



INSIGHT

Lessons learned from our grantmaking programs

Faith, Community and Civic Action

Reflections from the Organized Religion Initiative

David Scheie and Nan Kari, with research assistance from Paul Speer

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Cover photo left: Reverend Eugene Williams, Executive Director of Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches, addresses constituents at a meeting on responses to youth violence. Photographer: Leroy Hamilton.

Cover photo right: Minister José Angel Machaca and members of Good Shepherd Community Church, a member of the Relational Culture Institute, the Fresno-based affiliate of the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations (PICO). Photographer: John Blaustein.

Foreword

Between 1996 and 2005, The James Irvine Foundation funded faith-based institutions throughout California in order to draw newcomers and low-income Californians into civic life. The organizations that Irvine supported as part of the Organized Religion Initiative learned from each other, built leadership skills, created strategic relationships with other congregations, shaped public policy, and worked with applied researchers to advance this promising field.

Faith, Community and Civic Action tells the story of their work, captures findings from a five-year evaluation of the effort, and suggests that faith-based institutions can make significant contributions to civic engagement.

The Foundation invested in this initiative as part of its commitment to promote the participation of Californians in civic life. Today, we advance this priority through our California Perspectives program, which seeks to inform public understanding, engage Californians, and improve decision making on significant issues of long-term consequence to the state. With the state facing ongoing budget crises, major infrastructure needs, and a complex set of policy challenges, it is more important than ever to involve California's residents—especially those often ignored in such debates.

In the pages that follow you will read about a number of questions with real relevance to the state's civic participation challenge. What is the role of faith and faith-based institutions in civic engagement? What kind of impact can they have on Californians and their communities? What approaches can most effectively lead citizens to become involved?

We are pleased to have supported faith-based institutions in exploring these important questions and hope that the results they achieved and lessons they learned can be useful to others engaged in this vital endeavor.



James E. Canales

President and Chief Executive Officer
The James Irvine Foundation
January 2006

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Special thanks are due to the staff and leaders of the six faith-based civic engagement organizations that participated in the Organized Religion Evaluation Project. Their front-line work to build community, do justice, and live faithfully continually inspired us. They are principled, compassionate, and tough, committed to ongoing learning and to the development of other people as well as to achieving tangible community improvements and policy reforms. We appreciated their willingness to try new tasks in evaluation, co-create and test evaluation tools with us, and think critically about what works, both in human development and community change and in evaluation practice.

We especially valued the conversations we had over the years with Landon Williams and Tessa Rouverol Callejo at the FAITHS initiative in San Francisco; Ken Smith at Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA) in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties; Richard Ramos and Darcy Jensen at the Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County; Eugene Williams and Cheryl Branch at Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM); Gina Martinez at Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO) and her predecessor, Corey Timpson, now at Inland Congregations United for Change (ICUC) in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties; and John Hughes at the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute in San Diego.

We appreciate also the partnership of The James Irvine Foundation. Vice President Marty Campbell, Program Staff Amy Dominguez-Arms and Latonya Slack, and former Program Staff Lande Ajose and Craig McGarvey all contributed to the vision of an evaluation project that could be useful to participating organizations and to broader fields of practice and policy. Marty's facilitative leadership and thoughtful editorial review were especially valuable in developing this publication.

Several scholars, researchers, and consultants on faith-based organizing and community action provided valuable input at various stages of this project. In particular, Don Miller of the University of Southern California, Richard Wood of the University of New Mexico, Jeannie Appleman of Interfaith Funders, and Emily Goldfarb of the French American Charitable Trust's Community Organizing Evaluation Project stimulated our thinking in helpful ways. Barry Cohen at Rainbow Research also shared his passion for rigorous, community-friendly, socially useful evaluation.

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Nancy Hancock, former Associate Director of the Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County. Her tragic passing in 2004 saddened us all. May her enthusiasm for creating a humane, beloved world long live on.

David Scheie and Nan Kari
January 2006

Introduction

THE ORGANIZED RELIGION INITIATIVE

People and institutions of faith have long played important roles in American public life. From the abolition of slavery in the 1800s to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, religious individuals, networks, and institutions have been at the forefront of liberating change.

More recently, faith-based networks have served to galvanize voters with views along the entire political spectrum. In fact, some credit George Bush's presidential re-election in 2004 largely to his campaign's success at mobilizing millions of Christian conservative voters.

Given the power of religion as a force in public life, those who would improve community conditions and strengthen democracy would do well to understand the phenomenon of faith-based action. Under what circumstances can organized religion contribute to democratic renewal, community problem-solving, and human development? What are the pitfalls and tensions that come with working through faith-based groups?

For nearly 10 years, from 1996 through 2005, The James Irvine Foundation invested in work across California intending to learn about these topics and explore the possibilities of faith-based community action. Over 20 organizations received grants during this period, most of them for several years, through Irvine's Organized Religion Initiative. For the past five years, the authors of this report have worked with a subset of those organizations in a learning and documentation project called the Organized Religion Evaluation Project. This publication shares insights from that effort.

The Organized Religion Theory of Change

The James Irvine Foundation (Irvine) created the Organized Religion Initiative to capitalize upon the potential of congregations as civic spaces to draw people, especially new and low-income Californians, into greater civic engagement. Overall, Irvine sought to promote a robust civic culture in California, inclusive of the state's demographic diversity. Such a civic culture would encourage participation in public deliberation and address community concerns. Renewing California's civic culture was important because rapid population growth and unprecedented levels of immigration and multicultural diversity were straining the state's social cohesiveness. Disparities of wealth, opportunity, and civic engagement between different segments of California's population were extreme and increasing, with new and low-income residents at the margins of civic life. Polls showed residents to be increasingly mistrustful of public officials and ambivalent toward public institutions and infrastructure.

Irvine perceived that faith-based institutions and networks possessed important resources for democratic renewal:

- Faith-based institutions are where *people* are found. These include newcomers, people of color, and poor people, those most marginalized from civic life. They also include many middle-class, affluent, and highly educated people well-connected to resources and power.
- Organized religion promotes *values* that underpin democracy: inclusiveness, tolerance, love for neighbor, the dignity and sacredness of all people, appreciation for learning and inquiry, stewardship, and appreciation for both social stability and transformational change.
- The faith-based sector offers *public spaces* where voluntary associations form and people develop skills relevant to participation in public life, including the cooperative skills of communication, planning, handling conflict, and mobilizing and managing resources.
- Faith-based institutions are rich in *social capital*, with high levels of trust, norms of engagement and reciprocity, and dense networks of both horizontal (peer) and vertical (age, wealth, and social status) relationships. Though many faith-based institutions are segregated and homogeneous in cultural and ethnic terms, they still offer venues for cross-class and intergenerational relationships.

By partnering with faith-based institutions and networks, Irvine hoped to mobilize these resources for civic renewal. The Organized Religion Initiative supported faith-based structures that worked to draw marginalized people and communities into larger roles in public life—into more active engagement with governance and public policymaking.

**Organized religion
promotes values that
underpin democracy.**

In the Organized Religion theory of change (the articulation of the program, linking resources, activities, and strategies to desired outcomes), efforts and results occurred on three levels: participating individuals, faith-based institutions, and the communities in which these faith-based civic engagement organizations were located. Expected results included:

1. Individuals growing in capacity (skills, knowledge, attitudes, relationships) for public leadership and moving into more active public roles
2. Institutions growing stronger at building civic culture, mobilizing participation, and addressing community problems
3. Communities being improved through specific policy and program achievements and through enlargement of structures and pathways (e.g., the relationship webs through which information flows, dialogue occurs, and trust is built) for entering public life

The theory of change predicted that activities and outcomes on these three levels were interrelated: individuals would grow in civic activity and in civic leadership capacity as they went through training and participated, through or with the support of these organizations, in community improvement and policy reform efforts. Organizations would grow stronger as they built up their membership base and leadership capacities and as they achieved community changes that demonstrated their effectiveness and raised their visibility. Community improvements and policy reforms would result as organizations mobilized their membership and leadership capacities to identify community concerns, generate possible solutions, and mobilize the community will necessary to act on solutions.

This vision was pursued through three interrelated strategies:

- The initiative supported faith-based civic engagement organizations in continuing and expanding their work—both with current participants and by drawing in more faith-based organizations and individual participants.
- It also supported the development of knowledge about what works in the faith-based civic engagement field. In the late 1990s, Irvine invested in the establishment and development of the Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California and promoted partnerships between faith-based civic engagement organizations and this academic research institution. Starting in 2000, Irvine also pursued knowledge building through support of a collaborative evaluation partnership among a subset of its grantees and an evaluation consulting group. Here the focus was on strengthening internal systems of learning, documentation, and critical inquiry while also forming a peer learning cluster with regular interaction, information sharing, and joint reflection among participating organizations. This became known as the Organized Religion Evaluation Project and is the basis for this report.

- Finally, Irvine promoted public communication of emerging knowledge. This was to increase awareness and understanding of faith-based civic engagement, thereby drawing more participants and resources to the field, and provide information by which others could adapt or emulate current good practices. Public communication was understood to be a responsibility shared by the Foundation, its faith-based civic engagement grantees, and its research and evaluation intermediary partners. These three groups of stakeholders challenged and supported one another to communicate findings and stimulate public dialogue among peers and other relevant audiences through formal and informal channels.

The Organized Religion Initiative supported faith-based structures that draw marginalized people and communities into larger roles in public life.

Participating Organizations

Six faith-based organizations participated in the Organized Religion Evaluation Project from 2001 through 2005. These included three relatively established organizations that were between six and 15 years old in 2001 and three that were new, founded between 1999 and 2001.

Three of the organizations used faith-based community organizing models affiliated with different organizing networks. The other three were unique, homegrown models emphasizing varying combinations of training, convening, brokering, and joint action.

The organizations came from six different regions of coastal California: the Bay Area, Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties on the central coast, Santa Barbara County, Los Angeles, Orange County, and San Diego.

