

faithful citizenship project

congregational profiles

A guide to
non-partisan
voter registration
in religious
congregations



A Report Prepared by The National
Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice

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about us

about us

about us



Putting Faith Into Action: The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice

The religious community has long been an advocate for the poor and needy. And yet until the founding of the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, many people in the religious community were not sure how to help raise wages, benefits and working conditions for low-wage workers, nor was there a structure in place to mobilize people's concern and willingness to help.

Founded in 1996, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) has become the leading national organization committed to strengthening the religious community's involvement in issues of workplace justice. Its mission is to educate, organize and mobilize the U.S. religious community on issues and campaigns to improve wages, benefits and working conditions for workers, especially low-wage workers. It has helped hundreds of thousands of workers secure contracts that raised wages and improved benefits and working conditions.

The National Interfaith Committee programs include:

Direct support of workers

- More than 60 local interfaith committees nationwide reach out to religious groups to create religion-labor coalitions to work on specific worker justice issues.
- Workers' centers around the country provide safe havens where workers can gather, learn about their rights and plan ways to improve their working conditions. The Chicago workers' center has helped workers recover over \$1 million in back wages over the last two years.

Outreach to congregations

- Labor in the Pulpits organizes labor leaders and workers to speak at religious congregations over Labor Day weekend to promote support of worker justice issues as a way of putting faith into action.
- Faith-based publications are one-of-a-kind resources to help congregations become active in worker justice campaigns.

Partnerships with Government Agencies

- NICWJ works with government agencies charged with protecting workers' rights to improve processing of worker abuse complaints and to highlight industry-wide worker abuses.

Public Policy Education

- Public policy initiatives that impact workers are analyzed and educational materials are distributed nationwide.
- During this election year 2004, NICWJ's Faithful Citizenship Project is conducting voter registration drives and Get-Out-The-Vote activities in eight communities around the country. This has included a special summer internship project (the focus of this publication).

Educating Future Leaders

- Internships for college students and future religious leaders, such as seminarians, rabbinical students and future imams, provide opportunities to learn about worker justice issues and get first-hand experience helping workers.
- The Religious Perspectives on Work Project is developing worker justice curricula in religious training institutions. These classes will train future religious leaders about their faith's teachings regarding workers' rights and the role they can play in promoting these values.

In addition, NICWJ publishes a bi-monthly newsletter, Faith Works, and dozens of resource materials for faith communities and worker rights' trainings.



introduction

introduction

introduction

Putting Faith into Civic Participation: Faithful Citizenship Project

Through its work engaging religious leaders and laypeople to support the struggles of low-wage workers locally, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice (NICWJ) realized that the concerns of low-wage and immigrant workers were not being heard on the national level.

Why? One reason that these workers have not been heard is that low-income people are less likely to be registered to vote than middle and upper income people. Below, the US Census Bureau data of 2000 shows the distinct correlation between income and registered voters.

Below \$5,000	53.1%
\$5,000-9,999	57.1%
\$10,000-14,999	58.6%
\$15,000-24,999	65.0%
\$25,000-34,999	69.0%
\$35,000-49,999	72.3%
\$50,000-74,999	77.9%
\$75,000 and over	82.1%

If low-wage workers are not registered, they cannot and do not vote. According to the Census data, about one-half of those who voted in the 2000 election lived in families with incomes of \$50,000 or more.¹

Another reason is that many workers, especially immigrant workers, are fearful or unattached to many institutions where they could register to vote. Their religious congregation may be the only “community organization” with which they have personal contact. Congregations serve as safe gathering places. Clergy are trusted leaders who can effectively educate congregants on civic participation and encourage them to exercise their right to vote.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Voting and Registration in the election of November 2000, <http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/p20-542.pdf>.

From this context, NICWJ saw a unique opportunity to register low-wage workers through religious organizations. It created the Faithful Citizenship Project to achieve this goal. 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 eight communities:

- Chicago, Illinois
- Elmira, New York
- Kansas City, Missouri
- Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota
- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- Portland, Oregon
- Syracuse, New York
- Tulsa, Oklahoma

The goals of the project are to register 20,000 new voters by October 2004 and to develop intensive, congregational-based campaigns to get these voters to the polls.

The Faithful Citizenship project has proven to be a powerful way for congregations to become engaged in important civic issues through their faith communities. This report highlights some of the most active religious congregations that participated in the Faithful Citizenship Project. The report also provides practical how-to resources for other religious congregations to engage in non-partisan, voter registration and get-out-the-vote programs.



congregational profiles



In the summer of 2004, the Faithful Citizenship Project (FCP) recruited 35 summer interns to canvass congregations and register voters in eight communities. Teams of interns ventured out to Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Oklahoma, Syracuse and Elmira, New York, Kansas City, Missouri, Chicago, Illinois, Portland, Oregon and Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota.

In ten short weeks, the teams partnered with hundreds of churches, synagogues, and mosques to put their faith into action by registering voters. They set up tables after Muslim prayer services, canvassed church picnics with cards and clipboards, and recruited lay leaders to go door-to-door in neighborhoods surrounding the FCP congregations.

Pastor Calvin Battle, head pastor at Greenwood Christian Center in Tulsa, confessed that, “the odds are stacked against them,” and continued, “only 25 percent of Evangelical Christians voted in the last presidential election, and that number sharply decreases in minority communities.” Yet, through their partnership with the Faithful Citizenship Project and the commitment of the church’s leadership, this 800-member, Evangelical and minority congregation has registered almost all of its eligible members.

