

## Let Justice Roll in Ohio

The Central Southeast Ohio Association Department for Church in the World has made working to raise the minimum wage in Ohio one of its priorities.

The *LET JUSTICE ROLL* living wage campaign is a program of the National Council of Churches of Christ. The Rev. Paul Sherry, former President of the United Church of Christ, is its national coordinator.

Wages are a bedrock moral issue. They reflect whether you believe workers are just another cost of production—like rent, electricity or raw materials—or whether you believe workers are human beings with inherent dignity, equal rights, and basic needs of food, shelter, healthcare and so on. Wages reflect your values and our nation's values.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said "there is nothing but a lack of

social vision to prevent us from paying an adequate wage to every American [worker] whether he is a hospital worker, laundry worker, maid, or day laborer."

### Why do we need a new Ohio minimum wage?

- The federal minimum wage of \$5.15/hour has not changed since 1997.

- Minimum wage employees working 40 hours a week, 52 weeks a year, earn \$10,700 a year, \$6,000 below the poverty line for a family of three. Since the last increase of the federal minimum wage in 1997, its value has eroded by nearly 20%.

- Today, the real value of the minimum wage is more than \$3.50 below what it was in 1968. To have the purchasing power it had in 1968, the minimum wage would have to be \$8.82 an hour today, not \$5.15.

- At \$4.25 per hour, Ohio's minimum wage is actually below the federal minimum wage of \$5.15. 92,000 Ohioans are working at this sub-par wage.

*LET JUSTICE ROLL OHIO* is a member of Ohioans for a Fair Minimum Wage, working to raise Ohio's minimum to \$6.85 in a ballot initiative by November 2006.

The CSEOA Department for Church in the World is seeking individuals in each of the Association congregations who will circulate petitions to have an increase in the Ohio minimum wage placed on the November 2006 ballot.

For more information about the campaign or about becoming a petition circulator, contact Forrest Hoppe or Ron Hooker, Chair of the CSEOA Department for Church in the World, at 614-322-0777 or rhooker2003@yahoo.com.

## Junior high youth explore ways faith can change the world

The 2005 Central Southeast Ohio Junior High Youth Event was held October 16 at **First Congregational United Church of Christ, Columbus**. Over 60 youth and adult advisors from our Association churches participated in an afternoon of fellowship, learning experiences and worship focusing on the way our faith can make a positive difference in the world.

Participants worked their way around tables piled with toothpaste, towels, combs and the other items that make up personal care kits. The group assembled 100 kits that will be sent to Church World Service to be distributed to disaster victims.



The young people got a taste of what it might be like to live on minimum wage by playing the Minimum Wage board game. With the "Uprooted" simulation, they had a chance to learn a little about what it is like to be a refugee. Through "The Fast that Lasts" they discovered their understandings about world hunger.

Participants assemble health kits (left) and are "Uprooted" to become "refugees" (right). For more photos from the Junior High Youth Event, visit [ocucc.org/CSE/csea.htm](http://ocucc.org/CSE/csea.htm).



### Witnessing for justice

The *Witnessing for Justice* offering is scheduled for January 2006. It is an offering of the Central Southeast Ohio Association, administered by the Department for Church in the World.

*Witnessing for Justice* augments the funds disbursed through Mission Priority Grants to CSEOA churches and community programs endorsed by the churches of the Association. The offering also allows the Department for Church in the World to directly support programs and groups working on issues of justice and peace.

All churches are encouraged to provide opportunity for their members to contribute to *Witnessing for Justice* in Central and Southeast Ohio.

## North Church forum encourages civil dialogue on controversial issues

At a time when reaction to the General Synod resolution on equal marriage rights is generating controversy and divisiveness in some of our congregations, **North Congregational UCC in Columbus** offered a setting for conversation.

More than 200 people gathered on Sunday, October 23, to participate in a four-hour forum, *Marital and Parental Rights for Gay and Lesbian Persons: An Opportunity for Social Justice*.