Table 1: Participating Organizations, Organized Religion Evaluation Project

Organization	Location	Date Founded	Model	Context
FAITHS	Bay Area (5 counties)	1993	Convenor/broker/capacity-builder. Informal network of over 500 leaders and institutions. Based at the San Francisco Foundation.	Urban/suburban, culturally diverse, interfaith.
Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA)	Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties	2000	Faith-based community organizing, affiliated with Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF). 30 member congregations.	Small-city/suburban/rural, balanced Latino/Anglo, mostly large Catholic and mid-sized mainline Protestant.
The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County (IFI)	Santa Barbara County	1999	Convenor/dialogue/advocacy, creating spaces for deliberation and vehicles for policy advocacy. About 30 active faith-based and community organizations.	Small-city/suburban, mixed Anglo/Latino, intentionally interfaith.
Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM)	Los Angeles County	1994	Culturally specific, faith-based community organizing, affiliated with Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations (RCNO). 45 member congregations.	Urban, Afro-centric, small and mid-sized congregations, autonomous and mainline Protestant.
Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO)	Orange County	1985	Faith-based community organizing, affiliated with Pacific Institute on Community Organizing (PICO). 15 member congregations.	Urban/suburban, Latino/Anglo, mainly large Catholic and some mid-sized mainline Protestant congregations.
Faith Based Leadership Training Institute	San Diego	2001	Pastor-centered training. Pilot project of urban ministry agency-university partnership. Classroom-based training followed by action coaching for pastors and select lay staff.	Urban/suburban, African American/white Anglo, mainly autonomous and mainline Protestant pastors.

Profiles of the six organizations are presented in Appendix A of this report.

Evaluation Methods

The Organized Religion Evaluation Project was coordinated by a consulting team based at Rainbow Research, a Minneapolis-based nonprofit organization specializing in evaluation and organizational development.

Three strategies were used to build evaluation capacity and generate knowledge:

- Individualized coaching for each organization in support of its own evaluation infrastructure and data collection efforts
- Formation of a peer learning cluster through periodic evaluation retreats for training, reflection, and dialogue and encouraging mutually supportive relationships among them
- Direct data collection by the evaluation consultants through on-site interviews and observations at each organization

Site visits for coaching and data collection were conducted generally on an annual basis from 2001 through 2004. Intensive, two-day site visits with a two-person team (for greater triangulation) were conducted in 2003–04. Five evaluation retreats for peer learning and capacity building were held from 2002 through 2005. Further information on the evaluation appears in Appendix B.

This report is based on the following information sources:

- Civic leadership surveys of participants at three organizations: OCCCO, FAITHS, and LAM
- Administrative records, organizational reports, notes from public forums, and interviews of pastors and leaders conducted by organizational staff at all six organizations
- Interviews of pastors, leaders, and staff conducted by Rainbow Research consultants during site visits
- Observation of organizational activities by Rainbow Research during site visits
- Proceedings from and organizational presentations at the evaluation retreats

The evaluation team gathered data on accomplishments and challenges at three levels: individual, organizational, and community change.

While the six organizations worked within a common evaluation framework based on the Organized Religion theory of change, their evaluation efforts were tailored to their particular interests and context. They varied in the amount and kinds of information collected and in the timelines of their data collection. This was not a controlled experiment. The evaluation did not include rigorous measurement of change. Since the primary goal was to build their evaluation capacity, emphasis was placed on piloting different kinds of data collection strategies and then revising tools based on the pilot experience. The three organizations that elected to use a similar (though not identical) participant-survey instrument surveyed relatively small numbers of participants, between 30 and 93 per year. The two organizations that did follow-up surveys in a second year did so with only 19 to 28 members. In addition, site visits by the coordinating evaluation consultants included interviews of key participants and staff but not of external local observers or partners of these organizations.

Through this process, the Rainbow Research team learned a great deal about faith-based civic engagement as practiced by these organizations. And the evaluation team gathered considerable data about their accomplishments and difficulties at the three levels of individual, organizational, and community change. Accordingly, this report presents what the evaluation team found to be important cross-cutting themes and learning, and hence it is a report on “reflections” rather than “findings.”

Results

INDIVIDUALS, INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITIES

Impact on Participating Individuals

A Profile of Participating Individuals

Participants in these faith-based civic engagement organizations included clergy and lay leaders who actively participated in the meetings, trainings, and community improvement and policy reform activities of the organizations. Demographic information on participants was gathered through a faith-based civic leadership survey conducted by three organizations.¹

Survey respondents from the three organizations were culturally diverse, as shown in Table 1, below. All three predominantly included people of color. FAITHS engages an ethnically diverse network of faith-based leaders from across the multicounty Bay Area. LAM and its affiliates intentionally focus on African American congregations. OCCCO's member congregations are primarily the large Catholic congregations of central Orange County, which have large Latino memberships.

Table 2: Cultural Composition of Three Faith-based Civic Engagement Organizations

	African American	Asian American	Latino	Native American	White	Other
FAITHS	34%	7%	8%	1%	39%	10%
LAM	93%	—	7%	—	—	—
OCCCO	—	—	74%	—	26%	—

¹ FAITHS surveyed 150 participants drawn from its general mailing list in 2003-05. LAM collected surveys from 34 participants in leadership training in 2004. OCCCO surveyed 59 participants from four member congregations in 2003-04.

Compared to a random sample of Orange County residents, the OCCCO participants included a higher proportion of Spanish speakers and immigrants who did not yet have U.S. citizenship.

Women were more likely than men to be active in these organizations; the three samples ranged from 57% to 65% female. This is consistent with the primarily female composition of most religious congregations.

Participants reported primarily low-to-moderate incomes. In the LAM sample, 65% reported annual household incomes below \$50,000, with none above \$100,000. In the OCCCO sample, 62% reported incomes below \$50,000, with none above \$100,000.

While generally average to below average in income, the faith-based civic engagement participants had fairly high education levels. In the FAITHS sample, 90% reported college or graduate degrees. The LAM sample included 49% college or graduate degrees, and the OCCCO sample included 69% with college or graduate degrees.

Improved Civic Leadership

The Orange County survey asked OCCCO participants and a random sample of community residents to rate themselves on five dimensions of civic leadership capacity and engagement, as shown on the next page.

Table 3: Dimensions of Civic Leadership

Civic knowledge	<p><i>Knowledge of how government works at:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Local level · State level · National level <p><i>Knowledge of how to influence government at:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Local level · State level · National level
Civic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Holding oneself accountable · Inspiring others to act · Running meetings so that goals are achieved · Negotiating differences · Offering new ideas and initiating new directions · Active listening · Public writing · Researching facts · Doing a power analysis of an issue · Formulating strategy for an issue campaign
Level of participation in public life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Speaking or writing to a public official · Attending or organizing events to address community concerns · Holding conversations with other people to address community concerns · Leading training sessions on organizing or civic processes · Holding leadership positions in community organizations · Relationships with public officials
Identity as a leader	<p><i>Seeing self as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Someone with an appetite for expanding relationships and participating in public life · Someone who can make things happen in a community group or in the community · Someone with leadership talents and responsibilities · Someone who works to make sure that groups and meetings welcome diverse points of view, are fair and democratic in decision-making, and keep commitments
Role of faith in civic engagement	<p><i>Extent to which:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Civic participation and building relationships are expressions of one's religious beliefs · Congregational relationships support one's community involvement · Religious beliefs give strength to persevere in improving one's community · Improving one's community encourages one's religious beliefs · Community involvement has helped one to share faith with others · Community involvement has helped one to serve others · Community involvement has helped one to be more understanding of people with different religious perspectives

Sample sizes were quite small, limiting the study's ability to detect statistically significant differences between the two groups. However, some differences were found. The survey found that OCCCO members were substantially more involved in civic life than were members of the general community: they participated in nearly three times as many civic activities as did the random sample of residents.

Regarding knowledge of democracy, OCCCO members said they knew more about how local government works and how to influence it, but there was no difference between the groups on knowledge at state and national levels.

Regarding personal identity, findings were mixed. OCCCO members were more likely to say they could make things happen in the community or a community group, more likely to describe themselves as someone with leadership talents and responsibilities, and an appetite for expanding relationships and participation. But those in the random sample were more likely to say they worked to make meetings fair, democratic, and accountable.

What contributes to the higher level of civic activity among faith-based civic engagement participants? Dr. Paul Speer of Vanderbilt University conducted a statistical analysis of survey data comparing the 209 OCCCO and FAITHS respondents to the random sample of 120 Orange County residents. The analysis found that the two faith-based civic engagement groups did not significantly differ from one another on civic participation, but both did significantly vary from the random sample of community residents. Perhaps most important, these analyses found that civic engagement was influenced significantly by their participation in faith-based civic organizations. Even among people with similar demographics and attitudes, those who belonged to a faith-based civic engagement organization were likely to participate more in civic and community life. In contrast, civic engagement is typically understood by sociology and political science as a product of fairly static characteristics of individuals, such as their education level.

These analyses found that civic engagement of individuals was influenced significantly by their participation in faith-based civic organizations.

Table 4: Contributing Factors Toward Increased Civic Participation²

Demographics	18%
Individual attitudes	15%
Membership in a faith-based civic engagement organization	10%

² According to a hierarchical regression analysis of survey data from 209 members of FAITHS and OCCCO, compared to a random sample of 120 Orange County residents, 2003–05. In the hierarchical regression analysis, demographic characteristics (age, education, gender, ethnicity) were associated with 18% of the variability in civic participation. An additional 15% of the variability was explained by differences in individual attitudes. Group membership (whether or not respondents belonged to a faith-based civic engagement organization) predicted an additional 9% of the variance in civic engagement.

In a second analysis—an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA)—with the effects of demographic characteristics “removed” from the analysis, membership in a faith-based civic engagement organization alone could predict 17% of the variance in civic participation [$F=70.3$ (1,347); $p = .001$].

Challenges and Lessons for Involving People in Public Life

Barriers to civic participation are both practical and attitudinal. The foremost practical barrier we found, in interviewing participants, is the lack of time available. Often people in these congregations, generally with low-to-moderate incomes and in many cases immigrants, are working long hours, caring for family, and dealing with transportation and other time-consuming daily challenges. Many immigrants work long hours so they can remit monies to their relatives in their countries of origin. Lower-income members who lack medical insurance often spend extra time and energy coping with health difficulties.

Attitudinal challenges include people's view of themselves, of issues, and of civic life. A common starting point, heard again and again, is that people don't see themselves as capable of making a difference. They think that they lack skills, knowledge, confidence, connections, and money—the key ingredients necessary for being a powerful public actor. People often have few successful past experiences of effective civic engagement.

