action

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon  
First Christian Church, Eugene  
Gorge Ecumenical Ministries  
Interfaith Network of Central Oregon  
Inter-Religious Action Network of WA County  
Muslim Educational Trust  
Neighborhood Partnerships  
Oregon Center for Christian Values  
Oregon Food Bank  
Oregon Islamic Chaplains Organization  
Salem First Congregational Church (UCC)  
ShelterCare

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**Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon is a statewide association of Christian denominations, congregations, ecumenical organizations and interfaith partners working together to improve the lives of Oregonians through community ministry programs, ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue, environmental ministry and public policy advocacy. Please note: The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Portland releases all public policy statements through the Oregon Catholic Conference.**