

WAC CHURCHLETTER

MARCH 2009



WYOMING ASSOCIATION OF CHURCHES - ON LINE NEWS
1131 13TH .
SUITE 210
CODY, WY 82414
307-527-7026



ON SACRED GROUND - CELEBRATING THE WYOMING RANGE”

The Wyoming Association of Churches, in partnership with the National Council of Churches, is sponsoring an evening forum on March 13th in Rock Springs entitled, “On Sacred Ground - Celebrating the Wyoming Range.” The public forum is designed to focus attention on this special mountain range in Wyoming and on the legislation presently before Congress to protect the Wyoming range from over development.

The keynote speaker for this event will be Tom Stroock, former state senate vice-president and U.S. Ambassador to Guatemala. His presentation will be followed by a panel made up of people representing those who see the Wyoming Range as a special place. The forum will be held at Western Wyoming College beginning with a public reception at 5:30 pm. The program will begin at 6:30 with the speaker, panel and a time for public participation. The event is free and those in the faith community are especially urged to attend.

Ambassador Stroock served as envoy to Guatemala from 1989-92. Previous to that, he represented Natrona County as state senator from 1967-89. Throughout his professional career, he has been an oil industry executive and presently serves as head of the Alpha Development Corporation. He was state Republican Party Chair from 1975-78. He has been a strong supporter of the Wyoming Range Legacy Act which is part of an omnibus public lands bill now before the Congress.

Other panelists include Phil Washburn representing the faith perspective. Phil is an active member of St. Andrews in the Pines Episcopal Church in Pinedale. Mindi Crabb of Pinedale is a tourism and marketing consultant there. She will present the tourism perspective. Mike Burd of Green River will be representing the sportsman perspective. He is also a member of the Steelworkers Union. Gary Amerine of Grey’s River Trophies in Daniel will be representing the outfitters. The panelists will

address the question of why the Wyoming Range is so important to the state's future.

This forum is designed to promote protection of the Wyoming Range as part of WAC's "On Sacred Ground" initiative. It is also designed to better inform church members about this important issue. We urge church members to attend this special event, especially those living in the southwestern part of our state.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



As of this writing, the 2009 legislature is beginning to wind down. Following is a brief review of what the WAC has supported and the probable outcomes. These are all issues that very much affect our collective life in Wyoming.

When the session began in January, we were much concerned about efforts to single out and punish illegal immigrants who may have entered our state. HB103 was seen as a harsh and "unwelcoming" piece of legislation. Our Social Justice Committee even wrote a position paper outlining the WAC's position on this issue. We were prepared to oppose it as being racist and unnecessary. On January 26th we received a note from Rep. Semlek, Agriculture Committee Chair where the bill was assigned, stating, "I doubt we will have time or the desire to here this bill." Good news. Instead, we threw our support behind House Resolution 16, which petitions the Congress to address this issue in a meaningful way.

Following are some other bills that were a concern for the WAC:

HB223 - This bill deals with anti-bullying in our schools and asks that schools develop plans to prevent bullying. Bullying of children can lead to later psychological problems and even be a prelude to gang involvement. This bill has passed the legislature and awaits the governor's signature.

SF84 - This bill will make "choking and strangling" an assault under the law. It is seen as a necessary tool to combat domestic violence. As of this Churchletter the bill has passed both houses but needs concurrence.

SF88 - Expanding the law to require "interlock safety devices" for drivers convicted of DUIs. This would allow people to drive to work but only after they pass the interlock breathing test. This bill has passed the Senate but has been "laid back" in the House.

SF39 - This would expand the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). This has also

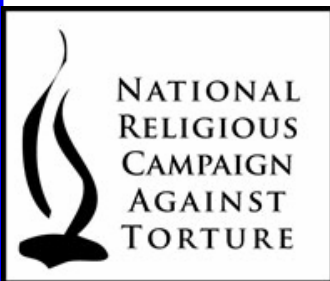
passed the U.S. Congress and makes it possible for the state's children to receive early health care. The CHIP bill passed the Senate but was then defeated by the house on a 23-32 vote. This was a great disappointment to advocates for children.

SF27 - This bill would have authorized communities to cut down on outdoor light pollution and "light trespass". This bill was lost in the Senate by one vote on third reading. This was a visionary bill that could have been a model for other states.