Finally, many people view civic life and policymaking as something someone else does (someone more knowledgeable, more powerful, more affluent), not them. They don't believe the system is open to them. Many immigrants come from backgrounds where public officials do not listen to poor people, where politics are corrupt, and where speaking out can be dangerous. Many people of color in this country, especially African Americans, have similar experiences in their background or cultural memory.

A major strategy practiced by these organizations to cope with these attitudinal challenges was to bring people together to tell their stories—so that, in listening to one another, people could realize that they were not alone in their difficulties but had much in common with their neighbors and fellow church members. As people reframed their experiences to recognize the public dimensions of their issues—that difficulties in school had to do with limitations of the school system, not just with family responsibilities; that people could become infected with HIV even when married and sexually monogamous if their partner was infected within the prison system; and that housing quality and stability depended on housing market and policy forces along with an individual's income and home maintenance capacities—their inclination to get involved in community action went up.

Factors Affecting Individual Growth

In interviews conducted by the Rainbow Research team with faith-based civic participants across these organizations, the team found that the degree of civic leadership growth tended to vary with the *intensity* of their engagement (more active participants grew more) and with the *length* of their involvement (people develop more in the first few years of participation in these organizations than do the veterans who've been involved for 5, 10, or 15 years).

The research team also found that people enter and stay engaged in public life due to three factors in particular: *self-interest* (especially in regard to issues that they personally care about, plus their appetite for the personal development possible through participation); *relationships* with people with whom they enjoy working; and *beliefs*, such as their religious and moral convictions regarding justice and community.

Organizations varied in what they emphasized in individual leadership development. For example, the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute in San Diego focused on getting pastors and other faith-based leaders to recognize their brokering skills, commonly used within the congregation, as relevant community skills as well. LAM taught participants to use a critical historical analysis, recognizing parallels between the current period and the end of Reconstruction when governmental protections for equality were rolled back, Jim Crow segregation was enacted, and the criminal justice system was widely used to exploit and oppress African Americans. COPA encouraged leaders to gain clarity about their wellspring for participating in public life and to develop their public voice, by crafting their personal narrative and practicing telling their story of why they decided to get involved in public life.

Recognizing one's talents within the congregation and realizing that those same skills and knowledge could also be used in community settings, on community concerns, was a common theme across all organizations.

People enter and stay engaged in public life due to three factors: self interest, relationships, and beliefs.

Impact on Participating Congregations and Institutions

The research team saw evidence of impact at many congregations—in community relationships, programs, infrastructure, leadership, and other areas—from participation in these faith-based civic engagement organizations.

Expanded Community Relationships

Through these organizations, congregations moved into expanded working relationships with other houses of worship and with civic leaders and public officials.

Sometimes these relationships were highly local: collaboration with neighboring churches on education, housing, safety, and other local issues. People at three of four OCCCO congregations studied in 2003 said relationships with neighboring churches had become stronger through collaboration on OCCCO-assisted projects.

In San Diego, Greater Life Baptist Church formed an interdenominational alliance with two other congregations to provide supplemental after-school tutoring for students in nearby schools. This partnership also included some important secular partners: San Diego State University and Volunteers of America helped supply tutors and teaching materials.

Often these expanded relationships stretched city or regionwide, as congregations participated in federations, task forces, and coalitions. For example, the Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County formed the Goleta/Isle Vista Clergy Task Force to raise community concerns and include a faith perspective in the planning of the city of Goleta.

FAITHS mentored several emerging regional faith-based coalitions. These included Richmond Improvement Association (25 member congregations) in Richmond, Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (eight member congregations) in San Francisco, and the Tri-Valley Interfaith Poverty Forum, with participants from churches in five cities in the East Bay (Alameda and Contra Costa Counties).

FAITHS' three advisory groups—the overall Leadership Group, the Economic Justice and Opportunity Team, and the Race and Community Relations Team—were highly prized by their participants, whom we interviewed, as spaces for peer learning, support, and joint action across congregations and geographic areas.

Expanded Community Programs, Infrastructure, and Strategy

Many congregations expanded or strengthened their community ministries such as childcare, after-school tutoring, health programs, and support groups for ex-offenders, women, and other populations. Engaged congregations organized classes open to neighbors and members on financial management, home maintenance, and on how parents can be advocates for children's education. They held community fairs, supported development of housing, ran schools, and opened their buildings for use by community groups.

Several organizations in this initiative emphasized building congregational infrastructure and capacity for programs. FAITHS, LAM, and the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute all provided training and consultation to help congregations form 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate organizations for easier access to government and foundation funding. FAITHS, for example, assisted over 20 congregations between 2001 and 2005 with incorporation and tax-exempt filings to establish nonprofit organizations for community economic development and related activities. Staff and leaders were coached in grant writing, program design and management, and financial management. A few congregations made improvements to their physical facilities to support social and educational community programs.

Through their experience in these organizations, many congregations shifted the strategies by which they conceptualized and conducted their ministries and programs. They now put more emphasis on listening, seeking and working with partners, and recognizing the systemic and policy dimensions of personal and local concerns.

Enhanced Congregational Leadership and Membership

As leaders became strengthened through participation in faith-based civic activities, they had an impact not only on achievement of the faith-based civic engagement organization's goals but also on other aspects of congregational ministries and dynamics where they were active. One pastor of an OCCCO congregation said OCCCO had helped bridge "the great divide" between Latino and Anglo members of his congregation. "For Spanish-speaking folks especially, it's an opportunity to build skills and influence they can use elsewhere in the congregation," he said.

Another priest estimated that over 60% of the parishioners playing leadership roles in congregational ministries in his former church had developed their leadership capacities through participation in OCCCO. Traditional parish ministries such as religious education and fellowship clubs were being invigorated, as reported to the research team, as leaders grew more capable through their civic engagement experiences.

One pastor said OCCCO had helped bridge "the great divide" between Latino and Anglo members of his congregation.

Some congregations attracted members through their community and civic engagement reputations. Buena Vista United Methodist Church in Alameda changed its identity from “refuge” to “mission outpost” over the past 15 years, a change facilitated by its participation in FAITHS. One consequence, according to its pastor, was that it attracted a new mix of members, 25% of whom were now people who joined because of its activist, community orientation, he estimated. Buena Vista now attracts people engaged in public life who want a faith community for themselves and their families, including several who first got to know the church through its participation in community coalitions and projects. West Oakland Missionary Baptist Church, another participant in FAITHS, also gained members who were drawn to its supportive atmosphere for civic and community involvement.

Internal Shifts in Framing and Conversation

Particularly in some smaller congregations, participation in these faith-based civic engagement organizations contributed to a shift in internal culture—in what gets talked about and how those conversations unfold. One lay leader in LAM described how work on women’s health and on issues involving incarcerated family members had affected her congregation:

Attitudes are changing. We’re able to talk openly about issues we had never done before. LAM has helped us educate ourselves. When the MCI issue [challenging the charges levied by the long-distance telephone company to inmates in California prisons] was first presented to us, we were surprised at how many [congregation] members had been affected by the issue. We didn’t know, because these issues don’t come up at choir rehearsal or Bible study. Then we learned there were tools we could use... plans we could make to address the issue... People become empowered when they have knowledge... Now we need to go public with our work. We’ve gone beyond just passing out literature and making announcements. We’ve done health fairs and other outreach activities. Participation is snowballing. We want to go deeper with other congregations where we have relationships. We’ll grow stronger and more united.

She described a changed church culture and pointed to the power of learning to frame personal problems in public, actionable terms as key to its change. She went on to say that the revitalized congregational life had also spurred improvements in their physical space: new restrooms and a remodeled office.

Improved Reputation and Visibility

Pastors and lay leaders interviewed often said that participation in community affairs as taught and facilitated by these faith-based civic engagement organizations had shifted the reputation and boosted the visibility of their congregations. They became known in their community as congregations that work on justice issues and policy concerns. One OCCCO member said her congregation was seen as powerful by residents, who had noticed the public forums on community issues that the church hosted and the public figures appearing at those forums. Through OCCCO, congregations also became known as committed to Hispanic and immigrant concerns—which raised tension within some predominantly Anglo congregations that had struggled to reconcile opposition from established Anglo members with priorities advocated by Hispanic immigrant members and neighbors. OCCCO uses one-to-one relationship and dialogue strategies to bridge these tensions, but the going is often slow.

One LAM leader said, “The church’s reputation in the community is changing. We are more than just a building on the corner. Our women’s group is attracting new members and more people are starting to drop in at the church now. We may need to add a social worker to the staff so that we can address the needs people are showing up with.”

Table 5: Impact on Congregations Participating in Faith-based Civic Engagement Organizations³

Expanded community relationships	Local
	City or regionwide
	With other religious institutions
	With secular nonprofit, community, and government organizations
Expanded programs and infrastructure	Community programs and ministries
	Incorporation of 501(c)(3) nonprofit affiliate organization
	Enhanced capacity at program design, fundraising, management
Shifts in strategy and culture	More and deeper collaboration
	More systemic change
	Reframing of personal problems to reveal public dimensions
Leadership and membership	Leaders with enhanced skills through civic engagement experience and training
	Some congregations attracted new members
Visibility and reputation	Better known as community-serving church
	Better known as advocate for marginalized members of community

³ These changes were reported by some, not all, participating congregations in these organizations.

Challenges to Impact at the Congregational Level

The scale of impact on congregations was generally moderate, not transformative. In most cases, a congregation's civic involvement was one of many aspects of congregational life, with a relatively small number of members actively engaged. As a larger proportion of members get involved, of course, congregational impact grows.

A key factor affecting congregational impact was the pastor's level of leadership on civic engagement. Many pastors are stretched for time, with multiple and potentially overwhelming demands on their time. In many of the smaller, independent congregations touched by LAM and the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute, pastors were bi-vocational (with day jobs outside the church), which further constrained their time. Some pastors, we found, were committed to and engaged in community improvement efforts but didn't integrate these activities into their work in the congregation. This was particularly true in the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute—perhaps partly because the Institute's pastor-centered program may have attracted pastors with a personal more than a congregational interest in the Institute's ideas.