Following are nine congregational profiles that demonstrate the depth and diversity of the program. They also highlight some of the lessons learned in working with congregations and some best practices for motivating congregants to register voters and to develop intensive, congregational-based campaigns to get these voters to the polls.



chicago illinois

Muslim Community Center

4380 N. Elston Chicago, IL

Faith Tradition: Islam

Congregation Size: 1,200

Faith Leader: President Mohammad Kaiseruddin

Voter Registration Contact: Rafiq Talaty

The Muslim Community Center (MCC) is one of Chicago's oldest mosques. Located in a diverse neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side, it is a Muslim congregation with 1,200 members and an average of 500 attendees at the weekend sermons. The Imam is the faith leader of the congregation. Rafiq Talaty serves as the voter registration contact.

MCC accepted FCP's initiative to set up a voter registration drive at the mosque's Friday prayer, or qutbah. FCP voter registrars explained in detail to Mr. Talaty the intent of the collaboration between the two organizations. This included personal meetings between Talaty and the FCP voter registrars, and multiple phone calls to the mosque to build relationships, to coordinate publicity and set up for the

voter registration effort. After the sermon and prayer, FCP interns and NICWJ Executive Director Kim Bobo, wearing appropriate Muslim attire, staffed a voter registration table. Twenty-three members registered to vote that evening.

The members of MCC had various reasons for becoming involved with FCP and voter registration. As Muslims, members felt an increased urgency about their community's civic participation since 9/11. Some have interpreted the Patriot Act to be an assault on their civil liberties. In some cases, friends and family have experienced threats and a growing fear that didn't exist for them previously. "We aren't giving up our freedoms for fear," said Mr. Talaty.

The most important challenge facing the first-ever connection between FCP and MCC was to successfully demonstrate the mutual interests of the two groups. The Chicagoland Muslim community and FCP share the same goals with regards to worker issues and justice, and the need for these workers to be adequately represented in the socio-political environment. This was further emphasized with MCC's desire to have some of its own members



become deputy registrars. “Chicago Muslims want to have more of a political voice in their community, and they’ve realized that in order to do that they need to be registered voters. I think that’s a rule that holds true for all communities,” said FCP intern, Murtuza Salahuddin.

The relationship that started with a single registration event has grown since that first Friday in July. FCP workers have been invited to continue the registration drive in community events sponsored by the Chicagoland Muslim community as a direct result of their partnership this sum-

mer. Both FCP and Muslim Civil Rights Center workers collaborated to register attendees at the 2nd Annual Indian Muslims Convention held in Rolling Meadows, IL in early August. There are various community fests scheduled in the future.

The MCC has deep spiritual reasons for becoming involved with the Faithful Citizenship Project. It is an expression of their faith to get involved with the culturally and religiously diverse community of Chicago. It is a belief in respect and equality for people, and justice for all.



Lesson Learned: When collaborating with diverse communities of faith, keep an open mind and identify a leader in the congregation who can guide the way. It is important to take the time needed to communicate across cultures, and respect for difference in customs and traditions is essential.

elmira new york

Frederick Douglass Memorial AME Zion Church 402 Madison Ave., Elmira, NY

Faith Tradition: African Methodist Episcopal Zion
Congregation Size: 97 active members
Faith Leader: Rev. Roosevelt Simmons
Voter Registration Contact: Lloyd Mapp



“without participation, there is no democracy...”
—Lloyd Mapp, church member

Frederick Douglass Memorial AME Zion Church is a small congregation with big ideas. In the spirit of its founder, Frederick Douglass, the church involves its members in the electoral process and educates them on issues that will affect the community.

This tireless group of church members has registered hundreds of people within the community to vote. This is partially due to the numerous opportunities the congregation provides to register. Every Sunday after services there are voter registration drives for members of the congregation. There are also weekly meetings held to engage interested members to register voters in the community. It was at a community event that the Elmira Faithful Citizenship Project team members first met members of this active congregation. Both groups combined resources to share a voter registration table at the annual Juneteenth Festival. This festival celebrates the end of slavery in the United States, and always draws an enthusiastic crowd. Here Faithful Citizenship interns partnered with church volunteers to register 15 voters.

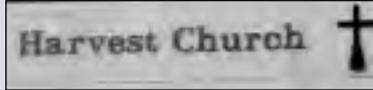
The church’s success is in large part due to the passionate efforts of such church mem-

bers as Lloyd Mapp. Lloyd spends much of his free time registering neighbors to vote because he strongly believes that every citizen should have a say in who governs their country, county, or city. He believes that if everyone gets involved we will live in a better democracy with elected officials held to greater accountability. He also encourages people to become active citizens by directly contacting officials and giving them opinions on issues. “Thank God for America,” he says, “you can do it in this country!”

Lesson Learned: Appoint a dedicated and knowledgeable chairperson to lead your voter registration efforts. Both members of your congregation and community members will respond to an enthusiastic leader.



kansas city missouri



Harvest Church 4300 Cornington, Kansas City, MO

Faith Tradition: Non-denominational Christian

Congregation Size: 2,500 members

Faith Leader: Dr. Steve Houpe

Voter Registration Contact: Kiara McConico

"...this did not impose any hardship on the church. By allowing this congregational voter registration to happen in the church, we take an active role in the community."

—Kiara McConico

The Kansas City Faithful Citizenship team's message of linking faith values with civic participation resonated with Dr. Steve Houpe when he heard their presentation at a ministerial alliance meeting. As pastor of the Harvest Church, Dr. Houpe has a strong belief in citizens registering and exercising their right to vote. Soon the church and the FCP team began working on plans to for a successful voter registration drive at Harvest.

