

# Staying on Course

Navigating the Shifting Tides of  
Government and Church  
Partnerships

This resource has been prepared by the Justice for Women Working Group of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA as a contribution to the important dialogue that is taking place in our church life on the role of government and churches in responding to the increasing human needs in our communities. The public debate on these issues offers the churches a teaching moment to reflect and discern on our commitments to social justice and human rights. Since the vast majority of poor in the USA are women and their children, the Justice for Woman Working Group offers this piece as a way to help us all in our education and advocacy toward the goal of ending poverty. Some think this is too idealistic. But we see it as a hopeful vision. We join with the larger ecumenical community and its partners to move into a better future for all.

## UNDERSTANDING THE NEW OVERTURES TO CHURCHES BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### What is a faith-based initiative?

The term “faith-based initiative” became part of our nation’s vocabulary when President George W. Bush created the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives on January 29, 2001. Prior to that, it was increasingly common to hear policy-makers speak of faith-based organizations (FBOs). The term faith-based organization can be interpreted in many ways. Some people think of religiously affiliated non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations but, in today’s policy conversations, it also includes local congregations, such as churches, synagogues and mosques. In general, faith-based initiatives refer to the broad spectrum of ways that the faith community “partners” with government to address social needs. A look at the document released as President Bush launched the new White House Office, called *Rallying the Armies of Compassion*, reveals more about the new faith-based policies. ([www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/faithbased](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/reports/faithbased)) The Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives has been charged with several tasks: 1) to remove any federal barriers to government and faith-based partnerships; 2) to expand private giving; and 3) to expand Charitable Choice. As of July 2001, however, there has been no formal budget allocation for faith-based initiatives.



*Can the faith community ever be as comprehensive as the government in the delivery of social services?*

### What is Charitable Choice?

Charitable Choice is a provision of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, better known as welfare reform. Since then, the provision has been enacted into law through several other pieces of social legislation, such as the Community Services Block Grant in 1998, the Children’s Health Act, and Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000. A bill currently pending in the House, the Community Solutions Act of 2001 (H.R. 7), seeks a substantial expansion of the provision.

Essentially, the 1996 Charitable Choice provision stipulates that if a state uses private for-profit or non-profit contractors to deliver social services, that state must also include religious congregations in the competitive process. The provision also alters how government and the religious community “partner” in several distinct ways.

Charitable Choice:

- Enables a local congregation to compete for and receive public funding without establishing a separate 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
- Allows public funds to be directly handled by the church, synagogue or mosque, although the funds must be used only for activities specified in the contract and cannot be used for sectarian worship, instruction or proselytization.
- Enables faith-based organizations to display religious symbols in service areas and to include religious concepts and language in their programming, as long as a secular alternative exists so that a client has a “choice” of providers.
- Permits the FBO (faith-based organization) to use religious criteria in hiring for publicly funded programs.

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## How does Charitable Choice differ from the way in which Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services or many other faith-based community development corporations (CDCs) receive government money?

In the past, a religious congregation or organization was required to set up an affiliated yet separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to carry out its social services or community empowerment work. In doing so, they were required to abide by certain civil rights and tax exemption laws. These religiously affiliated organizations are still the predominant form of faith-based organizations. By and large, they are committed to offering social services without an explicit religious component; instead they view their work as a fulfillment of their religious duty to serve others.

## How can my congregation access funding from Charitable Choice?

Remember, Charitable Choice is simply a policy that enables local congregations to receive public funds while maintaining their "religious distinctiveness" and without setting up a separate 501(c)(3) organization. The process by which a social service or community-based ministry pursues public funding remains largely the same. The majority of public funds are managed by the city, county and state and distributed through agencies on those levels. Contact the various agencies (welfare, housing, agriculture, education, labor, workforce development, etc.) and ask

### *Does this devolution to local congregations provide an excuse for government to wash its hands of poor individuals and families?*

about current requests for proposals, or RFPs. To receive public funding in a particular program area, your congregation will have to complete a lengthy application; show that you have the organizational and legal structure to conduct the program; offer evidence of a track record in providing the service; and prevail in an open, competitive bid process that may include other congregations, religiously affiliated 501(c)(3) organizations, non-profit and for-profit entities and public

## For more on Charitable Choice and faith-based initiatives, consider the following resources:

"Keeping the Faith" (Resource developed by The Interfaith Alliance and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs) [www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org).