Another common challenge is the religious tradition that shuns worldly involvement and emphasizes personal responsibility and salvation rather than social responsibility and engagement in collective action. Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations receive a fair amount of denominational resources and reinforcement for civic engagement in public life. Denominational social teachings encourage solidarity and involvement in public policy efforts on behalf of those in poverty, immigrants, and other marginalized people. Bishops and other high-ranking officials were visible within COPA and OCCCO events, lending their support to the organizations' work. Sometimes grants and technical assistance came through denominational channels. However, autonomous congregations, which were more common in LAM and the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute, did not get denominational support for civic participation.

Many Catholic congregations within these organizations focused more of their public energy on the policy dimensions of “personal morality” issues, such as gay marriage, abortion, and stem cell research, rather than on the bread-and-butter health, education, housing, and immigration issues central to these faith-based civic engagement efforts. Members of these congregations who were active in faith-based civic engagement organizations explained their choice to focus on the bread-and-butter issues as a choice that builds unity and strength, rather than division and polarization. But they expressed frustration that their social justice, community improvement path was not embraced by more of their fellow members.

Impact at the Community Level

These six organizations contributed to multiple kinds of community impact, including a role in public policy changes, particularly at the local level. Numerous community service programs and housing and redevelopment projects were initiated or expanded as well. Perhaps most significant was the development of relationships and expansion of spaces for dialogue on community and policy issues among residents and between residents and public officials.

Policy Change and Program Development

These six organizations, and their participating congregations and leaders, worked especially on policy change and program development in the areas of housing, education, health, immigrant concerns, public safety, and the criminal justice system. The following array of examples gives a flavor of their policy and program accomplishments:

In five East Bay suburban municipalities, 429 units of low-income housing are under development thanks to efforts of the Tri-Valley Interfaith Poverty Forum, a FAITHS participant. The Forum organized research and testimony at city planning meetings, brokered relationships between city officials and housing developers, and educated developers on how to incorporate affordable housing into development projects.

The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County convened a housing advocacy group, the Housing Action Coalition (HAC), which created a housing endorsement procedure for developers. At least 20 organizations adopted HAC principles, which aimed to influence policy decisions about affordable housing.

Following the organizing by OCCCO of five tenants rights associations in Costa Mesa and a housing rights forum attended by over 350 residents, the city of Costa Mesa increased rental housing inspections, allocated more funds for rental renovations, and created an advocate for tenants staff position.

Family Assistance Ministries (FAM), a faith-based nonprofit organization in south Orange County, applied principles of public partnership learned in the San Diego Faith Based Leadership Training Institute to develop a 26-bed transitional housing shelter in San Clemente for women and children. FAM partnered with Mercy House, a major shelter provider in central Orange County, obtained city approval, and successfully pursued a federal housing grant along with private donations to fund the project.

These organizations built relationships and expanded spaces for dialogue between residents and public officials.

A review of public education in Santa Ana spearheaded by OCCCO resulted in an action plan for increased academic performance for limited-English students in that school district.

FAITHS, LAM, and OCCCO all helped congregations open health programs in their neighborhoods. OCCCO also worked on health policy, winning allocation of \$400,000 for medical coverage for 1,000 uninsured children and joining a countywide collaborative to pass Measure H, which secured Orange County's tobacco settlement funds for health care.

In San Diego, an interfaith leadership group called Black Men United (BMU)—some of whose leaders had gone through the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute—influenced San Diego Police Department policies. They persuaded the department to adopt the policy of routinely notifying parents when their children are documented as participating in gangs. They also convinced the department to add a BMU representative to the internal committee that screens candidates for promotion from lieutenant to captain.

Criminal justice and ex-offender reintegration issues were a major focus area for LAM. Its multiyear MCI Initiative persuaded the state to limit profits on collect telephone calls made by incarcerated men to their families to \$25 million per year, instead of the \$45 million formerly allowed.

Because public policy formation and program development require collaborative processes, credit for these achievements should not be attributed to these organizations alone. The evaluation process also did not include interviews with independent observers who could corroborate or correct these organizations' self-reported gains. Nonetheless, we found high likelihood that these organizations were contributing to the process of meaningful policy and community improvement.

Enhanced Capacity for Public Dialogue and Deliberation

Beyond any specific policy or program change, the key contribution of the participating organizations to community quality of life may lie in their enhanced vehicles and practices for public dialogue and deliberation. All six organizations taught and practiced an approach to public life that emphasized relationship-building and ongoing dialogue between diverse community actors. Beginning with one-to-one relationships and small group meetings and escalating into public forums that could bring hundreds or thousands of people into direct contact with elected officials and other policymakers, these organizations became known as public spaces where diverse elements within the community could meet to explore differences, clarify interests, express values, and seek common ground and workable solutions. Interviews with experienced civic leaders and secular organizational partners conducted by the evaluation team revealed that staff and senior leaders of these organizations were highly regarded as bridge builders, coalition builders, project developers, and resources for strengthening civic culture.

The following account about OCCCO shows how these organizations built relationships between ordinary residents and public officials and created forums where residents and officials could pursue solutions to community concerns.

In early 2004, Orange County Sheriff Michael Carona proposed that the county enter into an agreement with the federal government that would allow sheriff's deputies to check the immigration status of anyone they suspected of a serious crime. A small group of OCCCO leaders met with Sheriff Carona to learn more about his plan and his motivations as well as to share with him some of the immediate concerns community members had regarding the proposal. In May 2004, OCCCO leaders brought together 1,200 residents to ask Sheriff Carona to ensure that his proposal focused on serious crimes rather than immigration. Carona's reluctance to attend the meeting was evident in the fact that he arrived with a security team (presumably to protect him from what he might have assumed would be an "angry mob"). By the end of the meeting, Carona was so impressed with the process OCCCO had used (meeting with him before the large forum, maintaining discipline in the forum, and grounding the event in common faith values), that he assured the audience that OCCCO would have as many seats at the table as it wanted as he prepared the specifics of his proposal.

Since then, OCCCO and Sheriff Carona have continued to come together in small meetings, and OCCCO is making headway in actually shaping Carona's policy in a way that best protects the immigrant community. In this process, OCCCO leaders have collaborated with County Supervisor Lou Correa and others to create specific language for the proposed policy. Similarly, OCCCO leaders met with conservative County Supervisor Jim Silva regarding Carona's proposal. Although Silva and OCCCO leaders disagreed on some basic ideas underlying the proposal, personal accounts by OCCCO leaders of their own immigration experiences, their subsequent journeys to citizenship, and their contributions to the Orange County community allowed Supervisor Silva to identify with OCCCO leaders around some basic shared values. OCCCO leaders see this as an opportunity to get beyond stereotypes and assumptions by and about the immigrant community and to engage in meaningful dialogue with public officials and others. By entering into these dialogues, OCCCO has built relationships of respect among public officials and low-income, largely immigrant community members.

In short, these organizations appeared to be building community capacity for dialogue and deliberation leading to more constructive action on community concerns. They offered forums in which contentious issues could be explored in a civil way, with multiple points of view voiced and heard among diverse community stakeholders. And the specific encounters provided in these forums were embedded in ongoing relationships of collaboration, two-way communication, and accountability between leaders of these faith-based civic engagement organizations and those holding policymaking positions.

Promising Practices for Achieving Impact

The following summarizes the promising practices demonstrated by the six organizations. As they worked to achieve impact on the individual, congregational, and community levels, they...

1. Provided one-on-one coaching and mentoring to support the development of new leaders
2. Integrated hands-on experience with critical reflection to infuse leadership training for policy work
3. Reframed personal problems as public issues to facilitate critical understanding of complex issues and the need for policy change
4. Looked for democratic practices within religious and cultural traditions and incorporated these along with other cultural resources, like music, stories, and ritual, to ground and enliven organizing work
5. Involved a critical mass of congregational members along with pastors in public work, surfacing the self-interests of members and inviting members to pursue their self-interests and contribute their distinctive talents to enable congregations to mobilize their considerable internal resources for community and congregational change
6. Integrated development of service programs and community construction projects with critical analysis of the policy and systemic dimensions of the issues addressed by those programs and projects as they learned from the experience of the people coming for services and engaged them as leaders and advocates for systemic change
7. Generated a regular practice of public dialogue among diverse people and community stakeholders to strengthen the civic infrastructure
8. Built relationships with diverse partners to grow the power base and increase the level of public activity by recognizing that working collaboratively with other institutions allowed an impact far greater than any congregation or single organization could achieve on its own
9. Internalized evaluation practices to strengthen organizational strategies and built a culture of learning through reflective practices, critical questioning, articulation of core principles, and utilization of an organizational theory of change linking resources, challenges, strategies, and expected outcomes

Reflections

THE ROLE OF FAITH IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Differences and Linkages Among Faith-based Models: Human Services, Civic Engagement, and Community Development

Faith-based public activity encompasses a range of actions, which can be subdivided into three categories described further below and summarized in the table. These three models are: 1) faith-based human services; 2) faith-based civic engagement; and 3) faith-based community development. The framework highlights the nuanced differences among faith activities, illustrating the spectrum of faith-based community action, which sometimes overlaps in the models supported in this initiative.

Faith-based human services help individuals and families address personal problems and improve individual lives through support groups, health and education programs, childcare, senior care, and many other program examples. This model works within existing public policy. The current Bush administration's support of faith-based organizations to provide social services falls within this category.

Faith-based civic engagement draws people into public life as active citizens able to identify and address social issues, often in the context of improving their geographic communities. People of faith also work through faith-based organizations and their secular partners to change policy or shape it where there has not been a public strategy before. It is work that must be sustained over a long period of time. Faith-based civic engagement holds a distinctive place in the broad field of civic engagement, utilizing faith-based organizations to convene and educate people about complex social issues and providing a communal setting for development of public leadership skills. Faith values, a deep sense of spirituality sometimes expressed as "calling," and a language of justice distinguish the faith-based approach and provide core resources to this form of civic engagement.

Civic engagement takes different forms, from voting to volunteering in one's community to involvement in public work—paid or unpaid—that creates public improvements, including systemic changes advanced by public policy reforms. Most active people participate in a range of civic activities.

Faith-based community development represents efforts that comprise housing and economic development projects to improve the physical and economic infrastructure of a community. It is not a policy-change model.