Key to the success of the voter registration efforts was communication from the pastor about the importance of registering to vote. Preceding the registration drive, announcements went out from the ministry in church bulletins announcing the voter registration effort at the church. The times and locations for the drive were noted, and the pastor encouraged the congregation to become registered voters.

On July 18, 2004, Herbert Ellis and Theresa Deutsch, two of the Faithful Citizenship interns, went to Harvest Church and registered 45 voters after the 9:30 a.m. worship service. Rev. Houpe spoke in support

of registering to vote from the pulpit. He told people that there are many issues that affect their lives, and they should put their faith into action in the upcoming election.

At bible study on the following Wednesday, the team registered another 18 new voters, and the church's voter registration efforts continue.

As the drive continued, the team sought the support of other church members such as church secretary, Kiara McConico. She hopes that other congregations will get involved with voter registration in the same way as the Harvest Church. "We are involved because the pastor encourages the congregation to be involved as a Christian duty. We are not involved from a political perspective, plot, or ploy, but it is a Christian duty to be involved with the law of the land. Other faith bodies should get involved because the state of our country morally depends on Christians voting," said McConico.



Lesson Learned: Have faith leaders give messages from the pulpit, bimah, or minbar that encourage members to register to vote and participate in the civic process.

minneapolis/st. paul minnesota

First Unitarian Society

900 Mount Curve Ave., Minneapolis, MN

Faith Tradition: Unitarian Universalist
Congregation Size: Approximately 800
Faith Leader: Rev. Dr. Kendyl Gibbons
Voter Registration Contact: Jo Haberman



How do you participate in voter registration when virtually all of your congregation is registered to vote? This was the challenge for the First Unitarian Society when approached to participate in voter registration by the Twin Cities Faithful Citizenship Project and the Metro Unitarian Universalist Social Justice Alliance (MUUSJA).

The solution was to mobilize, mobilize, mobilize. MUUSJA, an umbrella organization of Twin Cities Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregations interested in justice issues, and the Twin Cities Faithful Citizenship Project brought together several UU congregations to organize a large voter registration drive in a low-income neighborhood in Minneapolis.

Teams of volunteers took to the streets four Sundays in August to register voters in areas with lots of foot traffic. Their hard work paid off quickly — the first Sunday 18 volunteers registered 115 people! The success of the program has had a tremendous impact on congregational volunteers, who loved being able to see first-hand the results their efforts were having on others in their communities.

For members of the congregations involved, voter registration is an effective

way of expressing their faith. According to Carol Koepp, member of First Unitarian Society, “Unitarians are strong believers in the dignity and worth of every human being and believe that it is really up to people if changes are to be made. We need to get our support from working with each other. Working together with other Unitarian Universalists and anyone else doing this work is where we get our support, where our spirituality comes in.”

They plan to continue the work that began this summer by continuing voter registration in Minneapolis neighborhoods and by organizing a large voter registration rally in conjunction with the September visit of UU President Bill Sinkford.



Lesson Learned:

Put your spiritual beliefs into action. Once your congregation is registered, organize weekly voter registration drives/canvasses in areas with a large concentration of disenfranchised voters.

oklahoma city

oklahoma

Skyline Urban Ministries 500 SE 15th St., Oklahoma City, OK

Faith Tradition: United Methodist

Congregation Size: over 100 outreach programs in the area

Faith Leaders: Rev. Dale Tremper, Director;

Rev. Chester Phyffer, Assistant Director



Intern Darryl James and Rev. Chester Phyffer

Two hundred and seventy-two newly registered voters were the fruits of a partnership that grew between the Oklahoma City Faithful Citizenship Project and a faith-based community ministry.

Intern Darryl James first met Rev. Chester Phyffer, Assistant Director of Skyline Urban Ministries and pastor of Christ United Methodist Church, at the kick-off event held by the Oklahoma City Faithful Citizenship Project. The two arranged a meeting the next week, in which Rev. Phyffer invited Darryl to register voters at his small congregation and to plan a voter registration drive with Skyline Urban Ministries.

Skyline Urban Ministries is a United Methodist Church community ministry with more than 100 outreach programs in the Oklahoma City area. They provide basic needs such as food and clothing to thousands of people each year. The organization was interested in giving more people the opportunity to register to vote, furthering their mission of “building mutually empowering relationships with those in need” and to “calling the systems of society to social and economic justice.”

Together, Skyline Urban Ministries and the FCP team devised an outreach plan to reg-

ister voters in the communities served by Skyline. The organizations placed voter registration cards at food banks, legal service agencies, job training centers and senior citizen sites and encouraged staff to promote voter registration. They also held voter registration presentations for community members about the importance of being registered to vote and voting in elections. They found that one of the most effective ways to register people was to listen to their concerns. Faithful Citizenship interns and Skyline Urban Ministries staff talked one-on-one with dozens of people about issues that were important to them and how the voting process can lead to social and economic solutions.

Their partnership garnered great results, with 272 registered voters! Both organizations are eager to join forces again on issues that affect the future of disadvantaged citizens in Oklahoma City.

Lesson Learned: Many congregations' ministries include social service agencies – soup kitchens, job training centers, crisis response centers, and senior citizen centers – where potential voters can be reached. Enlist the staff of the agencies to help register their clients.

portland oregon

Augustana Lutheran Church 2710 NE 14th Ave., Portland, OR

Faith Tradition: Lutheran

Congregation Size: Approximately 800 (500 active)

Faith Leaders: Rev. W.J. Mark Knutson, Pastor

Rev. Ramona Soto Rank, Associate Pastor

Voter Registration Contact: Allen Brown

Electricity, spirit-filled music, and ecumenical fellowship filled the air at Augustana Lutheran Church on Sunday, June 27th in anticipation of the Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr. sermon. The nationally acclaimed pastor from New York's Riverside Church was traveling from coast to coast to spread the word on the importance of voter registration, civic participation, and the issue of poverty.



