

EPISCOPAL NETWORK FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2004



Bishops form coalition for a 'just society'

By Jim Naughton

Episcopal bishops from 30 dioceses have formed a coalition to work on behalf of public policies that benefit the nation's poor.

The new group, Bishops Working for a Just Society (BWJS), was created in late March at a meeting in Navasota, Texas, before the annual spring meeting of the House of Bishops.

Washington Bishop John Chane said the group decided to focus on issues of economic justice, including improving the quality of public schools, providing health care for uninsured Americans, and increasing the availability of low income housing.

Chane and Bishop William Persell of Chicago, who worked together in organizing the group, were named co-conveners and members of an interim steering committee. Bishop Suffragan

James E. Curry of Connecticut was named the group's secretary.

The Episcopal Church establishes its official position on political issues through resolutions at General Convention, but bishops are frequently asked to speak out on issues for which no Convention precedent exists. "The creation of BWJS allows them to be better informed, and to coordinate efforts on a statewide or nationwide basis," Chane said.

The group's initial meeting was facilitated by Maureen Shea, director of the Episcopal Church's government relations office.

Persell said a good relationship with Shea and her staff will be essential to the success of the bishops' work. "They are a resource for us in terms of contacts and we are a resource for them in communicating the views and priorities of the church, nationally and

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Letter from the President

There are those of us working from inside the Church who claim Jesus calls us to address the economic needs of our communities and its people. Often our work leads us to the periphery where we find ourselves confronted with the systemic inequities and injustices that are loose in this market economy.

Walter Wink would encourage us to consider the nature of the powers and principalities that rule over our nation and its institutions. Over the last decade we have watched the incredible transfer of wealth into the hands of a smaller and smaller minority in our society, which is placing great stress upon our democracy and the institutions that foster our freedoms.

Can the Church be a mediating institution in the midst of this consolidation of power? Can the church raise up people with a conscience regarding the issues of poverty, racism, environmental degradation and violence? Did Jesus teach the disciples about economic justice? Should the Church teach about economic justice? Where there is economic injustice should the Church be engaged in the struggle to overcome this injustice?

It is pretty clear that in recent years the federal government spending has been focused on empire building and its defense. This means the wealth has been transferred to the creation of global corporations who create and defend empire. In this context spending is limited for domestic concerns and

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Michael Bryant, Carl Rehling and Byron Rushing at ENEJ Annual Meeting. See ENEJ Meets in Baltimore on page 4.

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ECONOMIC JUSTICE RESOURCES

Resources available through ENEJ include training modules on various aspects of economic justice, a video, and a booklet entitled Community Investing: An Alternative for Religious Congregations Seeking a Social as well as a Financial Return.

The ENEJ website (www.ENEJ.org) includes sources of technical assistance available through members of its steering committee.

Coalition

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locally," he said.

Shea agreed. "If there were 30 bishops in their communities talking about these issues, it would be a great help to our advocacy efforts," she said.

Chane said part of the group's mission will be to work with the Washington office to help make bishops better public advocates.

"We hope they can be the primary feeder source to urge the bishops to be more politically active," he said. "There is a need to help bishops understand how to work better politically and how to help dioceses learn to deal better with the media. We need to learn how to take complex information and without diluting it or dumbing it down, communicate it to our people as something that has merit theologically."

Bishop Suffragan Mark Andrus of Alabama, is spearheading the effort to write a brief theology statement for the group.

Shea said the meetings that led to the group's formation were quite lively. "They spurred each other on to get out there and be more public in their advocacy," she said. One bishop told

Shea, "This is a real kick in the pants for us."

Chane said that Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, who did not attend the meetings but passed by the meeting room several times, said he had never seen bishops having so much fun.

"I said we are dealing with a common issue," Chane said. "There is nothing that divides us here."

The most immediate fruits of the meeting will be an email listserve for members of the coalition and other interested parties. The group will report on its activities to the full house of Bishops at its meeting in Spokane, Washington, in late September.

Other members of the temporary steering committee are: Andrus, Bishop Suffragan Gayle Harris of Massachusetts, Bishop Johncy Itty of Oregon and Bishop Pierre Whalon, bishop in charge of the Convocation of American Churches in Europe.

Jim Naughton is director of communications for the Diocese of Washington. David Skidmore, director of communications for the Diocese of Chicago, contributed to this report.

NICWJ Sponsors Faithful Citizenship Summer Internships

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, its denominational partners and local interfaith committees, are sponsoring "Faithful Citizenship Summer" this year. The Faithful Citizenship Project is a non-partisan voter registration and "get out the vote" program targeting low-wage and immigrant workers, primarily through congregations, in six cities. The program seeks to register at least 25,000 additional new voters and develop intensive, congregational-based campaigns to get these voters to the polls.