All three categories draw on faith resources to motivate and sustain involvement, build organization capacity, and bring about improvements to the community.

Faith-based civic engagement is distinctive for its focus on shaping policy and its insistence that all people are called to be active, creative citizens.

Table 6: Characteristics of Faith-based Public Activity

Characteristics	Faith-based Human Services	Faith-based Civic Engagement	Faith-based Community Development
Goal	Meet human needs	Create a vigorous democratic society	Create a well-built housing and economic environment
Relationship to policy	Works within existing policy	Shapes policy	Works within existing policy
Typical mode	Program	Campaign	Project
Faith mandate	God wants us to care for our neighbors, to serve others	God wants us to co-create a just common life	God wants us to build infrastructures that meet people's basic needs
Examples of key players	Presidential Office of Faith-Based Initiatives; Charitable Choice	Faith-based community organizing networks: RCNO, PICO, IAF	Habitat for Humanity; Fannie Mae, LISC

How Faith-based Organizations Integrated These Approaches

The six organizations practiced a range of strategies for building active citizenship, sometimes integrating attention to faith-based human services with leadership development and other organizing functions of civic engagement. Several organizations (LAM, FAITHS, Faith Based Leadership Training Institute, and OCCCO) included a focus on helping congregations build capacity and access funding for human services programs, including health screening and prevention programs; tutoring, after-school enrichment, and youth development; and programs for the reintegration of ex-offenders. Three organizations (LAM, OCCCO, and to some degree FAITHS) embedded their capacity building for civic engagement in programs for community development and human services, viewing these programs as entry points for policy engagement and leadership development. A focus on social programs had the potential to foster faith-based civic engagement in several ways.

First, social programs helped to build relationships within congregations, and between congregations and the organizing network, by enabling the congregation to deliver something of value immediately to its parishioners and neighbors.

Second, programs increased critical knowledge of the root causes of social problems directly impacting people's lives and helped them to understand the policy and politics around these issues. For some congregation members, this approach provided a foundation and generated readiness to work on the systemic level as well as in direct service delivery.

The experience at Christ Full Gospel Baptist Church in Los Angeles illustrates the point. A few years ago, open discussion of HIV and its causes was taboo in this religiously conservative church. Working with LAM organizers who acknowledged his commitment to children's issues, the pastor began to see how the issues connected. He learned how to surface the topic of HIV, endorse prevention, and encourage congregational involvement from the pulpit. The congregation became involved in HIV efforts at first through social programs, including "Black Women's Right to Know." As lay members learned to frame HIV and other issues from a broad societal and infrastructure perspective rather than from the perspective of a personal problem, they began to look beyond programs for the solutions. "It's like a rock thrown into the pond. It ripples," explained Michele Carter, a lay leader in the church. She described the visible change in her congregation's culture that occurred when people openly discussed a full range of topics. Most poignant, in her view, was the shift from a primary focus on individual problems to the need for policy change.

Third, participants in these programs are themselves potentially active citizens, many of whom are willing to participate in public forums. For instance, LAM organized more than 500 people from their faith-based ex-offender programs to participate in a public meeting that was part of a successful campaign to leverage \$70 million in federal funds to create an employment center for ex-offenders and provide loans and tax credits to employers hiring ex-offenders. The program participants' willingness to show up for the discussion communicated the scope and seriousness of the issue.

Some organizations explicitly looked for leadership talent among program participants, whom they then mentored and brought into organizing activities as young leaders. Organizations that used this approach acknowledged the time-intensive organizational commitment but also believed this to be an effective strategy to grow new grassroots leaders able to understand firsthand the issues affecting people they organize.

Several organizations also combined community development initiatives and social programs. Jones Memorial United Methodist Church in San Francisco (part of the FAITHS initiative), for instance, formed Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (Tabernacle CDC) with six other African American churches to undertake high-profile, sometimes politically charged, land redevelopment and affordable housing projects. Challenged by the extremes in housing costs and subsequent dispersion of much of San Francisco's African American population, Tabernacle CDC was asked by political leaders to help move forward the redevelopment of the Hunter's Point Shipyard and deal with other key challenges, such as San Francisco Unified School District's racial achievement gap and the disproportionate incidence of the city's African American children in the foster care system. Formation of an independent community development corporation allows these faith groups to undertake significant, long-term community improvement initiatives no one congregation could accomplish alone.

One key organizing challenge for leaders in this and other similar redevelopment efforts is to remain informed by and accountable to their low-income, often politically alienated African American core constituency even as they deal with powerful political, corporate, and civic players. This represents one real tension in overlapping and mixing approaches.

Tensions Between These Approaches

While there are good reasons for promoting both social services and civic leadership opportunities, here, too, inherent tensions exist in working toward both goals. Faith-based civic engagement raises questions about who has power, who sets what agenda, and who is responsible for addressing problems. In the first place, it can be challenging to people who simply want to implement programs or projects without questioning the underlying dynamics of community conditions. Similarly, those proficient at delivering programs challenge those with a civic engagement focus on achieving tangible outcomes that make a difference in people's lives.

Second, sustainable programs require that people invest in ongoing fundraising and program administration—demanding functions that can easily deplete resources and eclipse efforts at long-term policy work.

Third, there is a danger that program participants will be seen as and see themselves primarily as recipients or clients rather than as public actors who can build collective power to influence change. Unfortunately the client-provider dynamic is strongly reinforced by the social service/expert models that dominate professional practices and shape the missions of human service organizations. Without question, social service programs fill an important function in our society by addressing basic needs. But in doing so, they frequently highlight deficits rather than capacities.

Faith-based civic engagement raises questions about who has power, who sets what agenda, and who is responsible for addressing problems.

Similarly, faith-based organizations that invest in human services programs carry the risk that people involved in directing social ministries will see themselves primarily as service providers rather than full-fledged citizens who work with others to develop leadership, deliberate, and act together. Without a strong organizing framework, it would be easy for pastors and lay people running programs to think solely from the program-delivery perspective. This is why the faith-based organizations' emphasis on social analysis and public leadership development is so important for clergy and lay people involved in social ministries.

Reverend Eugene Williams, Executive Director of LAM, explained LAM's rationale for combining social ministry with civic engagement this way: "If there is no way to touch people's lives, to help address the immediate circumstances they are most affected by, people will not engage in policy work." The goal is to find a healthy balance between the two approaches. All organizations shared the goal to identify effective strategies that draw more people into the policy side of the work and, once there, to sustain their involvement.

Developing Leadership, Building Power, Achieving Change

The Organized Religion theory of change assumes that to achieve progress requires three interacting components: faith-based organizations that provide vehicles to leadership development; active, skilled leaders; and serious work directly related to community improvement and/or policy change. Power, understood as fluid and dynamic rather than zero-sum, is built through the development of individuals and organizations, which when orchestrated can leverage it to influence institutional decision makers. Faith-based organizations serve as key intermediaries, bridging the space between city hall and people in the pew.

The organizations used a variety of strategies to develop leadership, among them: skill building, knowledge acquisition, use of a public language and concepts, and strengthening of civic identities. These are not discrete areas; they overlap and reinforce each other as skill and confidence accumulate. Organizations used a combination of ways to develop leadership, including formal trainings, house meetings, research meetings, one-on-one coaching, and hands-on public experiences, all combined with critical reflection and feedback. Public actions often included evaluation sessions to help people hone skills and sharpen strategies. Sometimes coaches/mentors embedded formal training in meetings. Much of the leadership development occurred in context of faith beliefs and in relationship to real organizational work or issue campaigns. The one-on-one coaching and experiential learning opportunities were the approaches people pointed to as most valuable.

Effective leadership depends upon *basic knowledge* of the political process and how government works at the local, state, and national levels. Organizers often contextualized this information as they prepared participants for public actions with elected officials. Reflecting on the value of experiential learning, a young leader pursuing a graduate degree in public administration credited her growing knowledge base as much to her on-the-ground work through LAM as to her academic studies. “Some of the things I’ve learned in college about policy and government I now know firsthand, and I’ve learned how policy really works,” she said. “I know firsthand about systems change and inequalities... One of my professors says common people won’t take action, but I’ve been able to give examples that suggest otherwise.” Through trainings, workshops, forums, and educational programs, people learned about the complexities of systems that govern our lives and the root causes of large issues affecting whole communities.

The one-on-one coaching and experiential learning opportunities were the approaches people pointed to as most valuable.

The organizing networks among these projects (LAM, OCCCO, COPA) focused especially on *building skills* related to effective public life, among them building power, thinking strategically, utilizing the resources of diversity, developing public relationships, recognizing one’s self-interests, and listening for the interests of others.

Relationship building was a core strategy used in every project. In interviews, participants told remarkable stories about how they used newly developed public skills and language to negotiate in political situations and build effective relationships with public officials—people whom many would not have considered calling on prior to their leadership training.

Sally Torres of St. Mary’s Parish in Salinas (member of COPA) described a relationship-building meeting her group convened with the chief of police to address issues of community violence. Community members were angry and concerned that there was not enough visibility from the police force on the east side of the city, where most of the violence occurred. Her story shows how her group framed the meeting, integrating public concepts, to build a relationship with officials.

[The meeting] was very interesting because [the police chief] had with him at least four other officers that he brought for support, because he didn’t know what we wanted. We had told him we were from St. Mary’s Parish and that we were representing the community. There were five women attending... The thing that I didn’t notice at the time [and that] was brought to my attention later was there were two officers standing outside the building. What did they think five women were going to do?

We began our conversation with “We’re here to talk about some issues and concerns... but we also want to talk about how we can work together to build a better community. It’s not about you personally or us making demands.”... So we began by asking about his philosophy... We asked about his experiences and what he was most proud of. Some of us asked questions in English, some [spoke] in Spanish. At the end he was a lot calmer and open to what we were saying. He agreed to work with us to see how we could make things better.

Building relationships involves brokering power and forming alliances. It means listening to another’s interests and finding ways to collaborate. People learn that it isn’t necessary to agree on everything or even to like the person or group with whom they work. Building a power base through mutual interests is the point. Thus concepts like relational power, public, diversity, and relationship-building form a conceptual framework that guides strategic thinking, provides a language, and identifies a set of skills.