Rev. Mark Knutson and Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.

Forbes' visit, a part of the National Council of Churches' (NCC) "Let Justice Roll: Faith and Community Voices Against Poverty" campaign was the highlight of the voter registration kick-off for the Faithful Citizenship Project in Portland. The event was co-sponsored by Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, and the NCC.

At the kick-off event, Reverend Forbes delivered his message to more than 800 congregants and guests at Augustana's Sunday evening jazz service. Augustana's

pastor, Rev. Mark Knutson welcomed the national and local faith leaders and reflected on the importance of civic participation. "It's important to organize and mobilize the religious community to participate in

social justice issues. It is our civic and moral responsibility to change the social structure in society and to build on the commonality we all share, such as love and justice," stated Knutson.

Recognized as one of the twelve most effective ministers in the English-speaking world by Newsweek in 1996, Forbes' message was powerful and to the point. "Let's get the poor on our agenda because it's on God's mind," said the Rev. Forbes. At the news conference preceding the service, he commented, "If you ever expect to get a reservation in heaven, you will have to have a letter of recommendation from the poor to get in."

The service was the culmination of a day of activity designed to register voters and recruit volunteers. Earlier in the day, Rev.

Forbes spoke at Highland UCC Church, was interviewed by local media, and met with the Augustana youth group. The Faithful Citizenship interns held an afternoon voter registrar training, and hit the street to register new voters.

During the service, the Faithful Citizenship interns collected more than 150 bright pink volunteer cards. Trained by the FCP team, these volunteers have participated in several events throughout the summer including the Waterfront Blues Festival, the Bite of Portland, and National Night Out. As a result of this collective effort, Augustana has collected more than 250 registration cards. In addition, the volunteers at

Augustana and the pastor, Reverend Knutson, have made a commitment to continuing voter registration at Augustana as well as participating in a variety of events throughout the coming months.

Reverend Knutson acknowledges the challenges of this large-scale effort and getting volunteers to go door-to-door to register voters. However, he is also quick to note the long-lasting benefits of a congregation-based voter registration drive. “The fruits of work this summer will continue for time to come. Members share their experiences and will tell the story of their unified effort to register voters.”



Lesson Learned: Hold an event to kick-off your voter registration project. Collect volunteer commitments, train your volunteers, and put them to work!



syracuse

new york

Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS)	1513 South Ave. Syracuse, New York
Church House of Levites – Rev. James Pertillar	215 Oakwood Ave., Syracuse, NY
God’s Temple of Faith Ministries – Bishop Leroy McClain Sr.	1501 South Ave., Syracuse, NY
Hopps Memorial Christian Methodist Episcopal Church – Rev. Larry Howard	1101 South State St., Syracuse, NY
Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ – Rev. Craig Schaub	232 East Onondaga Ave., Syracuse, NY
University United Methodist Church – Rev. Marilyn Wolfe	1085 East Genesee St., Syracuse, NY
Camillus Immanuel United Methodist Church – Rev. Craig French	303 Kasson Rd., P.O. Box 335, Syracuse, NY
Christ Community United Methodist Church – Rev. B.J. Norrix	3474 Stiles Rd., Syracuse, NY
People’s A.M.E. Zion Church – Rev. Sherman Dunmore	2306 South Salina St., Syracuse, NY
St. Lucy’s Roman Catholic Church – Father James Mathews	432 Gifford St., Syracuse, NY
New Beginnings Unity Missionary Baptist Church – Rev. Steve Walker	588 Delaware, Syracuse, NY
South Presbyterian Church – Pedro Abreu (lay representative)	112 West Colvin St., Syracuse, NY
South West Community Center – Mr. Jesse Dowdell	401 South Ave., Syracuse, NY
Living Water Church Of God In Christ – Rev. Nebraska Carter	121 Huron St., Syracuse, NY

Congregation Size: 8,000 collectively
 Voter Registration Contact: Twiggy Billue

A coalition of congregations, Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse (ACTS), has been a key link in registering voters in the faith communities in Syracuse. ACTS is a coalition of diverse faith communities whose common mission is to listen to community residents, identify critical issues, and find ways to strategically respond.

ACTS served as a liaison between the Faithful Citizenship Project, the Central

New York Labor Religion Coalition and the religious leaders of its congregations. This partnership helped maximize the participation of religious leaders in the voter registration process. Increasing voter registrations in Syracuse is important to ACTS since voter registration directly relates to its goal of creating a new community of hope by giving a voice to the disenfranchised and low-income people. This summer ACTS received a commitment from all of its participating congregations to active-

ly participate in their get out to vote campaign by setting a 100 percent membership registration goal by October 8, 2004.

The Voter Registration kick-off began August 15th. During religious services, congregation leaders helped members understand the link between the critical issues that Syracuse neighborhoods face and the relationship to voter participation. Most congregations subsequently registered voters after Sunday services.

In addition to registering within the congregations, ACTS leaders also reached out to the surrounding communities by con-

ducting neighborhood door-to-door canvassing and registering voters at faith-affiliated food pantries. The registration efforts were also a visible presence at virtually all ACTS congregation-related events, including picnics, block parties, strawberry festivals, and vacation Bible schools.