"In Good Faith: A Dialogue on Government Funding of Faith-Based Social Services" (Report from two-year initiative co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University) <http://www.ajc.org/pdf/in%20good%20ofaith.pdf>.

To get opposing points of view, visit the websites of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (against Charitable Choice) [www.au.org](http://www.au.org) and the Center for Public Justice (for Charitable Choice) [www.cpjustice.org](http://www.cpjustice.org).

"Community-based Ministries and Government Funding," A Statement from the General Board of Church and Society and the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church [www.gbgm-umc.org](http://www.gbgm-umc.org).

"Faith-based Initiatives and Charitable Choice, Resources for Presbyterians," A Statement from the Presbyterian Church, USA. To order, call (800) 524-2612 and request publication #7436001307.

"Building on Faith," A Statement from the United Church of Christ. Available in July 2001. [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org).

"Considering Charitable Choice," by the Rev. Dr. Eileen Lindner in *The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches 2001*. Order by E-mail: [yearbook@nccusa.org](mailto:yearbook@nccusa.org); phone: 888-870-2031; Fax: 212-870-2817; or mail: Yearbook Orders, NCC, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 880, New York, NY 10115.



## Why are some people excited about Charitable Choice?

- ▼ Seen as an opportunity for smaller religious organizations and congregations to compete in a domain which is perceived to be dominated by the larger religious federations of social welfare agencies.
- ▼ Viewed as a way of increasing funding opportunities for cash-starved social ministries.
- ▼ Considered an opportunity to build the capacity of local congregations and develop them into organizations that can serve the needs of the community.
- ▼ Acknowledges and affirms the good work that many religious organizations have been doing for years.
- ▼ Allows faith-based organizations to express their faith more fully, considering the needs of both body and spirit.
- ▼ Gives religious service providers the opportunity to augment their publicly funded social services with privately funded religious activities.
- ▼ Seen as a way to reduce the scope of bureaucratic government services, replacing them with more responsive programming on the community level.

## What questions are critics of Charitable Choice asking?

- ▼ Can the faith community ever be as comprehensive as the government in the delivery of social services?
- ▼ Does this devolution to local congregations provide an excuse for government to wash its hands of poor individuals and families?
- ▼ Will government funding alter the missions of religious organizations and limit their prophetic voice? Will bureaucratic paperwork detract from the mission of the church?
- ▼ Will an unhealthy competition develop among organizations from different denominations and faiths, and between religious organizations and secular community-based organizations?
- ▼ Will minority faith communities have an equal opportunity to participate in the programs? Will religious diversity be respected in the awarding of contracts?
- ▼ Is the wall between church and state dismantled when government defines or advances religion?
- ▼ Is the inclusion of religious symbols, concepts and language in social services a form of proselytization?
- ▼ Does religious discrimination in hiring erode civil rights laws? Will it lead to broader forms of employment discrimination? ■

**W**omen know that our faith and our doing of theology takes seriously the lived reality of our brothers and sisters next door and around the globe. We are well aware that because of greed and pride – our basic human sinfulness – the resources and power and fullness of life are not experienced by all. In fact, the bounty is hoarded by a few. While our country has experienced a period of unprecedented prosperity, many people continue to live in poverty. Women are over-represented in the ranks of the poor, the unemployed and underemployed. Wage discrimination and the low-paying jobs of the service sector make it difficult for women who lack a college degree to escape poverty through a job alone. In addition to low education level or lack of job experience, women face multiple barriers to employment including lack of transportation, lack of affordable child-care, care-giving responsibilities for sick or disabled children, substance abuse, mental health issues and/or domestic violence.