The summer internship will:

- give students an opportunity to learn faith-based principles for social justice; witness worker struggles for workplace justice;
- help local interfaith committees

develop and implement voter registration campaigns focused on congregations with low-wage and immigrant workers.

The inter-religious teams of Christian, Jewish and Muslim interns will also have an opportunity to share experiences across faith traditions, said Kim Bobo, NICWJ executive director. Each team will include Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Muslims, Bobo explained. In addition, the interns will develop voter registration, coalition building, organizing, advocacy, and communications skills, she said. Interns receive a weekly stipend; housing for the summer if necessary; transportation costs and possible academic credit. Interns will work in Chicago, Kansas City, Minneapolis/St. Paul, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Portland, or Syracuse/Elmira, N.Y.

Migrant Ministries Recipient Of ENEJ's 2004 Gloria Brown Award

At its annual breakfast in Baltimore, the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice recognized the work of Rural Migrant Ministries by presenting them with the 2004 Gloria Brown Award for outstanding work in the area of economic justice. Accepting the award was The Rev. Richard Witt, executive director.

For over 10 years the Rural Migrant Ministry (RMM) has helped to coordinate the Justice for Farm Workers campaign in New York. The campaign has national implications as work is done to remove the legislative exclusions that deny farm workers equal rights. As in most states except California farm workers are denied basic rights as a day of rest and to bargain collectively. RMM's campaign has brought together a remarkable coalition of people of faith, labor and students to stand with farm workers to address these injustices. RMM was instrumental in changing some laws, raised tremendous media attention and most importantly raised the voices of farm workers in the policy process. As a result of a march across New York State earlier this year, the farm

workers have gained for the first time, support for legislation from the Republican side of the Senate. A bill removing all of the exclusions was passed in the assembly. Unfortunately there is still away to go to have the support of all the leadership within the Senate and the House.

RMM is taking another important step as they prepare for another march across New York combined with a vigil on the steps of the Capitol. The importance of this campaign lies first in the progress around the legislative issues. Not only does RMM have an impact across the state, but also across the country. Because of RMM's efforts similar advocacy programs are underway in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

In 1991 the Episcopal Diocese of New York and four other denominations became covenanting ministries with RMM. They have since maintained and received ongoing support from over 100 congregations of the Episcopal body. RMM encourages volunteer efforts of members of the Episcopal



The Rev. Richard Witt of Rural Migrant Ministry accepts Gloria Brown Award from Geoff Curtiss and Urla Abrigo.

Church and other denominations throughout the nation. Farm workers are extremely grateful when religious communities are involved in all aspects of their stance for justice and equality.

Background On Dr. Gloria Brown Award

Dr. Brown was born in Detroit Michigan. She graduated from Wayne State University with a Masters in Social work. She served on the faculty of California State and Pepperdine Universities. Gloria received an honorary Doctorate from the University of Southern California.

Before working for the Episcopal Church, Dr. Brown worked as the Recreation Director of the athletic department of the city of Detroit and in a similar capacity with the city of San Francisco. Dr. Brown also worked with the California Department of Vocational Rehabilitation in Watts. Gloria's leadership skills were honed

through work in organizations such as the Union for Black Episcopalians and with the Collation for human needs at the Episcopal Church Center, becoming a committee member of the latter in 1980 and being hired as a staff officer in 1987.

With adoption of the Michigan Plan at the 1988 General Convention in Detroit, she became the first and only full time staff person for the national Church's Economic Justice program, with the creation of the Economic Justice Implementation Committee. As various economic justice ministries blossomed around the church, Gloria was instrumental

in contacting and encouraging local project leaders in the work of economic justice. She logged thousand of miles around the country, learning what economic justice ministry meant to activists around the Church, sharing her developing expertise, helping projects to find financing and know how, and exhorting Dioceses to create and fund community investments and economic justice committees. She was tireless in cajoling, nudging, advocating for parishes and Dioceses to become more socially responsible with the great resources under their

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ENEJ Meets In Baltimore

Continuing its tradition of meeting at the time of the Episcopal Urban Caucus, the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice held its annual meeting in Baltimore earlier this year. After the breakfast which features the presentation of the Gloria Brown award, reported elsewhere in the newsletter, ENEJ held its annual meeting and continued planning efforts begun during the fall retreat in Asbury Park, New Jersey.