This fall, ACTS congregations intend to register and convene 1,000 new voters at a public meeting. Dubbed "Rolling Thunder," the convention will invite public officials to meet with and listen to the voices of these 1,000 new voters before the November 2004 election.



Lesson Learned:

Consider coalition building to engage groups of congregations to help register people in the community.

tulsa oklahoma

Greenwood Christian Center

1517 W. Pine, Tulsa, OK

Faith Tradition: Non-denominational Christian

Congregation Size: 800

Faith Leader: Bishop Gary McIntosh

Voter Registration Contacts: Pastor Calvin Battle, Kelly Ridge



When Faithful Citizenship interns Jessica Nerio and Christy Buzzard walked into Tulsa's Greenwood Christian Center on the morning of July 18th, they encountered enthusiastic greeters, lively music, and groups of children and teenagers buzzing around the lobby. "It was a great energy," Jessica said, "It really lifted your spirits. From the moment we walked in, we felt accepted." They were there to register voters, but their job was made much easier by the inspired work that had already been initiated by Bishop Gary McIntosh and Pastor Calvin Battle.

Located in a former Wal-Mart building in northwest Tulsa, Greenwood Christian Center is a young, rapidly-growing church with approximately 800 members. It is a multi-ethnic congregation, mainly made up of African-Americans. Founding pastor and senior pastor of Greenwood Christian Center, Bishop Gary McIntosh, has dedicated himself to bridging the gap between politics and faith, and is seeing his vision gradually becoming a reality. The congregation has set a goal to ensure that every member of Greenwood is registered, educated about the issues and candidates, and mobilized to vote. Pastor Calvin Battle, a young African-American minister, has undertaken the task of meeting these goals with an enthusiastic approach.

These leaders cite a lack of accessible, trustworthy education about the candidates and the issues as the key factors that keep people from voting. In response, Bishop McIntosh has invited candidates for local elections into the church to introduce themselves and their platforms. He reflected with the FCP team that he has found that people often feel more comfortable discussing issues and meeting candidates in their house of worship than they otherwise might feel in a political forum.

FCP easily built a partnership with Greenwood Christian Center. Lay leaders and Pastor Battle worked with two FCP interns to host a voter registration event. The Sunday before the interns arrived Pastor Battle distributed an announcement in the church bulletin and asked people in the congregation to stand up if they fell into any category that would require them to re-register or to register for the first time.

On the Sunday of the drive the interns were asked to speak during the announcement period of the worship service. After the service, they set up a table outside the sanctuary and registered 27 voters. The lay leaders volunteered to keep registering

voters each Sunday and encouraging people to vote this fall. They hope to reach as many potential new voters as possible before the election.

Lesson Learned: Educate voters by holding non-partisan candidate forums. To remain non-partisan, all candidates for an office must be invited to participate. People often feel more comfortable discussing issues and meeting candidates in their house of worship.



Higher Dimensions Family Church 8621 S. Memorial Drive, Tulsa, OK

Faith Tradition: Inter-denominational Christian
Congregation Size: 1,500

Faith Leader: Bishop Carlton Pearson

Voter Registration Contact: Imogene White

It was a stormy night with tornado alerts sounding that caused members of the Higher Dimensions Family Church and All Souls Unitarian Church to spend their “Family Sunday” huddled together in the basement of All Souls. Yet the weather didn’t stop visiting minister, Bishop Carlton Pearson of Higher Dimensions Family Church from taking the first steps toward fellowship. In his sermon that evening, he preached the Gospel of Inclusion, proclaimed the all-encompassing love of God, the inherent goodness of all humanity, and in so doing, fostered a growing sense of community between the two churches.

Building on that sense of community, Tulsa’s Faithful Citizenship Voter Registration Project approached the Higher Dimensions Family Church to register their members to vote. Their leader,



Bishop Pearson, has a history of community involvement that made his congregation an ideal partner for the project. With his blessing, the voter registration project was connected to Imogene White, Director of Member Care. She is personally committed to civic participation, and voting in particular, because of her experiences in other countries. She said, “In my travels I’ve seen such oppression where people are literally dying for the right to vote. In America we have that privilege but there’s so much apathy, and that disturbs me. A lot of people don’t vote, and then they grumble about the way our country is.” She went on to explain that the contrast between such fervor abroad and such apathy in the

U.S. motivates her to get involved in the political process and to encourage others to do the same.

With Mrs. White's help, well-connected volunteers were recruited to participate in voter registration. These volunteers were active church members that would be able to identify others that needed to register. Once chosen, the Faithful Citizenship Team trained the volunteers to register voters and educated them about the laws related to congregations participating in non-partisan voter registration programs. The volunteers and staff then did comprehensive outreach within the congregation by submitting an announcement in the weekly newsletter, an insert in the church bulletin, and posting signs around the building the day of the event.

On Sunday July 25th, members from All Souls and FCP interns visited Higher

Dimensions for a special "Family Sunday." The voter registration team chatted with congregational members as they arrived for service about the importance of voting. Then, during the sermon, Bishop Pearson espoused the importance of civic participation and encouraged his parishioners to be "devoted to voting". After the service, the team attended the family lunch in Fellowship Hall. And while others were enjoying home-cooked mashed potatoes, chicken, and veggies, volunteers and staff registered 54 new voters. This success rate was testimony to the value of congregational volunteers. They chased down fellow members who had recently moved, and encouraged the young adults who had not yet registered. Senior Executive Pastor Jesse Williams even helped out, setting an example by re-registering to vote with his new address. All in all, it was a great day filled with fellowship, food, fun and Faithful Citizenship!