The event was an attempt at civil dialogue between persons of faith and reputable biological and social scientists on the question of what each perspective brings to bear on moral and legal issues related to sexual orientation.

The panel of eminent evolutionary biologists, physicians, psychologists, systematic theologians and constitutional scholars conducted a public debate and discussion of the relationship between science and theology as it pertains to the question of sexual orientation. They addressed three questions:

- What does evolutionary biology tell us about the origin and permanence of sexual orientation in humans? Is sexual orientation, in fact, a "choice" as is often claimed by Christian conservatives?

- What does it mean politically, socially, and theologically that both The American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have asserted that, "Denial of marital and parental rights to gay and lesbian persons is mentally injurious"?

- What do informed, progressive systematic theologians say about the bible and homosexuality? Is it as simple as biblical literalists would have us believe?

The forum was undertaken with the recognition that questions of fairness and equality in the United States are often played out, over time, in the life of religious institutions.

The Rev. Eric Williams, Pastor of North Congregational, said "What mainline Protestantism will decide to do with the questions around homosexuality is very sig-

nificant. It is an issue that threatens to divide (and potentially conquer) the Protestant Church as no other issue has since the question of slavery was confronted more than a century ago."

The reaction to the Synod resolution "In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All" in some of our UCC congregations speaks to the truth of Eric's observation.

"We're living in a time when religious ideology and the conservative Protestant Church are playing a particularly influential role in determining public policy and legal rights," said Eric, "not only with regard to the question of homosexuality, but with regard to moral and legal questions associated with the beginning and end of life (abortion, stem-cell research, Teri Schiavo), and with the moral and legal legitimacy of the war in Iraq."

Panel member Michael Para, M.D., a professor of Infectious Disease in the OSU College of Medicine, discussed the biological basis of sexual orientation in humans from the per-

spective of evolutionary biology.

Dr. Sandra Shullman, Ph.D. is a member of the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association and Past President of the Ohio Psychological Association. She played a strategic national role in drafting the position statement released on behalf of the American Psychological Association referred to above.

Dr. Howard Fradkin, Ph.D. is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice with extensive experience in treating the mental injuries that result from discrimination against gay and lesbian persons.

He spoke about the psychological literature on faith-based programs designed to "alter" sexual orientation as well as the empirical evidence for good psychological adjustment among children raised in same-sex parent households.

Rev. Phil Hart, M.Div., M.A., is the Executive Director of Sanctuorum and is Chaplain to the GLBT community of central Ohio.

Dr. Dave Ball, J.D., Ph.D., is both a scholar of constitutional law and a

systematic theologian trained at the Graduate Theological Union of San Francisco. He is the Executive Director of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation of Columbus.

Dr. Ball placed in both historic and theological context passages from the Hebrew and New Testaments that deal with the question of homosexuality.

Rev. Patricia Wagner, M.Div., M.S., is Associate Pastor of the North Broadway United Methodist Church.

She chairs a task force in the Western Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church charged with seeking authentic unity between progressives and conservatives on the theological questions, including homosexuality, which divide the church.

Mr. Phil Moots, J.D. served as the moderator of the forum. Mr. Moots has written extensively about religious institution legal issues. He is currently serving as Chancellor (legal counsel) for the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Central  
Southeast  
News

### Central Southeast Ohio Association

6161 Busch Blvd., Suite 77 • Columbus, OH 43229-2547  
614-885-0722 • Toll-free 800-282-0740 • Fax: 614-885-8824  
Email: [cse@ocucc.org](mailto:cse@ocucc.org)

G. Forrest Hoppe, Association Minister

Jill Glass, Administrative Assistant

Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send copy to the Association office by the first of the month for publication the following month.

## Equipping the Saints in March

*Equipping the Saints*, a day of worship, workshops and fellowship for laypersons and authorized ministers, will be held on Saturday, March 4 at **Westerville Community United Church of Christ**.

*Equipping the Saints* is co-sponsored by the Central Southeast Ohio Association Department for Church and Education and the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ in central Ohio.