In particular, the two day session focused on carrying out A Vision for Justice, the 2004-2006 Strategic Plan for Expanding ENEJ's Capacity and Effectiveness. The discussions emphasized revisions to the ENEJ committee structure which now focus

on Capacity Building of the network, Organizing and Empowerment of local initiatives and Education on issues of economic justice. Work also continued with the Advocacy and Communications committees that remains important to economic justice work.

ENEJ President Geoff Curtiss presided over the early portion of the meeting and Vice President Byron Rushing took over for the last sessions. Diane Aid, Michael Bryant, Art and Sue Lloyd led sessions on the new



Diane Aid of Bircen, Washington and Verna Fausey of Nashville, Tennessee at ENEJ annual meeting.

committees which helped create goals and milestones in each of the areas. Members of the network also led economic justice workshops during the Urban Caucus assembly.

From the President

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for the welfare of society itself. The focus is on the exterior threat rather than the interior decay. Where should the Church stand in the midst of this reality?

Ronald Reagan put this country in debt for the promotion of empire and its defense. Bill Clinton got us out of debt but did so by not addressing the domestic needs. Domestic spending was kept at a minimum and in fact he gutted several social welfare programs. Now George Bush has returned to the Reagan philosophy and our focus is on the globalization of the American Corporation rather than the democracy of the United States citizenry.

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice is at work as a small voice calling our Episcopal Church to account. Whose are we to be? Are we to be chaplains to the engineers of the market economic machine or are we to be the prophetic conscience of God's people who are not receiving the benefits of the natural resources that God has gifted to all of us?

Is the future of our society one of gated communities of wealth in the midst of concentrated poverty? Is the future a continual progression of inequity in education, housing and employment based upon our unwillingness to share the wealth that is capable of being generated? Does the Church care what the culture we are engaged with might look like?

You are encouraged to join the ENEJ network and support the local community building efforts that are underway. You may go to our website and join our listserve.

*Sincerely yours,
Rev. Geoff Curtiss*

Background

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stewardship.

Dr. Brown exemplified an unusual style of leadership: innocent as a dove and wise as a serpent. Her manner was simple and down to earth. She enlisted people to the cause of economic justice by paying attention to their needs and responding to them. After the riots in Los Angeles in 1992, Gloria was loaned to the Diocese of Los Angeles, where she helped found the Episcopal Church's first Diocesan Credit Union, fulfilling her dream that the credit union will become a vehicle for bettering the lives of poor people. Through her tireless advocacy, the credit union received its charter in 1994.

Gloria spoke often of her faith, relating it to her life in the parishes in which she participated. For several years toward the end of her life, Gloria battled Lupus, a debilitating lung disease. In 1996 pulmonary complication set in and took Gloria's life on Christmas day.

Gloria's legacy is enduring. When she took on the ministry of economic justice, few people had a clear grasp of what that meant. Thanks to her tireless pursuit of the vision of a just economy, the Episcopal Church has a firmer understanding of how individuals, parishes, dioceses and the National Church can be supporters of the self-help efforts of disadvantaged communities in efforts to make the economy serve everyone. As the ministry of economic justice becomes a greater part of the outreach of Episcopalians and other Christians, the pioneering work, deep faith and simplicity of the life of Dr. Gloria Brown will continue to guide us as we live out our Baptismal Covenant, and strive for Justice and Peace.

Strong Voices For Justice Heard In Baltimore

Episcopalians and friends from across the nation interested in justice issues gathered in Baltimore during February for the 24th assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus. During the same weekend, the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice held its annual meeting.

From the welcoming words of Bishop Robert Ihloff of Maryland, keynote address of The Rev. Canon Ed Rodman, luncheon speaker Elizabeth McAlister of Jonah House, Eucharist preacher The Rev. Floyd "Butch" Gamara and banquet speaker, Bishop Gayle Harris of Massachusetts came powerful words for peace and justice work throughout the country.

Attendees also went to Collington Square in East Baltimore to visit the housing and social service initiatives that are helping a neighborhood in transition as well as visiting similar community revitalization efforts in West Baltimore. A youth delegation visited Jonah House to hear more about the efforts for world peace which are fostered there.

Workshops covered topics from Urban Heath Issues, Empowering Episcopal Communities for Action, Living Wage Campaigns and The Real Threat to Family



ENEJ President Geoff Curtiss addresses Urban Caucus Assembly in Baltimore.

Values. A special feature of the assembly was a Youth Plenary when the Caucus youth talked about their experiences and interest in justice issues. Another treat was the inspiration from the St. James Lafayette Expressions of Faith Gospel Choir.

Plans have already begun for the 25th assembly of the Urban Caucus which is scheduled for Feb. 23-26, 2005 in Newark, New Jersey. Mark your calendars now!