Lesson Learned: A well-trained committee of congregational volunteers reaps results. Congregation members will know who among their fellow members has turned eighteen, has moved, or for any other reason needs to register to vote.

a salute to the 2004 faithful citizenship interns



Have you heard the one about the Muslim, Catholic, and Jew who went to a Baptist church to register voters? While this might sound like the start of a joke, it's exactly what happened during the Faithful Citizenship Summer. For ten weeks 35 interns of diverse backgrounds and faiths from across

the country devoted their summers to the Faithful Citizenship Project and registered over 11,000 voters, bringing the FCP total to over 13,000 newly registered voters by mid-August. Armed with youthful enthusiasm and a sincere commitment to working for social justice, the interns focused their efforts on registering voters through religious congregations, religious-affiliated schools, and community events.

"I've learned that registering voters is not about 'doing for others,' as if they cannot do for themselves, but rather about helping mobilize people, to assist them in empowering themselves to vote and appreciate their power and worth."

—Sara Hayman, Chicago
Sara, a Unitarian Universalist intern for the Chicago Faithful Citizenship Project is a third year seminary student at Meadville Lombard Theological School.



"I wasn't there to make money or to make this internship look good on my resume. I was there to tell people that we were listening to the voice that they thought nobody heard."



—Shereen Zaid, Tulsa
Shereen, a Sunni Muslim intern for the Tulsa Faithful Citizenship Project, is a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma.

The interns' contributions not only made a lasting impact on the voters they registered, but also on the communities in which they worked.

- In Minneapolis/St. Paul, intern Mike Munson discovered a translation error on the printed voter registration forms that would have disenfranchised thousands of Spanish speaking voters. The word "county" had been translated as the word "country." This error could have caused thousands of voter registrations to be thrown out without being processed. Mike's quick action in alerting the election authorities resulted in correction and reprint of the forms.
- In Syracuse, interns Alton Barnes and Aboubaker Sebkhawui were accused of identity theft while registering voters. The interns used the resulting media coverage to educate the community about voter registration requirements and the importance of registering to vote.
- In several cities, the interns educated ex-felons about their right to vote. In several states, felons whose sentences have been discharged are eligible to vote. The interns devoted numerous hours to educating voters about their rights and clearing up misconceptions about eligibility to vote.

The work done this summer will have ripple affects for years to come. The National Interfaith Committee on Worker Justice salutes the work of the sites, site coordinators and interns who participated in Faithful Citizenship Summer.

The Faithful Citizenship Team

Charese Jordan, Faithful Citizenship Project Director

Kristi Sanford, Organizing Director & Catholic Social Teaching Internship Coordinator

Mike Beckman, Assistant to the NICWJ Executive Director and FCP Organizer

Chicago, Illinois

Site: Chicago Interfaith Committee on Worker Issues

Site Coordinator: Katy Hogan

Interns: Melanie Ellis

Emily Fitzgerald

Sara Hayman

Aqeela Jogee

Michael O'Connell

Brian Reichart

Murtuza Salahuddin

Lauren Woods

Elmira, New York

Site: Southern-Tier Labor-Religion Coalition

Site Coordinator: Cindy Hale

Interns: Olivia Fagan

Jennifer Manierre

Kansas City, Missouri

Site: Greater Kansas City Coalition for Worker Justice

Site Coordinator: Tilman Stewart

Voter Registration Committee Chair: Roy Nixon

Interns: Atziri Barron

Theresa Deutsch

Herbert Ellis, Jr.

Andrea Herchik

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Site: Twin Cities Religion & Labor Network

Site Coordinator: Julia Dreier

Interns: Elizabeth Dahlman

Nnennia Ejebe

Julia Gellat

Erin Knapp

Jason Levin-Koopman

Mike Munson

"I believe that finding a voice is empowering and getting historically disenfranchised individuals to vote permits them to begin a process of finding their voice."



—Luisa Linares, Syracuse

Luisa, a Catholic intern-turned-site coordinator for the Syracuse Faithful Citizenship Project, is a second year Master's student of Social Work at Syracuse University.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Site: Central Oklahoma Community Forum

Site Coordinator: Pamela Maisano

Voter Registration Committee Chairs:

Shirley Cox & Tim O'Connor

Interns: Darryl James

Zachary Roth

Mary Bede Russell

Portland, Oregon

Site: Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Site Coordinator: Cynthia Strickland

Voter Registration Committee Chair:

Philip Kennedy-Wong

Interns: Rebecca Cornwell

Rebecca Hoffman

Taylor Johnson

Kamaria Porter

Botum Sek

Syracuse, New York

Site: Syracuse-Central Labor Religion Coalition

Site Coordinator: Luisa Linares

Voter Registration Committee Chairs:

Tim Fay & Craig Schaub

Interns: Alton Barnes

Gertrude Danzy

Aboubaker Sebkhauoui

Tulsa, Oklahoma

Site: Eastern Oklahoma Labor Religion Council

Site Coordinator: Carol Cain McGowen

Voter Registration Chair: Karen Spradlin

Interns: Christy Buzzard

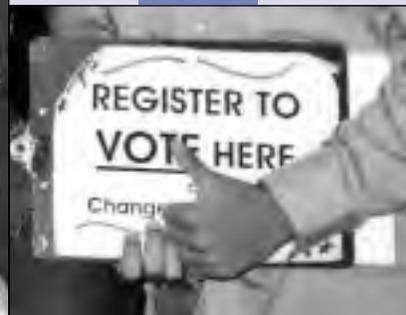
Linsay Cain McGowen

Jessica Nerio

Shereen Zaid

tools & resources

tools &
resources



Engaging Your House of Worship in Voter Registration

The Faithful Citizenship Project is a non-partisan voter registration campaign. Congregations can only conduct non-partisan voter registration efforts. This means that congregations must register people without regard to political party affiliation. Congregations cannot tie voter registration efforts to any particular candidate or ballot initiative. For example, no one in leadership should tell the congregation, “please register so you can vote for candidate X.”