Poverty knows no color. But income and wealth, educational inequity and labor market disadvantage are all strongly patterned along racial lines. Over 46 percent of Black and 48 percent of Hispanic female-headed households live in poverty. According to 1998 census data, Blacks constituted 39 percent of welfare recipients,

*Women are caught in a double bind when survival demands that they work outside the home yet care-giving activities are underpaid and undervalued in our society, jeopardizing the health and well being of our children.*

Hispanics 22 percent and Whites 32.7 percent.<sup>1</sup> Women of color have also been disproportionately impacted by welfare reform under Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). Studies have found that, compared to White former recipients, Black recipients are more likely to be required to take a pre-employment test, less likely to obtain employment regardless of educational background, and less likely to report receiving job or educational information from caseworkers.<sup>2</sup> In addition, analyses of welfare case closings in several states have found significant racial differences, with women of color more likely to leave welfare rolls after being sanctioned for failure to

comply with state rules, and White women more likely to leave after obtaining a job.<sup>3</sup>

All around us we witness women juggling multiple roles within our society – reproductive and parenting roles, employment outside the home either to support an entire family or to augment a spouse's income, and often unpaid work in the vol-

untary sector, whether at church or for the PTO. While some women can sustain such a juggling act, the reality is that few women can choose *not* to carry out these many roles. Similarly, welfare reform demands that women on welfare work in exchange for their public benefits, yet child-care options are limited at best and often involve informal and unregulated arrangements. Women are caught in a double bind when survival demands that they work outside the home yet care-giving activities are underpaid and undervalued in our society, jeopardizing the health and well being of our children. In addition, as public resources for schools and social services



## A Rising Tide Does Not Lift All Boats

**A Message From the Justice for Women Working Group of the NCCC**

decline, women are expected to play a greater role in the voluntary sector. The expansion of Charitable Choice depends on the increased volunteerism of women in churches, a major arena of the voluntary sector. We see a fundamental contradiction when public policy demands better parenting and stronger families and communities while these tasks are notoriously unpaid or underpaid.

When we consider the current social and economic climate in which the discussion of Charitable Choice is taking place, we cannot ignore that Charitable Choice is a provision of welfare reform. Welfare reform has reduced the welfare rolls in many states, but it has not necessarily reduced poverty. Women leaving welfare earn an average of \$6.75 an hour, barely enough to raise a family of three above the federal poverty line.<sup>4</sup> And more than half of all employed former recipients are unable to pay rent, buy food, afford medical care, and/or pay for phone or electric service.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, many of the under-resourced and overburdened community ministries that find Charitable Choice compelling are experiencing the growing needs of their community primarily because of welfare reform. Requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 17 percent in 2000, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Sixty-two percent of those requesting assistance were children and their parents, and 32 percent of the adults were employed.<sup>6</sup>

As individuals and families leave the welfare rolls for low-wage work, they are combating homelessness or are trying to augment minimum wage jobs with handouts from the private sector, such as from churches. While welfare reform has sparked an increase in faith-based programs to foster economic empowerment and meaningful job development, churches can also engage in a continual process of discerning what else might be done to alleviate suffering and eliminate poverty. A major part of that reflection process requires that we distinguish causes of poverty and symptoms of poverty. This kind of analysis can become the basis of more effective and comprehensive community ministries. When we choose to engage in advocating for changes in public policy and for a more just social and economic structure, we need to remember how social policy plays out in the day-to-day lives of women and their children. ■

# VOLUNTARY CHARITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: Must we choose?

One day a resident of a village on the bank of a river sees a baby floating downstream. She rushes out to save it, and, with the help of her neighbors, finds dry clothing, a crib, a blanket. The next day two babies are rescued, and the day after that, several more. Soon babies are arriving in large numbers, and they become a regular feature of life in the village; very nearly the whole village becomes involved in rescuing them. Finally, one of the villagers suggests making an expedition upstream, to see how the babies are getting into the water in the first place. The villagers, however, are afraid to take time and energy away from the immediate rescue project, afraid that babies will drown if they are not there to save them.

(from *Sweet Charity* by Janet Poppendieck, Penguin, 1998)

How do we navigate this stream? This striking parable illuminates the dilemma that many in the churches know far too well. Over the past 20 years, an increasing number of churches have developed food programs. In fact, very few churches do not offer some kind of food ministry. After all, sharing the table and breaking bread together is an essential element of our faith. But what originated as an emergency provision has become a permanent fixture in our communities. Attempting to meet the needs of the hungry (and not necessarily succeeding in reaching everyone) has become a full-time job. Often, keeping food programs

stocked and staffed consumes vast resources within a congregation. Who has time to consider why the line outside the church door continues to grow? Similarly, in our personal lives, we find ourselves

understand the everyday experiences of our hungry and homeless neighbors, and to continually reassess our response to them. While innovative work on poverty exists in many churches, there is always

## WHY ARE PEOPLE POOR?

### Service is incomplete without education and advocacy for social change.

Not everyone shares the same assumptions about the causes of poverty and, therefore, the remedies that people propose vary widely. Below you will see a chart suggesting that different policies regarding the poor are directly related to different perspectives on poverty. The causes of poverty listed below do not represent all perspectives, but do capture some of the most common understandings and responses. The top section reflects a spectrum of understandings on why people are poor; the bottom section shows the range of program responses that emerge from the different perspectives.