New Committee To Focus On Development

The Capacity Building Committee of ENEJ has, as its goal, expanding our membership and funding.

One strategy we are pursuing, to accomplish these goals, is to seek foundation support. A subcommittee, chaired by John Gibbs and including Aina Gutierrez, Sandy Elledge, and Lucinda Keil, will be identifying foundations to approach and writing proposals. We need to identify foundations with Episcopal Church connections or which fund religious-based work, such as economic justice. We need also to learn whether such foundations will fund our operations or our products - such as the economic justice education modules which we are developing, with United for a Fair Economy, the "Community Investing: An Alternative For Religious Congregations" booklet or workshops on how to create

economic development institutions such as credit unions.

Others on the Capacity Building Committee will be working our appeal letters. These go to all the dioceses in the Church, to selected parishes which have supported economic justice activity and to our members and mailing list. As part of this effort we also try to organize follow-up contacts by members to dioceses and parishes, urging them to renew memberships.

How you can help: If you have contacts with foundations who might fund our work or if you would like to help write/review grant proposals, please contact Art Lloyd at <aslloyd@mailbag.com>.

Also, if you have experience writing appeal letters and would like to help with such letters, contact Art.

RESOURCES

- **ENEJ Resources:** Include our newsletter, website, listserve, a booklet on alternative investing for parishes and diocese, education units on various economic justice topics (available in print or cd) and consultation on how your parish can start an economic justice education or program focus. We can also direct you to Episcopal Church teaching on economic justice. Contact Michael Maloney at meamon@aol.com.
- **Resources Committee,** Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, Sue Lloyd, Chair, 1104A Mound Street, Madison, WI 53715. 608-256-7250. Fax: 608-256-9991 email: aslloyd@mailbag.com.
- **Various resources** available through our president, The Rev. Geoffrey Curtiss, and other ENEJ Steering Committee members listed on our website under Steering Committee.
- **Jubilee Ministry:** Has your parish ministry been designated as a Jubilee Center by the National Church?
Jubilee Centers are eligible for grants through the Episcopal Relief and Development Fund and other valuable support through participation in a national network.
For more information, contact your diocesan Jubilee Ministry Officer or The Rev. Canon Carmen Guerrero, Office of Jubilee Ministries, Episcopal Church Center, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Telephone 800-334-7626, email: cguerrero@episcopalchurch.org.
- **Economic Justice Loan Committee:** The committee is given stewardship of \$7 million to make loans to projects to benefit poor and marginalized people, for such purposes as low cost housing or establishing credit unions. Contact: Harry Van Buren, 504 Orchard Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613, Telephone 319-266-4088, email: HarryVB@aol.com.
- **Episcopal Relief and Development Fund:** Episcopal Church Center, Mary Becchi, Deputy Director of Program and Program Planning, 815 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017, 800-334-7626 #6121 e-mail: erdid5@er-d.org www.er-d.org
Grant deadlines are March 15 and August 15.
- **Related Websites:** National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, www.igc.org/nicwj
- **The Witness:** www.thewitness.org
- **Wage Campaigns:** www.livingwagecampaign.org
- **Education Committee:** now have available five alternative economic justice training modules. John Hooper, Economic Justice Commission/McGehee Fund, 2727 Second Avenue, Ste. 121, Detroit, MI 48201. 313-964-7305 Fax: 313-964-7313 email: mcfundjh@aol.com

Economic Justice Education In The Parish

The ENEJ offers four modules for Christian Education on economic justice. The units encourage high participation by adult learners. The units were prepared by United for a Fair Economy in Boston. With some modest preparation facilitatory can learn to present the units.

The titles and subject matters of the units are: 1) A Christian Response to Economic Inequality (with a sub-unit on The Real Threat to Family Values); 2) Why the Economy Isn't Working for Workers; 3) The Global Economy; and 4) Making Sense of the Recession. Another unit on the Churches and our Money is in preparation.

Those who are interested in reviewing the units can access them on the ENEJ website at www.ENEJ.org. For further information you can call or e-mail Diane Aid (tell. 253-520-0556 or sanmateo921@yahoo.com) in the State of Washington, Sue Lloyd (tell. 608-256-7250 or aslloyd@mailbag.com) in Wisconsin, or John Hooper (tell. 313-864-9562 or hoopington2@sbcglobal.net) in Michigan.

ENEJ NOW HAS ITS OWN WEBSITE

*For detailed information about the
Episcopal Network for Economic Justice,
visit our newly revised website at
www.enej.org. You will find news, events
and resources about economic justice work
in the Episcopal Church
and beyond.*

ENEJ

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