Who Should Register?

All citizens who will be 18 by Election Day should register to vote. Those who have moved since the last election must register at the new addresses. Those who have changed their name through marriage or for other reasons must re-register. In most states, those who have not voted in the past four years must re-register to vote. For specific information about voter registration deadlines by state see pages 30-31.

Congregations should focus on four groups:

- **Those who have never registered** – New citizens and those who have not been engaged in civic affairs are two groups to approach.
- **Young people** – Be sure to register high school students who will be 18 by the date of the general election, November 2, 2004.
- **Those who have changed their names** – Check on people who changed their names when they got married, divorced or for other reasons. Name changes require re-registration.
- **Those who have moved** – More than 10 percent of Americans move every year. This means that at least 20 percent of your congregation has likely moved since the last federal election and probably have not notified election authorities. Ask people, “Have you moved in the last two years?” If they have, they should complete voter registration cards to change their addresses.

The Role of Congregational Leadership

Pastors, rabbis, imams, priests or other religious leaders are crucial for promoting civic participation. The leader sets the tone for the congregation and instills a sense of priority and vision for civic participation. Urge the leaders of congregations to:

- Select a key congregant who can lead voter registration efforts and motivate other church members to get involved.
- Assign an appropriate committee to work on doing actual voter registration and encouraging people to vote.
- Schedule training for congregational leaders.
- Choose multiple dates for voter registration and announce those dates and times several weeks in advance.
- Get information on denominational support for voting and civic participation.
- Place voter registration bulletin inserts in programs during voter registration days.
- Give messages from the pulpit, bimah, or minbar that encourage members to participate in the civic process.
- Set a goal of registering all eligible voters. Then, set a goal of getting everyone to the polls.
- Consider challenging the congregation (and appropriate committee) to help register people in the community.
- Be open to coalition building with other churches in the community.

Running Your Registration Program

Find out Who Needs to Register

Many people don't register because they don't quite realize that they should or they just don't get around to it. During the service or immediately following a service (before people leave), use the following script:

- If you have just turned 18, or will turn 18 by November 2, stand up.
- If you have moved within the last two years, stand up.
- If you have changed your name since the last election, stand up.
- If you have become a citizen within the last two years, stand up.
- If you have never registered to vote in this city/county/state or were registered but haven't voted in the past four years, stand up.
- All of you standing need to register to vote, if you have not already done so. Voting is a privilege, a right and part of being a faithful citizen. All those who wish to register, please remain standing. The ushers/volunteers will pass out voter registration forms. After you get your form, you can sit down, fill it out and turn it in at the voter registration table in the back (or other designated location).

Provide Multiple Opportunities for People to Register

It is important for congregations to offer voter registration opportunities over multiple weeks. Not everyone is present in services weekly. Someone may need to dash out of service and can't register. Or, someone may need to bring his/her identification, social security number (many young people don't know their numbers) or naturalization date.

Voter Registration Training

Those helping with voter registration should be offered training. In some states, it is helpful to attend formal "deputy registrar" training sessions. Other states don't have formal board certified training programs. Nonetheless, your volunteers will be more knowledgeable, more comfortable answering questions and more motivated if they participate in voter registration training. In some cities where National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice affiliates will be conducting voter registration, participating groups will organize training sessions. In other communities, you can attend trainings offered by the board of elections or community organizations.

Setting Up

No one likes to wait in line to complete voter registration materials. Most people are rushing to get somewhere. Make the program as simple and efficient as possible.

- Find a good spot. You want to make it hard for people to get in or out without passing your voter registration tables.
- Arrange for tables and chairs. Card tables work fine. Ironing boards are a good height for people who stand.
- Clipboards. These are handy if you have no table or if your table is crowded.
- Black pens. Bring lots of extra pens. No one seems to have them when they need them!
- Signs. Post signs around your table. Attractive "Faithful Citizenship" signs can be ordered from NICWJ free of charge. Or, make your own.
- Appropriate voter registration forms/cards. Make sure you have plenty of supplies, including materials in multiple languages if appropriate.
- **Do not allow electioneering materials nearby.** Do not put out any information

about candidates, parties, ballot initiatives or anything that suggests support for candidate, initiative or party. It is illegal for non-partisan voter registration programs to engage in electioneering activities.

Turning in the Forms/Cards

Each week, one person should take forms/cards to the appropriate place. If your congregation is participating in a city-wide voter registration effort coordinated by an interfaith group, you will be asked to get forms to the interfaith organization so it can track how many people were registered in its project. If you are working independently, you will need to get the materials to the board of elections or other designated place.

Consider a Youth Group Project

Young people make great ambassadors for voter registration. Invite youth to write and present a skit on registration. Perhaps they can organize a campaign to register people in the community and congregation.

Reaching Neighbors

Most congregations either sponsor or participate in social service organizations to help poor people. Help register people at faith-based soup kitchens, food pantries, shelters and social service agencies.

Many congregations commit to registering people in their communities. Door-to-door registration is an effective way to reach people who might not be active in the community.

If there is a grocery store, busy shopping center, or busy public transportation stop, consider setting up a voter registration table during busy periods.