<b>CAUSES</b>	Lack of Initiative Promiscuity	Bad luck Fate	Lack of resources Lack of opportunity Natural disaster	Exploitation Oppression Lack of skills
<b>PROGRAMS (examples)</b>	Workfare Public assistance sanctions for: • additional children (family cap) • children's academic performance (learnfare) • marriage incentives	Soup kitchen Food pantry Shelter Transportation Mobile medical unit	Training programs Head start Legal services Affirmative action Mentoring	Organize mass-based movements to challenge political and economic power: • poor people's movements • unions • political parties

(adapted from *Training for Transformation* by Sally Timmel and Anne Hope) <sup>7</sup>

*Why are people poor and hungry? By digging deeper and looking at the causes of poverty, you may find new and creative ways to overcome poverty.*

consumed with the daily business of survival, allowing little time to contemplate the big picture.

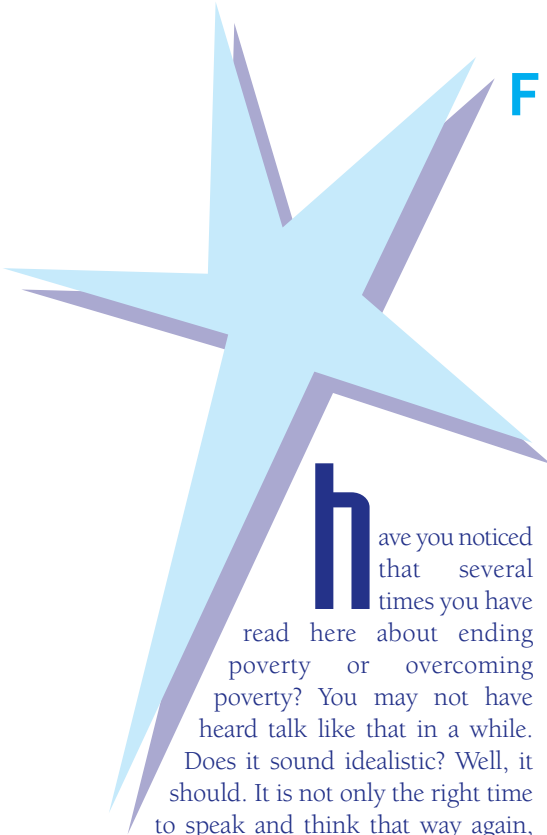
Christians believe that God continues to speak in and through history – a history that we all help to make in some way. Therefore, church members are called to

the risk of doing things the way we've always done them and missing God's breaking through with new ideas and approaches. Has your congregation recently assessed its effectiveness in addressing people's needs or its capacity to do something more or something different? Consider how this parable prompts us to ask "Why?" Why are people poor and hungry? By digging deeper and looking at the causes of poverty, you may find new and creative ways to overcome poverty.

Ask yourself or ask the mission committee at your church to consider the chart above and the following questions: *What do you believe are the main causes of poverty? What do you think is needed to end poverty?* ■

In May 2001, National Public Radio, the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government released the results of a poverty survey. They sought to learn what people thought about poverty in America and about its causes. The poll was designed to include the perceptions of poor people. For the full survey, see [www.npr.org/programs/special/poll/poverty](http://www.npr.org/programs/special/poll/poverty).

# FAITH: Our Guiding Star



**h**ave you noticed that several times you have read here about ending poverty or overcoming poverty? You may not have heard talk like that in a while. Does it sound idealistic? Well, it should. It is not only the right time to speak and think that way again, but there is a moral imperative to do so. It's right to assert Gospel values of love, justice, freedom and self-realization in the face of greed, fear and economic insecurity.

emphasizes that poverty in this country and in this era is morally unacceptable. The Mobilization seeks ecumenical and interfaith partnerships with a range of relevant organizations and agencies, including seminaries. Broad inclusion is also sought from rich and poor, old and young and from experts in many different fields.