HB203 - An anti-discrimination bill which would have included "sexual orientation" in state statutes. The WAC supported this bill to prevent discrimination. It passed the House Judiciary Committee on a 5-4 vote but was not brought up for a vote by the full House. It would have affirmed Wyoming as the "Equality State"

HB170 - Authorization of a state lottery with proceeds going toward "education". This is still a pro gambling bill. Defeated in the House.

TORTURE - IT'S IN THE NEWS



Torture is one of those issues people don't like to think about. However, it's real and it happens too often throughout the world.

The WAC has recently been in partnership with the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) and is part of their efforts to combat policies that promote it. The goal of NRCAT is to gain active supporters in all 50 states.

Is this a concern for you or congregation? The WAC is looking for an informed individual who is passionate about preventing torture to serve as our liaison with NRCAT. This would involve staying current on the issue, joining in on a periodic NRCAT national conference call and keeping others informed about the outcome. Please contact the office at 307-866-7026 or at wychurches@wyoming.com for further information.

TRANSITION COMMITTEE RETREAT - MARCH 30-31, 2009

The WAC Transition Committee will hold its first retreat at the Thomas the Apostle Center in Cody on March 30-31 from noon to noon. Committee members will spend time reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the present organizational structure and prepare a job description for a new director who will replace The Rev. Warren Murphy after he departs on July 1st.

Members of the group to gather in Cody are: The Rev Tim Trippel (Lutheran), Joyce Corcoran

(Episcopal), The Rev Dee Lundberg (UCC), The Rev Rebekah Simon-Peter (Methodist), Donn Kesselheim (Quaker), The Rev Doug Goodwin (Disciples of Christ), the Rev Bob Fox (Catholic) and The Rev Jonathan Warren (Presbyterian). A follow-up retreat and board meeting will be held May 11-12th in Casper.

ON SACRED GROUND FUNDING

Just a reminder that the WAC is making available up to \$1,300 for each of Wyoming's six On Sacred Ground "Affinity Groups". In addition, Diane Corsick has been contracted to be of assistance to each of these groups as they develop their projects. She can be contacted at dinaflo@hotmail.com.

To date, we have received funding plans from Douglas and have been in contact with the Cheyenne, Laramie and Park County OSG groups. We urge others to take advantage of this unique financial assistance made possible through the Turner Foundation.

IMPAIRED DRIVING CONFERENCE - MAY 6, 2009 IN CASPER



Gov. Dave Freudenthal will host the fourth statewide conference on impaired driving on May 6, 2009 at the Ramada Plaza Riverside in Casper.

This year's conference will focus on advancing the fight against impaired driving and will include select workshop sessions for law enforcement, youth, prosecuting attorneys and community prevention advocates. Attendees from throughout the state will have an opportunity to network with others who also work to prevent impaired driving.

Continuing education hours will be available for attorneys, law enforcement and teachers. Conference registration information can be downloaded from the Impaired Driving Council's Web site: www.ImpairedDrivingCouncil.org. The cost to attend the conference is \$25. Limited scholarships are available.

Governor Freudenthal is also asking citizens to submit names to him of people who have made outstanding contributions in preventing impaired driving in communities throughout Wyoming. "I will be awarding those individuals and groups who have truly made a difference at this year's Conference on Impaired Driving. I hope people will put aside some time to submit their recommendations to me," the Governor said.

Individuals and groups will be honored in nine award categories including Youth Initiative, Education and Prevention, Business Leadership, Media, Adjudication, Legislative Leadership, Law Enforcement, Government and Citizen Activist. The Governor will recognize award recipients at the closing banquet.

Nominations are due March 20 and should be submitted to the Governor's Council on Impaired Driving at 153 N. 4th Street, Suite B, Lander, WY, 82520. Nomination forms can be downloaded from www.ImpairedDrivingCouncil.org. Self nominations are encouraged and accepted.

For more information about the Impaired Driving Conference or Governor's Awards, contact facilitator Lorrie Pozarik at 307-332-5475 or email: lpozarik@wyoming.com.

A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE



If you were in one of the WAC member church congregations on February 22nd, there is a good chance you heard the famous story of Jesus' Transfiguration. In that story, Jesus feels an overwhelming need to get away from the crowds to a place of retreat. Along with his closest disciples; Peter, James and John, he climbs to a mountain top to pray. It is there that he is "transfigured" or turned a radiant white. His disciples were then convinced that he was, indeed, the Son of God. For them, it was a mountain top experience.

