

IHMs in Action



Sister Pat (left) with local farmer Yua Lo

Sister Patricia Nagle, IHM, is an activist dedicated to the creation of a new world order.

As educator and consultant for Earth Home Ministries in Portland, Ore., her ministry is to connect, inform and empower people and institutions to care for Earth, especially with regard to climate change.

"Earth's atmosphere encompasses all people, creatures and habitats," Sister Pat says. "The response to global climate change must reflect our interdependence and responsibility to the whole of life. This issue is really about the future of God's creation."

Sister Pat is a native of the Pacific Northwest, and it was "The Columbia River Pastoral Letter," an international pastoral letter by the Catholic bishops within the Columbia River watershed, that drew her back to Portland about four years ago.

Sister Pat's work with Earth Home Ministries is interwoven with her involvement with other organizations working to slow global warming, including the Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns and Oregon Interfaith Power and Light (OIPL).

"We are morally responsible for the effects of global warming," Sister Pat says emphatically. "We have an opportunity in this moment to make a difference. Global warming disproportionately affects the most vulnerable.

"If we are to take the Gospel invitation to 'love your neighbor' seriously, we must take action."

For Sister Pat, that action has taken many forms. She participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal in 2005 and has testified before the governor of Oregon and the Oregon State Legislature regarding climate change. With colleagues at OIPL she provides workshops on energy conservation and effective activism in the political arena.

"In my ministry we encourage communities from all faith traditions to sign on to an energy stewardship covenant," she states. "The congregations agree to do something concrete, and we give them a goal to reduce their energy use by 20 percent of 2005 levels by the year 2015 or sooner.

"With OIPL, we are currently working on a creative financing program that will make it possible for congregations interested in solar energy to install such systems. This will involve connecting congregations with a third party who purchases, installs and

maintains the solar panels. The third party and the congregations establish a loan repayment schedule based in part on the cost savings."

In addition to working on issues related to climate change, Sister Pat is also active with the Interfaith Food and Farm Partnership.

"Farmers partner with faith communities to bring locally grown flowers and produce to the community. It is a way strengthening urban and rural relationships while reducing energy consumption involved in the transportation of produce."

For Sister Pat, all of her ministry is about accepting our responsibility to be co-creators of a more just, sustainable, compassionate Earth community.