A commitment to ending poverty is a sign of faithfulness. The Micah 6 program of the NCCC's Economic Justice and Domestic Hunger Working Group, a partner in the Mobilization, seeks to show how the inward spiritual growth that comes from "walking humbly with God" is inextricably linked to outward acts of loving kindness and doing justice. The Micah 6 program offers ideas and a framework for congregations that are seeking to integrate and deepen their ministries of social action, service and spiritual growth. Micah 6 resources include Bible studies, theological reflections, tools for congregational renewal and guides for developing commu-

nity ministries, all of which use the Micah 6:8 passage as the basis for shaping our discipleship in the world.

Congregations can get a taste of the Micah 6 program by ordering "Introducing Micah 6." Send a check for \$10.00, made payable to Church World Service, to Church

*"...and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

*Micah 6:8*

World Service, P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, IN 46515 or call 800-762-0968. The order number is EJ0196. The complete Micah 6 resource, "Living Micah's Call," will be available September 2001 from Church World Service. The cost is \$40.00 and the order number is EJ0197. ■

*"It is our goal to make poverty in the 21st century as morally repugnant as slavery became in the 19th century."*

*Ambassador Andrew Young, President, NCCC*

A vision for a decade-long, faith-based Mobilization to Overcome Poverty — first discussed at the May 2000 meeting of the National Council of Churches' Executive Board — received unanimous and whole-hearted approval at the Council's General Assembly, which met November 14-17, 2000, in Atlanta, GA. The initiative seeks a measurable reduction of poverty in America over the next decade and

## The human cost of tax cuts

*Below are just a few facts taken from an analysis of President Bush's tax plan by the Institute for America's Future. A report from early May 2001 suggests that the \$555 billion tax cuts for the richest one percent could have instead expanded the Child Tax Credit, provided health insurance to millions of uninsured children, expanded child-care services to nearly 10 million children, increased the availability of Head Start programs to 80 percent of those eligible, funded educational services to disadvantaged children in high poverty areas, and expanded food stamp benefits. A \$555 billion commitment to these services could have covered a five to ten year period. See the full report at [www.ourfuture.org](http://www.ourfuture.org).*

- ▼ One in six U.S. children — 12.1 million — is raised in poverty. (Children's Defense Fund) Nine percent of children lived in extreme poverty, with family incomes below 50 percent of the poverty level, in 1997. (Kids Count 2000)
- ▼ Eleven million children in the U.S. lack health care coverage. (Children's Defense Fund)
- ▼ Child-care assistance reaches only 12 percent of eligible children. In 1999, on an average monthly basis, 1.8 million children in low-income families received federal child-care subsidies; 15 million were estimated to be eligible for federal support. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services)
- ▼ An estimated 10.5 million U.S. households were food insecure — that is, did not have access to enough food to meet their basic needs — in 1998. About 31 million people, including 12 million children, lived in these households. (U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- ▼ In 1997, the food bank network of emergency providers served more than 26 million people, 38 percent of whom were children age 17 or younger. (America's Second Harvest)
- ▼ More than three out of four poor children — 78 percent — live with a family member who worked at least part of the year. (Children's Defense Fund)
- ▼ One-half of the 1.3 million households in public housing are families with children. Public housing tenants have an average income of \$9,100 per year. At the same time that another million households are on waiting lists, more than 70 percent of 86,000 seriously distressed units are slated for demolition. (Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University)
- ▼ Renters in the bottom quarter of the income distribution saw their real incomes decline between 1996 and 1998, while real rents increased by 2.3 percent. (Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University)