Without question, people who gained confidence and developed public skills also experienced personal growth and sometimes an expansion of personal identity. Though somewhat elusive, *shaping a public identity* was an important aspect of leadership development in these organizations. LAM leader Reverend Winfred Bell, for instance, linked his growing intellectual abilities to his professional growth and the new public roles he had assumed—Moderator and State Vice President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention. “LAM has helped me shape my lens,” he explained. The ability to think critically, to recognize and analyze the lens with which one views the world, can bring new confidence and help form public identities, which, in this example, opened new opportunities for leadership he had not previously considered.

The example given by Elizabeth Schilling, a lay leader active with COPA, also illustrates the point. She discovered how learning a different framework helped integrate her personal faith with her public work. “The concepts [that the IAF] teaches gave me a different way of thinking about things,” she said. After several years’ involvement with political ideas core to COPA’s organizing, Schilling brought the public skills learned in trainings into her work place, where she became a coach to others. In the process, she expanded her thinking about how her own professional work could contribute to public life. In her role of executive director, she helped catalyze change in the culture of the organization she leads.

We bring up controversial issues, and we can do it in a way that reinforces the team [in their] community work. This is an example of how people can think about their work in relational terms, something almost countercultural. It has allowed us to seek change for the community from a shared point of view.

Schilling began to see not only the professional but also the public dimensions of her job—a shift that accompanied her shift in self-identity from “career professional” to “a public leader engaged in public life.”

These six faith-based networks used a variety of action strategies to *broker power*. They built networks and alliances that included religious and secular groups. They formed strategic partnerships with decision makers. They organized prayer vigils and fax actions; they convened public forums and dialogues with diverse participation; they organized listening campaigns through house meetings and one-on-one interviews. They learned about and used the political process. Some groups were especially successful working with print and television media coverage, an important power source that gives public visibility to an effort. As organizations accomplished concrete and visible outcomes, they generated more power both within their organizations and for their larger networks. Collective power was developed as more people assumed roles and became involved in the process through participation in decision making or involvement with strategy and action teams. They claimed authority for the work. Thus real work, sustained over time and accomplished with a mix of people, yielded tangible public outcomes and helped build the power base.

Real work, sustained over time and accomplished with a mix of people, yielded tangible public outcomes and built the power base.

Achievements among these organizations were substantial, as described in the Results section earlier, with much of the work ongoing. Organizations influenced housing policy to expand availability of affordable housing. In some instances, groups saw the completion of building projects for new housing available to low-income people. In the area of education, they initiated action plans, provided training for parents and teachers to participate in school reform, and shaped a policy that opened opportunity for ex-offenders to pursue a GED. Some organizations took up challenges in health prevention and promotion. Other achievements involved work with the prison system and reintegration of ex-offenders. In one significant policy change, the state of California lowered its cap of profit for telecommunication providers who supply phone service to prisons, thereby reducing collect-call charges for prisoners calling home. In all, these results show the impact and potential for faith-based civic engagement.

Leveraging Faith-based Resources for Democratic Renewal

Resources of Faith: Motivating and Sustaining Engagement

In its deepest sense, democracy creates a medium and provides tools for a free people to construct meaning about their lives and shape their common destiny. Despite the tensions that arise in mixing “church and state,” faith-based values and public ideas have always intersected in powerful ways for the reinvention of our democracy. The faith-based organizations funded in this initiative promoted core values that undergird public life: civility, mutual respect for diverse experiences, and belief in the inherent dignity of all humans. The organizations’ integrated emphasis on dialogue, reconciliation, and peacemaking combined with courage to challenge injustice generated a positive culture for social change without denying the toughness and hard political realities of these challenges.

Framing public issues in faith terms creates an opportunity to help people see issues from a justice framework, one that emphasizes the communal good over individual gain and calls for fairness based on the value of humans regardless of position in society. There is a craft, however, both in posing large ideas in actionable terms and using faith language in public settings. Clergy and lay members who were most effective in this practice were able to call on leaders with a prophetic voice to act in the interests of ordinary people, their families, and communities.

Faith communities bring rich cultural resources to the public realm. Stories from faith traditions have inspired people to persevere against great odds, to take risks and make sacrifices for a greater good. Recognized as core elements in most social movements, songs, rituals, language, and other cultural traditions provide powerful vehicles for people’s expression of deeply felt commitments and encourage solidarity and perseverance during the ups and downs of sustained public work.

Faith is also a key motivator and sustainer of people’s civic engagement. It shapes identities and invites people to articulate and work for an inclusive vision for a just society. “The faith component is very important to me,” explained Reverend Glenda Hope, director of the San Francisco Network Ministries in the Tenderloin District. “I go to gatherings of social service providers—good people doing good work—but there really is something different for me—a different energy—when I gather with people of faith... There is an enormous reservoir of talent and zeal to do what is right. It frustrates me that it has not been tapped more for social justice efforts.”

Despite the tensions that arise in mixing “church and state,” faith-based values and public ideas have always intersected in ways that reinvigorate our democracy.

Her concern points to an important insight that emerged from the collective experience of these organizations: successful faith-based civic engagement efforts have leaders skilled at surfacing and using faith resources embedded in people’s traditions. It involves an iterative process, an interplay between the project organizers and senior leaders who can bring forth that knowledge, on the one hand, and between those senior leaders and their newer congregational leaders, on the other.

People do not automatically recognize the public dimensions of their faith traditions. For many it involved a learning cycle of regrounding people in their faith values and traditions as they apply to present life, putting these values into action, and reflecting on the experience in order to discover how faith informs what ought to happen next. In all six organizations, this ongoing process of reflection-action-reflection shaped learning communities that operated within the traditions of faith.

This process of discovery learning fits well with faith communities, many of which have long sought to help people see things in a new light through awakening awareness and deepening insight. The ability to form this kind of learning community, however, depends upon the skill of organizers who are not willing to settle for a fixed doctrine without regard to context or perspective. In these organizations, the most accomplished organizers understood this and had honed their organizing work as a craft. They were imaginative, contextual, intellectually agile, and highly relational.

Perhaps the most powerful element in faith-based civic engagement is the belief in the possibility of transcendence—the promise of a radical transformation of individuals and whole societies, not occurring in incremental change or through instrumental means. Here the phrase “community improvement” may be too timid. These projects were addressing deep injustices requiring large struggle—issues such as the enormous economic divide, the prison system, the social inequities immigrants face, and the failure of public schools. For many involved in this work, it was the wholehearted belief in the possibility of transformative change that sustained and buoyed their commitment. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that any belief system encompasses extremes. Today we witness vivid examples of the repressive aspects of fundamentalist beliefs where transformation is also a central tenet.

In spite of the resources, tangible and intangible, offered by faith traditions, all grantees found that growing the numbers of leaders and keeping those who do much of the work from burning out are two of the largest challenges, dilemmas common to secular nonprofit efforts as well.

Yet faith-based groups can offer support in ways secular groups usually do not. In addition to the elements named above, there is a sense of permanency and membership that allows a witnessing of cycles of change over time. As Glenda Hope said, “You do get burned out, and then you take a break. But it never leaves you. You come back. The issues are about the qualities of life that affect everyone.”

Resources of Faith-based Institutions: Practical and Social Assets

Long-standing congregations with cultural histories and/or legacies of public involvement often play significant roles as part of a neighborhood’s infrastructure. Serving as *anchor institutions*, they remain a physical presence as populations in neighborhoods fluctuate, opening portals for public engagement with groups and individuals residing in the neighborhood or in communities affiliated with the congregations.

The rich account of the history of the Buena Vista United Methodist Church in Alameda as told by its current pastor, the Reverend Mike Yoshii, illustrates the importance of place-based faith institutions that honor cultural histories.

Founded in 1898 as a Japanese American immigrant congregation, Buena Vista primarily served as a refuge for that ethnic population during its first 90 years, “a place where people could celebrate and sustain their distinctive cultural traditions,” Yoshii explained. Particularly during and following the trauma of displacement and internment during World War II, the church was an important place, where its Japanese American members could retreat to recover their dignity, which had been assailed in the broader society.

When Yoshii was installed as pastor in 1988, he brought a different orientation. While honoring the congregation’s history and traditions, he wanted to reach out to engage a broader Alameda community, both its complex cultural diversity and the issues of concern to that community. His leadership, enhanced by the legacy of his institution, has influenced his congregation’s current interest in community issues from race relations to housing to youth empowerment.

The physical facility of Buena Vista United Methodist Church reflects its groundedness as a community-connected institution rather than just a Sunday congregation. In small-campus fashion, the church includes several buildings: a renovated house for the youth center, an education building, and another used for tai chi, massage, and other holistic approaches to wellness—all open to the community.

Many congregations in these organizations are part of *larger social networks* that foster relationships across institutions—faith-based and secular. These networks allow people to work with others on shared concerns rather than in isolation and hold the potential to build a large power base.

Organizations that included Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations, for example, often leveraged relationships with denominational officials. When OCCCO put on a voter education forum in October 2004, it not only held it in the parish hall of one of its member congregations, it featured both the local bishop and a Catholic state policy analyst from Sacramento as speakers. The bishop affirmed the public efforts of the people gathered at the forum, putting their civic engagement into a moral, faith-based context. The policy analyst informed the group, providing briefings on the numerous initiatives on the ballot that year.

Relationship-building includes forming relationships with public officials that can be leveraged to create and enlarge the dialogue. Marty Blum, mayor of Santa Barbara, for instance, said she found faith groups an important access point for public discussion of community issues. After several years working with clergy involved with the Interfaith Initiative to build a bridge between public officials and the faith congregations, she finds the faith perspective to be an important part of her public work, especially in dealing with difficult issues like racism and affordable housing. Her advice: “Separation of church and state can be a barrier for public officials. It doesn’t mean people of faith can’t go to city hall to talk about civic concerns. And it doesn’t mean public officials shouldn’t reach out to all parts of the community.” Faith communities draw constituencies public officials may not otherwise be able to tap.