Tradition places the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor in Galilee. Several years ago, I was privileged to make a journey to that same mountain summit. It occurred on a steamy July day and the pine trees and the cool breezes on the summit offered welcome relief. It reminded me very much of the Wyoming mountains and the spiritual respite they offer.

I have always believed that what makes Wyoming such a special place is its majestic mountains and mysterious desert lands. These are places where people can truly find spiritual strength and be refreshed for their personal journeys. No wonder Jesus sought out these special places when he was in need of getting away from the hecticness of life. Whether it be a mountain top like Tabor or a desert like the Negev where Jesus retreated for 40 days and nights to prepare for his public ministry. As we enter into this Lenten season, we would all do well to find our own isolated place where we can re-connect ourselves to God.

This is one of the many reasons that the WAC has joined the effort to save some of Wyoming's last remaining wild places. This is why we have invested so much effort in saving mountains like Little Mountain and the Wyoming Range. This is why we have spoken out to protect Adobe Town and the Red Desert from over development.



As stewards of God's natural creation, we are called to care for the places that have offered people a spiritual retreat.

In 2007 the WAC coined a new phrase for our environmental initiatives. We called it, "On Sacred Ground". We are committed to continue supporting the six On Sacred Ground "Affinity Groups" that were created after our initial "On Sacred Ground" Conference. We also continue to support our Red Desert protection initiative and are co-sponsoring the upcoming public forum. "On Sacred Ground - Celebrating the Wyoming Range" (see attached article). The WAC also continues to be concerned about even greater environmental issues such as climate change and sustainability. Our humanity would be truly diminished if we were ever deprived of a desert retreat or a mountain top experience. You are invited to join this cause.

Warren Murphy

REMEMBER TO GIVE TO THE WAC

As you should all be aware, the WAC has had to expand its fund raising capabilities because of the downturn in judicatory giving. Letters are being sent out to thank and remind our members to please renew for 2009. We also offer you and your congregation an opportunity to join our membership. Each individual and congregational member has a vote at the WAC annual meeting. You also make it possible to keep our online Churchletter and website to continue. Consider a donation based on the following categories.

Membership in WAC is easy. Just send us a check and your email address. Please have your congregation include us in the 2009 budget. We are a great Wyoming Mission project.

Congregational Memberships are:

\$40 for 50 members or less

\$75 for 51-100 members

\$125 for 101-200 members

\$200 for 200 or members

Individual and family memberships are \$25

Of course, additional gifts are also always appreciated. Please send contributions to the WAC at 1131 13th St. Suite 210 in Cody, WY 82414.

WEBSITE UPDATE

Have you checked our website recently? New changes are underway. This is all compliments of a grant from the Wyoming Community Foundation. Let us know what you think. You can find us at <http://www.wyomingassociationofchurches.org>.

COMING ACTIVITIES - SAVE THE DATES

Mar 13, 2009	Forum in Rock Springs at Western Wyoming College entitled, "On Sacred Ground - Celebrating the Wyoming Range." Reception at 5:30 pm - program begins at 6:30 pm. Admission is free.
Mar 30-31, 2009	First retreat of WAC Transition Committee - Thomas the Apostle Center - Cody. Retreat begins at noon on March 30th and ends at noon on March 31st.
Apr 12, 2009	Easter Day - May you have a blessed Easter
Apr 23-24, 2009	Equality State Policy Board Retreat - Thomas the Apostle Center - Cody
May 8, 2009	Cheyenne Day of Giving from 8am-5pm. This is the 4th annual event and is supported by and participated in by over 60 congregations in Cheyenne. For more information call Pam Pallak, at 307-637-5193.
May 11-12, 2009	Second retreat of WAC Transition Committee - Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church - Casper

The Wyoming Association of Churches, The Rev. Warren Murphy, Director and Rose Hackett, Administrative Assistant publishes this newsletter. We welcome your comments and suggestions. If you know of someone who would like to receive our publication, please email us at wychurches@wyoming.com. If you do not wish to receive the ChurchLetter, simply email wychurches@wyoming.com and type "unsubscribe" in the subject line