# CHARTING THE COURSE

## How can we faithfully respond to the needs of our communities?

### 1 Do some research.

*Learn what poor children and their families need.*

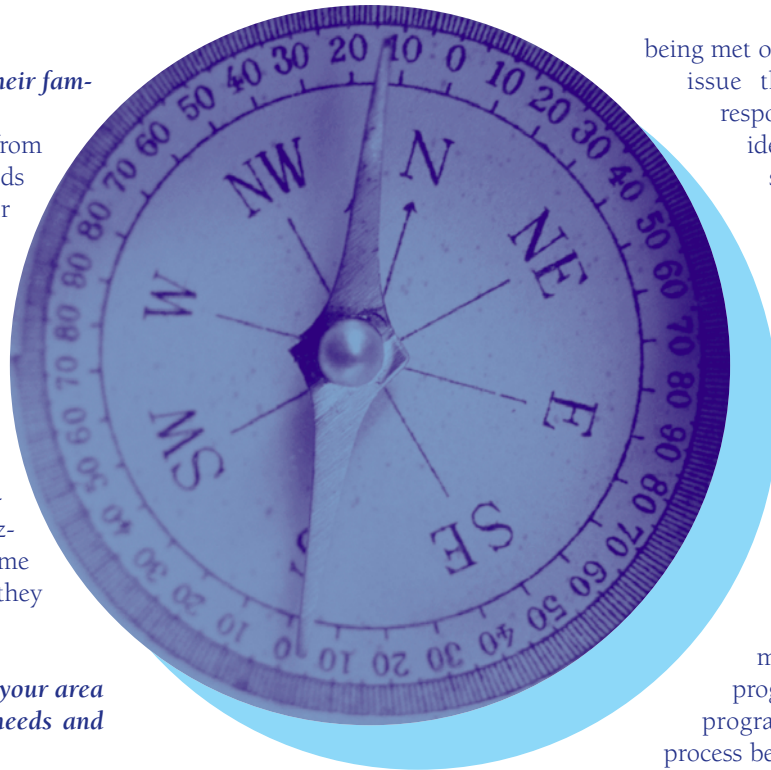
Talk to poor people and learn from them. Find out what their needs are as they define them. If your church or nearby community ministry operates a food program, join poor people at the table and listen to their stories. Create a survey instrument and ask particular questions, in confidence, about people's income and expenses in order to gain insight into their day-to-day reality. Support local organizing efforts by poor and low-income people to learn what issues they have identified for action.

*Discover what organizations in your area are working to address these needs and issues.*

Survey the resources available to poor people: agencies and programs, both secular and religious, presently serving those in poverty. See if you can determine which programs have been most successful in supporting families and individuals in crisis. The goal is to be able to direct a person in need to the appropriate source for assistance. Also identify local community organizations that are actively seeking institutional and structural change. For example, organizations that are developing housing for the homeless, working for improvements in our educational system, or advocating for fair and just welfare policies.

*Carefully study current social policy.*

In the early stages of your investigation, it is important to familiarize yourself with current social policy. Whether your congregation currently offers or plans to offer social services, community development or advocacy, it is essential to understand the various compliance and eligibility systems with which an individual must contend. (Housing, food stamps, medical coverage and cash assistance each have their own regulations). The world of social policy is highly political and changes along



being met or that there is a glaring policy issue that demands an advocacy response. Identifying gaps is an ideal way to avoid duplicating some of the very good work that other organizations, whether secular or religious, may be providing in your community.

### 3 Determine the appropriate action(s) for your congregation in addressing poverty.

*Has a focus been selected?*

A strong sense of mission will enable you to withstand the difficulties you may encounter in launching a program or raising funds for a program or when a contracting process becomes highly politicized.

*What other groups in your community might be partners?*

It is likely that there is a community ministry nearby that is engaged in related activities as well as others in your community who might be helpful partners.

*Who in your congregation can help carry out this mission and address any gaps or needs?*

A careful assessment of the resources and talents within your congregation will give you a sense of the kind of work your congregation can or cannot take on. Consider your physical plant and available equipment (computer systems, etc.). Identify sources of income and estimate your expenses. What kind of staff might your project require – certified social workers, professional fund-raisers or grant writers? If you find that your congregation does not have the capacity to initiate its own project, encourage members of your church to volunteer in a variety of community efforts. Gather volunteers to share their experiences, and even rotate volunteer assignments. Working in partnership with others can provide renewed energy and nurture for the long haul.

*A careful assessment of the resources and talents within your congregation will give you a sense of the kind of work your congregation can or cannot take on*

with shifts in political power. While your congregation must remain nonpartisan and may wish to avoid politics altogether, it may be hard to avoid the political issues that shape the services a government contract may ask you to provide or enforce.