Faith communities, among the few remaining *spaces for intergenerational teaching and learning* in our society, also serve an important socializing function for younger generations as they consider their involvement in public life. Congregations offer webs of relationships that allow young people to explore values, struggle with issues, and develop themselves as leaders with support from elders. Sandra Frost, a lay leader at the West Side Missionary Baptist Church in Oakland, explained the responsibility her congregation feels to its younger members:

Taking our children seriously comes from looking at the big picture and recognizing that something is happening to our kids. The church gets that message out. We include our children. At church they learn respect... they watch us when we get up to speak about things, and we direct a lot of what we say to children. They are not left out... Our children are becoming stronger. They’re able to ask for what they need in an effective way. My daughter ran for student body president. A few years ago, she wouldn’t have thought about it.

In this way, congregations create a particular kind of learning environment reminiscent of small towns or tightly knit neighborhoods, where children and adults form strong bonds beyond the nuclear family and maintain them over a long period of time.

The loss of intergenerational spaces in our society parallels the erosion of *public spaces* accessible to the community for self-directed activity. Some democratic theorists would argue that the loss of public space poses a major barrier to democratic renewal, because there are far fewer occasions and spaces in which ordinary people can develop skills, shape agendas, build power, and organize for public action as citizens. Houses of worship offer tremendous possibility as sites of civic renewal in that they have a flexible space with dimensions of intimacy, community, and publicness. The fact that many congregants feel a collective sense of ownership for their congregations allows them to set agendas and claim authority around the co-created work of the institution.

In downtown Santa Barbara, members of the Church of the Open Bible discovered the power of their church as a public space when the predominantly Spanish-speaking congregation hosted a series of public dialogues with school board members and public school administrators, police, and city council members. Pastor Emilio Florez explained, “Churches are places where non-English-speaking people can gather to interact with officials... Churches can help fix problems in the city [because] they are a point of access.” With language a major barrier to civic participation for non-native English speakers, convening bilingual public forums on familiar, “congregant-owned” turf drew between 800 and 1,000 people for public discussions.

Thus the physical presence of faith congregations, with their institutional histories and cultures and faith traditions, can make important contributions to the renewal of public life. In practical terms, these congregations provide physical space furnished with tables and chairs, and sometimes kitchens, for people to gather for a whole range of public activity, from voter education to neighborhood potlucks to community groups solving local issues and support groups for recovering alcoholics. They are distinct neighborhood places where members and nonmembers gather around community issues to practice democracy.

Conclusion

RENEWING DEMOCRACY THROUGH FAITH-BASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

America's democratic challenge at the beginning of the 21st century is the widespread re-engagement of the citizenry in public life. How do we become a people who see our individual self-interests embedded in the general welfare, who trust each other and our public institutions, and who can act together with poise and boldness?

These questions press for answers from many sectors. They call for a broader understanding of politics that embraces both conservative and liberal roots and grounds authority among the citizenry. Such a politics is founded on respect for the capacities and intelligence of common people without trivializing or romanticizing the hard work and resources it takes to develop public habits and build power relationships. It also requires places where people can learn civic skills and nurture civic identities, and vehicles through which people and institutions can work together to address real community concerns.

Faith-based civic engagement, as practiced by the six organizations in this initiative, offers a strategy for such democratic renewal. Through an integrated approach of individual, congregational, and community change, these organizations operate on the premise that ordinary people can make a difference on issues that affect their communities if they come together in relationship with other people and institutions to work for the common good. They teach the skills and co-create the pathways through which individuals and houses of worship can contribute to addressing community concerns. These organizations draw on the religious conviction that people are called, that they have an obligation to love one another and to care for their neighbors and the strangers in their midst.

At its best, faith-based civic engagement draws people into public life by awakening their self-interests, building relationships that facilitate and sustain civic participation, and connecting present-day work on practical community problems to deeply rooted religious values, stories, and imagery. These organizations helped individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively and creatively on public problems. They nurtured identity and attitudinal shifts so that people saw themselves and their neighbors as members of a larger community (a community with local, state, national, and even global dimensions) capable of and called to contribute to—indeed, to be leaders of—collective work for the common good of that community. These outcomes were consistent across diverse cultural lines.

Faith-based civic engagement is a distinctive and needed force for the reinvigoration of public life in our time.

At the congregational level, these faith-based civic engagement organizations nurtured shifts both in internal culture and operations, and in external relationships, reputation, and visibility.

At the community level, these organizations contributed to many tangible improvements as affordable housing development and code enforcement increased, access to health care expanded, school-community and police-community partnerships formed, and policies protecting the stability of immigrant families were strengthened. While credit for these community outcomes cannot be attributed solely to these organizations, we found high likelihood that their activities contributed substantially to meaningful policy and community improvement. Beyond any laundry list of discrete changes, these organizations are creating the networks of relationships and asserting the values of cooperation through which communities have ongoing resources for constructive action—for moving from alienation and apathy to collective commitment and the skills to manage difficult differences.

Faith can awaken the appetite to look beyond private and congregational life to join in the hard work of community leadership. Perhaps most important, faith-based organizations promote the values that underpin civic engagement.

Democracy, understood as a living philosophy whose tasks must be taken up by each generation, is fraught with multiple tensions and messy processes involving give-and-take. But it also offers the concepts and tools for people to co-create a society that values both individual freedom and common life. Faith-based civic engagement is a distinctive and needed force for the reinvigoration of public life in our time.

While credit for these community outcomes cannot be attributed solely to these organizations, we found high likelihood that their activities contributed substantially to meaningful policy and community improvement.

Appendix A

PROFILES OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Organizational profiles are provided in the following order:

- Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties)
- FAITHS (San Francisco Bay Area)
- Faith Based Leadership Training Institute (San Diego)
- The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County
- Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches
- Orange County Congregation Community Organization
- Rainbow Research, Inc.
- Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry

Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA)

Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA) was formally launched as a federation of faith and community organizations in June 2003 with 31 member institutions in the two-county Monterey Bay region. The launch culminated three years of intensive relationship building, leadership development, and organizational formation work conducted by Central Coast Interfaith Sponsors (CCIS), which included leaders from nine denominations. CCIS, in turn, grew out of three years of one-to-one organizing, between 1997 and 2000, among religious leaders in the region.

COPA's goal is to build a powerful, broad-based organization through which people can enter public life, shape their communities, and learn the skills of responsible citizenship. In religious terms, COPA says it is creating a new institution through which people can express their faith and "live out the reign of God." Its strategies center on building relationships among individuals and institutions, training and mentoring leaders, and experiential learning through engagement with community concerns at the local and regional level. Participants are engaged not just in tasks, but also in an invitation to make history and to do that as part of a team, leveraging their relational power.

As an indicator of COPA's relational power in civic engagement, over 50 elected officials from across the central coast attended the founding assembly. Five were asked and agreed to make specific commitments to work with COPA on issues of concern including housing, the California state budget crisis, health care access and quality, fair treatment of immigrants, and crime reduction.

COPA is affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) national network of faith-based community organizations. It works on state-level change with other IAF affiliates in California, and participates in IAF training and development networks for leaders and organizers.

For more information, contact:

Ken Smith, Senior Organizer
Communities Organized for relational Power in Action
95 Alta Vista Avenue
Watsonville, CA 95076
831.728.3210, iaforgnzr@aol.com

FAITHS

FAITHS, the Foundation Alliance with Interfaith to Heal Society, is a program initiative of The San Francisco Foundation guided by faith-based leaders from the five-county San Francisco Bay Area. Founded in 1993 in response to discussion among local religious leaders concerned about the government's retreat from social issues, FAITHS has three goals:

1. To build the capacity of congregations and their leaders to participate in civic activities and carry out programs that benefit their congregants and communities
2. To connect philanthropy with faith-based and community leadership
3. To leverage resources from other foundations to support faith-based community development and share lessons to inform their grantmaking

FAITHS is guided by an advisory structure that includes an overall Leadership Group and two more-narrowly focused teams: an Economic Justice and Opportunity Team and a Race and Community Relations Team. These three bodies meet at least quarterly and include about 65 members total.

Much of FAITHS' focus is on building the knowledge, skills, networks, and organizational capacities of faith-based organizations so that they can more effectively conduct service, advocacy, and community-building programs on issues of their choosing. FAITHS has identified nine kinds of assistance that it considers crucial for congregations: coalition building, connection to philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, evaluation, forum coordination, inclusion of faith community in decision making, leadership development, research and documentation, seed money, and technical assistance.

FAITHS works with congregations and faith-based leaders through broad convenings, focused cohorts, and individualized assistance. Over 80 congregations participate regularly in group or individualized assistance. FAITHS' total network includes over 500 congregations and faith-based leaders.

For more information, contact:

Landon Williams, Director

FAITHS Initiative

The San Francisco Foundation

225 Bush Street, Suite 500

San Francisco, CA 94104

415.733.8572, lrw@sff.org

www.sff.org/initiatives/faith.html

Faith Based Leadership Training Institute

Beginning in 1999, members of the faith community in San Diego initiated a series of conversations about issues related to poverty and social inequities. This generated interest in and demand for pastor training. In response, Metro United Methodist Urban Ministries (Metro) and the Consensus Organizing Center at San Diego State University led the formation of the Faith Based Leadership Training Institute (the Institute) as a way to help pastors strengthen their public skills and public ministries.

Situated on the San Diego State University campus in central San Diego, the Institute conducts a leadership training program for pastors of various denominations, especially those who lead congregations located in San Diego's inner-city neighborhoods. Although participants represent diverse groups, the majority come from predominantly black congregations. Since January 2002, the Institute has trained 40 pastors from nine denominations.

The Institute offers a certificate program through San Diego State University that includes five months of classroom instruction followed by 19 months of coaching. During the coaching phase, fellows are expected to put into practice through some form of community engagement the skills they have learned. The Institute staff works with fellows for a total of two years. Recruitment is strategic in that the Institute targets individuals who can understand the material and are willing to do the academic coursework, have a strong commitment to their community and congregation, and have access to key constituents, key players, and key resources that are necessary to do effective community development work.

For more information, contact:

Reverend John Hughes, Executive Director
Faith Based Leadership Training Institute
Metro United Methodist Urban Ministry
942 47th Street
San Diego, CA 92102
619.234.3158, jhughes@fbli.org
www.fbli.org

The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County

Founded in 1999 under the umbrella of the Santa Barbara Foundation, The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County (IFI) was created to engage the interfaith community as a partner in community problem solving along with other nonprofits, government agencies, and foundations already involved in responding to the needs of Santa Barbara. The IFI goal is to build a network of faith-based organizations to share voices and hands to solve and alleviate social problems. Its mission includes:

- building relationships among faith-based organizations, nonprofits, government agencies, and funders;
- responding to the needs of the community as a whole from a faith perspective;
- responding to the needs of individual congregations and faith-based organizations.

