

SLANT

- The death last week of nine people **at the hands of a racist** in a Charleston, South Carolina, church that was founded by Denmark Vesey, a man killed for planning a slave revolt, is not unthinkable or unspeakable, as an excellent essay in *Esquire* by journalist Charles P. Pierce points out. Someone did think to sit through an hour of Bible study and then kill a pastor and his parishioners. Someone did think to sell Dylann Roof a gun, someone did think — and talk and act — to ensure the Confederate flag flies over South Carolina's Capitol. Because someone thought and acted to kill innocent people, we need to think and talk and most importantly act on what led to this: racism, guns, hate, history. Read the *Esquire* piece at wkly.ws/21d.

- Cheers for aspiring new **community leaders** who are stepping up in Eugene (see our story about Lucy Vinis this week). With the elections nearly 17 months away, there's plenty of time for proverbial hats to fly into the ring. We probably won't have as many mayoral candidates as the Republicans have in the presidential race, but Eugene has a fun tradition of quirky candidates, especially for mayor, a position now paying about \$20,000 a year.

- City Councilor **Betty Taylor** has always been an astute observer of city politics, and we asked her what she thought about the recent public hearing on reviving the Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPT). "It was a well organized plea for tax exemptions," she says. "I was struck by two things: the contrast of the parade of the rich asking for tax relief — with past parades of the poor asking for a place to sleep." She also noted the lack of any liberal group that could organize and rally against tax breaks with questionable public benefit. Citizens for Public Accountability (CPA) was active for many years but has long gone. "Many activists have died or moved away," she says. We remember CPA and Friends of Eugene, active organizations that not only fired up the left but also supported progressives for public office. Big city elections are coming in 2016 with no substantial community organization on the left beyond the Democratic Party of Lane County.

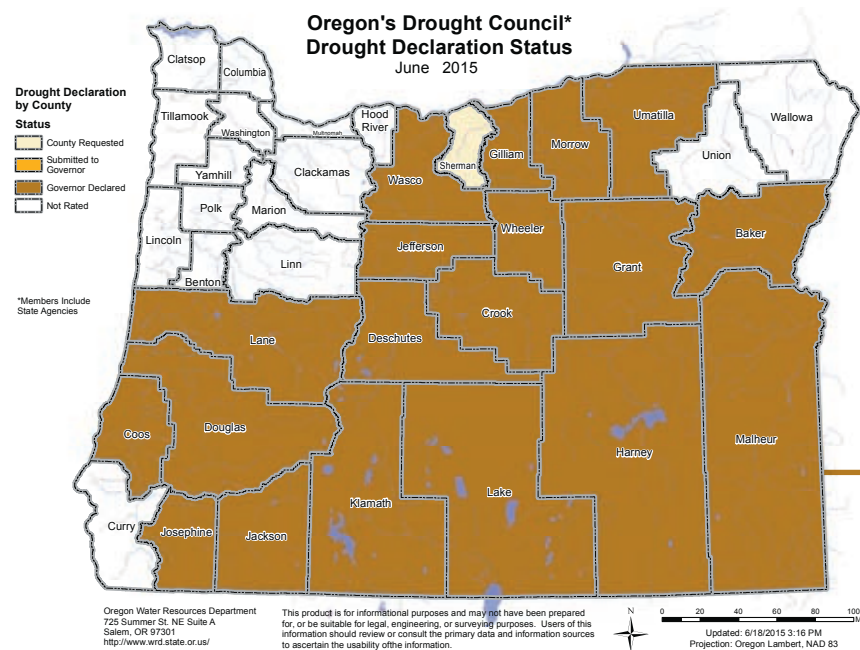
- Speaking of **MUPT**, we talked to an architect at a social gathering last week who suggested that tax breaks for downtown housing pay off in the long run. After 10 years the city gets a huge boost in property tax revenues that in turn can be used to support affordable housing. So MUPT stimulates higher-rent apartments now, and lower-income renters benefit later. Two eyebrow-raising assumptions here: 1) Residential development downtown won't happen without MUPT, and 2) the city will actually use the higher tax revenue to subsidize affordable housing. Reminds us a bit of trickle-down economics. Meanwhile, our inventory of affordable housing shrinks and our schools and social services struggle to meet real needs right now. We can't wait 10 years for the next batch of tax breaks to expire.

- Should we continue to **elect judges in Oregon** when money, both directly to candidates and through independent expenditures, is growing so powerful? Retired Justice W. Michael Gillette of the Oregon Supreme Court and Dean Emeritus James Huffman of Lewis and Clark School of Law spoke to that question at the City Club of Eugene June 19. They both mentioned life tenure for state judges similar to federal appointments. But retired Court of Appeals Judge and UO law Professor David Schuman asked whether it is realistic to ask Oregonians to give up their right to vote for judges. No, he said, although there is an 80 percent undervote for judges at the same time that 80 percent don't want to give up their vote. Sounds like nothing much is going to change, if indeed it should.

- **Go, Pope Francis!** He will be speaking his wisdom this fall from the "Rocky" steps of the Philadelphia Art Museum to millions on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and beyond. The population of the city is expected to double. Organizers are already signing up Philly families to host the expected two million visitors. Too bad the Charleston terrorism (that's what it is) eclipsed the media coverage of the pope's thrilling statement on climate change and social justice. Read it all, if you can. The text in English can be found on the Vatican website at wkly.ws/21b.

SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS
AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF.
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NEWS



POPE'S STANCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE HAS LOCAL RESONANCE

Inside a radially configured sanctuary — more akin to a tree house than a cathedral — Father Tom Yurchak peers out at Eugene's grassy South Hills through a spotless panorama of oversized panes. "Our 'stained glass' windows," he says. "Through them, we watch the seasons change."

Yurchak, pastor of St. Jude Catholic Church, feels fortunate to even have four seasons at his disposal. He is mulling over the words of Pope Francis, who last week published *Laudato Si*, a near 200-page encyclical, spelling out the human suffering that emerges from global environmental degradation: "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications ... It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day."

"My hope," Yurchak says, "is that people read this and think, 'What can we be doing locally?'"

Yurchak says he's concerned over the ease with which we can colonize the globe with pollution from the comfort of our own stable ecosystem. "You can't just have the newest and best everything. You have to learn to say no. We're asking you to consume less," he says. "And I know that's a hard sell. It shouldn't be, but it is."

The pope's report merges hard scientific data with biblical scripture, challenging Catholics to be critical of a "throwaway culture" that has led humanity to a lack of clean drinking water and generally "a decline in the quality of human life."

The report was essentially crowd-sourced, allowing Pope Francis to focus on those populations whom bishops and cardinals around the world identified as the poorest and most marginalized — those disproportionately afflicted by climate change and least adaptable to drought and flood conditions.

CONTINUED P. 11 >>>

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