### 2 What have you learned?

*What are some of the gaps in the social service delivery system? What are some of the basic needs that are not being met?*

After comparing the needs identified by persons in poverty and by the social service, advocacy and organizing resources available in your community, you may find that there are some gaps in social services or some basic needs that aren't

*If your congregation has the desire and capacity to take on a large project, consider questions of structure and governance.*

If you think your project budget will constitute a large proportion of your church budget, you may want to seek legal advice about establishing a separate 501(c)(3) organization. Non-profit status offers a buffer between your congregation and its project, providing protection from legal and ethical complications. It is also helpful to consider a diversity of funding streams. A standard recommendation is that government funding for religiously affiliated non-profits not exceed 15 percent. When forming a board of directors, include people with a variety of experiences, from people most affected by the issues to experts in fund raising or the complexities of government contracting.

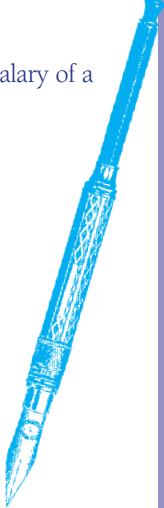
#### 4 Get started and good luck!

*Return regularly to step one (researching needs), but don't be discouraged.*

The needs and issues of communities are continually in flux, so it is important to remain in a steady posture of listening to folks and identifying the problems and the

### CAN YOU FILL IN THE BLANKS?

- ▼ The cashier at the grocery store makes \$\_\_\_\_ per hour. The average salary of a child-care worker in my neighborhood is \$\_\_\_\_ per hour.
- ▼ There are currently jobs available at the following locations:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ A person without health insurance could receive care at:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ The average cost of housing in my neighborhood is \$\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ A family or person in need of food could receive help from:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ A person in need of temporary housing could find assistance at:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ The closest welfare office to our church is:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ A person in a dispute over public benefits could locate an advocate or legal representation at:\_\_\_\_\_
- ▼ If a poor person was eager to get involved with local organizing, I would direct them to:\_\_\_\_\_



new efforts being generated to address those problems.

*You may find that poverty is a persistent problem regardless of the comprehensive social service programs or organizing efforts in your community. Again, don't be discouraged.*

There are real systemic challenges to over-

coming poverty. It takes the whole community in partnership with various government agencies to transform the quality of life for all. The conviction that our communities and our world must and can be changed – the faithful effort to build the kingdom – can sustain us through these long-range efforts. ■

## Current public policy work that congregations might explore with county, state and federal governments:

- Inform low-wage workers of their potential eligibility for food stamps and Medicaid. Many people who have left the welfare rolls mistakenly believe they have lost their entitlement to these benefits.
- Support campaigns to ensure a living wage in your municipality. Many full-time workers are living in poverty.
- Advocate for an increase in the minimum wage.
- Participate in the efforts to fully fund the current welfare legislation, TANF, at its present levels, as well as advocate for some fundamental changes in the TANF legislation, particularly around time limits, higher education opportunities, inflexible work requirements, and accountability of welfare programs, including tracking the impact of programs on reducing poverty rather than just reducing welfare rolls.
- Monitor how welfare reform is implemented in your state and county.
- Demand that the way poverty levels are calculated in the U.S. be updated and reformed. The poverty measure was created in the mid-1960s. The cost of food for a family, based on the cheapest of four Department of Agriculture food plans, is established first. The food cost is then multiplied by three. The calculation does not reflect today's realities. Food costs can no longer be a starting point when household costs such as rents, child-care expenses and transportation costs have all increased dramatically. Some people are talking about "Self-Sufficiency Standards," which reflect the real living expenses for families in each community.

# CONTACTS

**For assistance in developing social service, community development and/or advocacy ministries contact:** Your local and state ecumenical agencies and interfaith organizations. Your denominational staff person working on Economic Justice and Hunger.