IFI uses an education-advocacy model to raise critical consciousness of the role of faith in public issues and mobilize action on community concerns. Its primary strategies include coalition building and convening public forums and working groups on current issues such as affordable housing, the environment, and the growing divide along lines of race and class. IFI aims to become a resource and liaison for congregations and other community groups and agencies, and to provide leadership development among clergy to foster public ministry.

IFI currently includes approximately 35 faith-based and other community organizations and agencies. Participants are diverse and include Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Bahai, Buddhist, Sai Babba, Christian Science, Quaker, Unitarian, Unity, and Protestant denominations such as Lutheran, Methodist, and evangelical groups. In 2003 IFI became incorporated, made application for 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt status, and launched an intensive phase of strategic planning and organizational development with its founding board of directors.

For more information, contact:

Pastor Darcy Jensen, President
 The Interfaith Initiative of Santa Barbara County
 777 Camino Pescadero
 Isla Vista, CA 93117
 805.562.8349, lcmatucsb@urcsb.sbcoxmail.com
www.interfaithinitiativesbc.org

Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM) and affiliates

Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM), founded in 1994, is a coalition of 45 small and midsized African American churches in Los Angeles County. Its sister organizations in San Diego, United African-American Ministerial Action Council (UAAMAC), and the Inland Empire, Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE), number 17 and 26 member congregations respectively. These organizations were launched in 1998 and 2000. Each is affiliated with Regional Congregations and Neighborhood Organizations Training Center (RCNO). RCNO is a national center that focuses on building the capacity of underserved African American communities to participate in community organizing. The overwhelming majority of RCNO-affiliated congregations have had no prior experience in public policy formation and community organizing.

The mission of these organizations is to develop leaders in small and medium-sized churches to transform lives and neighborhoods. At a broader level, the organizations act to create policy changes that lead to program innovations. The policy changes and program innovations are designed to reduce poverty, recidivism, health disparities, and poor education. LAM pursues these goals through building the capacity of member congregations, especially leadership development of pastors. A typical LAM member church is an independent, nondenominational congregation with 30 to 60 members and an average annual budget of \$70,000. More than 80% of member congregations operate “ministries” or social service-type programs. About 60% use storefront spaces rather than maintaining their own church building.

Key strategies include listening campaigns to elicit concerns both inside and outside the church; national leadership training for clergy and lay leaders; direct action with policy makers based on principles of prophetic ministry; leadership development of clergy and laymen to support their pastors; capacity building of member churches, including assistance in areas such as technology, grant writing, and strategic planning; issue education based on research; and strategic use of media.

For more information, contact:

Reverend Eugene Williams, Executive Director
 Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches
 4701 South Central Avenue
 Los Angeles, CA 90011
 323.238.0445, ewilliams@lametro.org
 www.lametro.org

Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO)

Orange County Congregation Community Organization (OCCCO) is a coalition of 15 congregations with 38,000 members in four cities in Orange County: Anaheim, Costa Mesa, Fullerton, and Santa Ana. Approximately 200 people from the coalition are active in leadership roles, with upward of 3,000 participating in major public actions. OCCCO has a staff of four organizers. Founded in 1985, OCCCO's mission is "to provide faith-based groups a way of organizing individuals to develop leadership and power that creates positive individual, institutional, and community change," with a vision "to guide people of faith to have the greatest impact in building powerful, just communities."

OCCCO emphasizes relationship-based strategies with one-on-one conversations, local organizing committees based in member congregations that identify and pursue local priorities, and periodic major public actions and campaigns. It conducts collaborative projects with other major institutions such as health care systems, school districts, nonprofit service agencies, and local government agencies. Education, health care, housing, immigrant family stability, and public safety have been important issues.

OCCCO is the Orange County affiliate of the Pacific Institute on Community Organizing (PICO). Through the PICO California Project, OCCCO collaborates with other PICO affiliates in California to work for state-level policy change primarily in education, health care, and immigrant issues. It also participates in national PICO networks to build leader, organizer, and organizational capacity; build relationships with national policy makers; and help shape national policies.

For more information, contact:

Gina Martinez, Executive Director
Orange County Congregation Community Organization
310 West Broadway
Anaheim, CA 92805
714.931.6045, occcogm@earthlink.net
www.occco.org

Rainbow Research, Inc.

Rainbow Research, Inc., is a nonprofit organization founded in 1974. It is based in Minneapolis and works throughout the United States and occasionally in other parts of the world. Rainbow’s mission is to help socially concerned organizations—including nonprofit organizations, citizen groups, foundations, membership or advocacy networks, and government agencies—become more effective in their efforts to build healthier, stronger, and more vital communities.

Rainbow Research’s goals are to:

- discover what works, good practices, and lessons learned in a variety of community-building arenas and get these findings into the hands of those who can put them to good use, resulting in more widespread use of these practices;
- build the capacity of socially concerned organizations by helping them improve upon their own and others’ experiences, resulting in improved capacity for communities and their organizations;
- engage whole networks, associations, and systems in exploring and integrating principles of effectiveness, resulting in more sustainable and more influential networks.

As a “center for program effectiveness,” Rainbow Research affirms the following principles and values:

- Evaluation should strengthen socially concerned organizations’ responses to social problems, not just judge them.
- Evaluation tools and products should be of the highest technical quality given available resources and be crafted to serve specific circumstances, cultures, and audiences.
- Evaluation contributes most to community building when it is invested in efforts that benefit undervalued and disadvantaged community members.
- Evaluation is most effective when it employs dialogue, sharing of information, and concern for the long term rather than the short term.
- Evaluation is most empowering when socially concerned organizations are collaborators in the evaluation process rather than objects of study.

For more information, contact:

Barry Cohen, Executive Director
 Rainbow Research, Inc.
 621 W. Lake St., Suite 300
 Minneapolis, MN 55408
 612.824.0724, bcohen@mtn.org
 www.rainbowresearch.org

Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry

The mission of Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry is to foster learning and fuel improved practice within fields of social and community action.

Touchstone specializes in collaborative and participatory evaluation projects. It helps organizations and networks identify their learning and improvement goals, design and implement appropriate data collection strategies, and use data findings along with insights from experiential knowledge to identify key accomplishments and guidelines for improved practice.

In other words, Touchstone Center helps organizations and fields of social action document and tell their story in ways that enable insights for improved practice to be implemented by participants and shared with others to strengthen fields of policy and practice. Touchstone offers collaborative, participatory approaches because people and organizations learn through the process of evaluation as well as from the findings produced. Engagement in evaluation design, data collection, and interpretation helps build capacity. It fosters a culture of learning in which questions can be asked, assumptions surfaced and tested, skills built, and critical reflection can occur. In addition, engagement in the evaluation process helps ensure that evaluation findings are actually used, that evaluation is focused on the most relevant questions, and that the evaluation is conducted in ways that can help advance rather than disrupt the work.

Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry was founded in 2004. It now includes a pool of over 10 staff and consultants working in Minnesota and across the United States.

For more information, contact:

David Scheie, President

Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry

711 W. Lake St., Suite 411

Minneapolis, MN 55408

612.825.9100, dscheie@tcq.net

www.touchstoneinquiry.com

Appendix B

FURTHER INFORMATION ON EVALUATION METHODS

The Organized Religion Evaluation Project was based on the premise that faith-based civic engagement organizations will learn more, achieve more, and increase their accountability to key stakeholders as they strengthen internal theorizing about their change strategies, monitor relevant indicators more rigorously, and reflect more regularly and analytically on data to guide planning. The project sought to foster sharper conceptualization, better information-gathering systems, and better reflection practices among participants.

At the same time, the project sought to exercise caution so that oral and intuitive strengths in the current organizational culture of grantees were not displaced. Innovations in planning, documentation, and learning were to be modest and flexible, to maximize creative discovery and minimize risks and burdens for participating practitioners. Participants feared that documentation and evaluation activities would “dumb down” the work by focusing on trivial indicators (the risk of “pedantry”), and that increased evaluation expectations and ill-chosen methods would displace their core program work. The initiative’s challenge was to find methods that built on current activities of these groups that could provide new insight into the core challenges they faced. Practitioners wanted to find evaluation approaches that would strengthen their “culture of conversation” rather than displace or devalue it.

Individualized coaching and technical assistance happened through site visits and telephone and email contact. The Rainbow Research team helped the organizations to identify the focus and purpose of their data collection; co-developed surveys, interview guides, and administrative data systems; provided guidance, encouragement, and trouble-shooting support as the organizations collected and entered data; and worked with them to interpret data, utilize findings, and refine instruments.

Site visits were conducted at most organizations at least annually and sometimes more often. Members of the evaluation consulting team collected information through interviews with staff, pastors, and lay leaders, and by observation of events including training sessions, board meetings, leadership retreats, and public actions and conferences. Intensive, two-day site visits with a two-person team (for greater triangulation) were conducted in 2003–04.

Seminars or retreats focused on the topic of evaluation were the impetus for major conceptual advances in understanding the faith-based civic engagement work of these organizations, as the participants worked to identify common goals and challenges and to articulate the collective story of these efforts.

The evaluation consulting team was led by David Scheie, President of Touchstone Center for Collaborative Inquiry and formerly Senior Project Associate of Rainbow Research. Nan Kari, Senior Associate at Touchstone Center, and Mia Robillos, Research Associate at Rainbow Research, filled out the core consulting group that conducted site visits, provided evaluation coaching, and led evaluation retreats. Paul Speer, Professor in the Human and Organizational Development Department at Vanderbilt University, advised on quantitative design, analyzed survey data, and provided training at evaluation retreats. Geralyn Sheehan, of Sheehan and Associates, helped design and facilitate evaluation retreats.

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575 MARKET STREET
SUITE 3400
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105
415.777.2244

865 SOUTH FIGUEROA
SUITE 2308
LOS ANGELES, CA 90017
213.236.0552

WWW.IRVINE.ORG