**Below are some additional organizations that can be of assistance to your congregation as it considers the variety of avenues to address poverty issues: education, public policy advocacy, community organizing, social service provision, local/global connections, etc.**

**National Congress for Community Economic Development** (*technical assistance in community-based ministry*)  
1030 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 325  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: 202-289-9020

**Children's Defense Fund** (*education and public policy advocacy*)  
25 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
Tel: 202-628-8787  
[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

**Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility** (*corporate responsibility*)  
475 Riverside Drive, Room 550  
New York, NY 10115  
Tel: 212-870-2295  
[www.iccr.org](http://www.iccr.org)

**Habitat for Humanity** (*direct service – housing*)  
Partner Service Center  
121 Habitat St.  
Americus, GA 31709  
Tel: 229-924-6935, ext. 2551 or 2552  
E-mail: [publicinfo@hfhi.org](mailto:publicinfo@hfhi.org)  
[www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)

**National Campaign for Jobs and Income Security** (*community organizing – public assistance, job creation*)  
1000 Wisconsin Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
E-mail: [info@nationalcampaign.org](mailto:info@nationalcampaign.org)  
[www.nationalcampaign.org](http://www.nationalcampaign.org)

**Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign** (*community organizing, human rights, leadership development*)  
P.O. Box 50678  
Philadelphia, PA 19132  
Tel: 215-203-1945  
[www.kwru.org](http://www.kwru.org)

**Bread for the World** (*education, public policy advocacy*)  
50 F Street, NW, Suite 500  
Washington, DC 20001  
Tel: 202-639-9400 (or 800-82-BREAD)  
[www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org)

**Church World Service** (*anti-hunger, refugee assistance, aid for the poorest affected by disasters*)  
Resource Development and Service Center  
28606 Phillips Street  
P.O. Box 968  
Elkhart, IN 46515  
Tel: 800-297-1516  
Email: [cws@nccusa.org](mailto:cws@nccusa.org)  
[www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org)

**United for a Fair Economy** (*education, training manuals – popular economics and poverty*)  
37 Temple Place, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
Tel: 617-423-2148  
[www.ufenet.org](http://www.ufenet.org)

**Welfare Reform Listening Project** (*a model for cross-class dialogue and policy advocacy*)  
American Friends Service Committee,  
West Virginia Community Voices Partnership, et. al.  
P.O. Box 1964  
Charleston, WV 25327  
Tel: 304-529-3890  
E-mail: [jackrockofwv@hotmail.com](mailto:jackrockofwv@hotmail.com)

**Wider Opportunities for Women** (*women, work, economic independence*)  
Family Self Sufficiency State Organizing Project  
815 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 916  
Washington, DC 20005  
Tel: 202-638-3143  
Fax: 202-638-4885  
[www.wowonline.org](http://www.wowonline.org)  
[www.sixstrategies.org](http://www.sixstrategies.org)

Celebrating nearly 25 years of ecumenical partnership,



the Justice for Women Working Group of the National Council of Churches brings leadership and other resources to education and advocacy efforts that promote justice for women in church and society. The Working Group's programs and projects, which bring theology and ethics to bear on critical issues, currently are focused on women and children living in poverty. "Staying on Course: Navigating the Shifting Tides of Government and Church Partnerships" is part of this focus. The Working Group offers it to help meet the expressed need in our churches to reflect on poverty issues and to engage in a discernment process regarding our response to the challenge they pose. July 2001

For more information on the Justice for Women Working Group or for more copies of this resource, contact: Karen Hessel, [kessel@nccusa.org](mailto:kessel@nccusa.org), 212-870-2298. "Staying on Course" can also be found at [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org).

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> "U.S. Welfare Policy Disproportionately Impacts Women of Color and Immigrant Women, Statement to the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination," Women of Color Resource Center, March 10, 2001; [www.coloredgirls.org](http://www.coloredgirls.org)
- <sup>2</sup> "Welfare Reform Talking Points," Applied Research Center, January, 2001; [www.arc.org](http://www.arc.org)
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> "Welfare Reform: An Overview of Effects to Date," The Brookings Institute, January, 2001; [www.brookings.org/wrb/publications/pb/pb01/pb01.htm](http://www.brookings.org/wrb/publications/pb/pb01/pb01.htm)
- <sup>5</sup> "Families Struggling to Make It in the Workforce: A Post-welfare Report," Children's Defense Fund, 2000, [www.childrensdefense.org/release001214.htm](http://www.childrensdefense.org/release001214.htm)
- <sup>6</sup> "Mayors' 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Survey on Hunger and Homelessness in America," [www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org) (2000)
- <sup>7</sup> Hope, Anne and Sally Timmel, *Training for Transformation: A Handbook for Community Workers*, 3 Vols, Harare, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.