Getting Voters to the Polls

Getting voters to the polls is as important as voter registration, and sometimes harder. Lack of participation undermines democracy, limits voices heard by political leaders, and forfeits the right of citizenship. Congregations that register voters should also make plans to get voters to the polls. In political circles, this is referred to as GOTV (Get Out The Vote).

The key to GOTV is multiple communications. People need to be reminded and encouraged many times to go to the polls. Congregations are ideal settings for multiple reminders.

Since the election is on November 2, 2004, most GOTV efforts should take place in September and October. Here are some things you can do:

- Announce weekly from the pulpit/bimah/minbar that the election is coming on Tuesday, November 2 and urge everyone to vote. Set a goal of becoming a 100 percent voting congregation.
- Post information at the congregation about polling places in the community.
- Ask those who are disabled, sick or homebound if they need assistance getting to the polls. Arrange for rides.
- Preach about the gift and responsibility of citizenship. Messages given the week-end before elections would be most helpful.
- Call all newly registered voters to be sure they know where to go to vote.
- Organize a workshop before or after religious services to review how to vote if there are lots of new citizens, young people or other first time voters.
- Use the Faithful Citizenship GOTV bul-

letin inserts. These are available on-line at www.nicwj.org.

- Ask congregants to pledge that they will vote.
- Host a party on Election Day to watch the returns. Your voting receipt is your ticket to get into the party.
- If your congregation has care groups or small divisions of people, ask the person who leads to take responsibility for making sure each person in the group gets to the polls.

Common Questions About Registering to Vote

Am I eligible to register and to vote?

Yes, if you are:

- a citizen of the United States.
- a legal resident of your state.
- at least 18 years old by election day.

(These requirements are true of every state, for requirements particular to your state, please visit www.nicwj.org)

Must I read or write English in order to register or vote?

No. You may register and vote even if you cannot read or write. A literate and registered individual can accompany you into the voting booth to assist you in the voting process, but cannot actually vote for you.

When can I register?

Register anytime, but be sure to do it by your state's deadline if you want to vote in upcoming elections. A list of voter registration deadlines by state can be found on pages 30-31.

Does it cost anything to register?

No. Registration is free.

Do I ever have to re-register?

Yes. If you move, change your name, or have completed all conditions of a felony charge, you must register again. Check with your City/County Elections Office for answers to specific questions.

Will I remain a registered voter even if I fail to vote?

Yes. But most states remove voters who fail to vote for four or more years. Check with local election officials about your voter registration status.

Can I register for someone else?

No. You can only register for yourself. You may help others fill out forms, but they must sign the forms.

Where will I vote?

Your polling place will be in your neighborhood. Call your City/County Elections Office for that information.

NICWJ Resources

For most of the following resources contact the National Interfaith Committee at (773) 728-8400, or go to www.nicwj.org and click on "Faithful Citizenship."

- **Bulletin Inserts:** Bulletin inserts on voter registration are available. Some are denominationally specific and others are generic.
- **Links to denominational voter-registration resources:** visit www.nicwj.org
- **Faithful Citizenship Signs:** the first five are free, additional signs can be ordered for a modest fee.
- **Sample Workshop Outlines:** Call and speak with the Faithful Citizenship staff.

The National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice is a 501 (c) (3) organization. It only conducts nonpartisan voter registration initiatives.

Voter Registration Initiatives by Faith and/or Denomination

Following is a list of websites with information and resources on faith-based voter registration initiatives.

Faithful Democracy: www.faithfuldemocracy.org/

Faithful Democracy is:

1. a concept pertaining to civic participation by religious people; and
2. an organizing tool created by a group of national religious organizations to achieve the following goals:
 - To increase the number of people casting informed votes that are counted in the 2004 elections;
 - To increase the number of people with a commitment to responsible civic participation that is grounded in their religious values; and,
 - To create or strengthen lasting partnerships between different religious groups, and between the faith community and secular organizations at the local level.

This site has links to many sites of religious denominations that sponsor the Faithful Democracy project.

American Friends Service Committee:
www.afsc.org/vote/default.htm

American Muslim Alliance:
www.amaweb.org

Buddhist Peace Fellowship:
www.bpf.org

Church of the Brethren:
www.brethren.org/genbd/WitnessWashOffice

Council on American-Islamic Relations:
www.cair-net.org

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America:
www.elca.org/advocacy/faithfuldemocracy

Jewish Council for Public Affairs:
www.jewishpublicaffairs.org

Muslim American Society:
www.masnet.org/vip_more.asp

Muslim Electorate Council of America:
www.americanmuslimvoters.com

National Congress of American Indians:
www.ncai.org/nativevote/index.asp

Presbyterian Church, USA:
www.pcusa.org/washington/christiancitizen.htm

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism:
www.rac.org

Unitarian Universalist:
www.uua.org/news/2004/voting/

United Church of Christ:
www.ourfaithhourvote.org

United Methodist Church:
www.umc-gbcs.org

US Conference of Catholic Bishops:
www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/index.htm

Publications

Politics and the Pulpit: A Guide to the Internal Revenue Code Restrictions on the Political Activity of Religious Organizations
<http://pewforum.org/publications/reports/IRCbrochureBIG.pdf>

State Registration Deadlines for all Elections	
Alabama	10 days before an election.
Alaska	30 days before an election.
Arizona	29 days before an election.
Arkansas	30 days before an election.
California	29 days before an election.
Colorado	29 days before an election. If the application is received in the mail without a postmark, it must be received within 5 days of the close of registration.
Connecticut	14 days before an election.
Delaware	20 days prior to the general election and 21 days prior to any primary election.
D.C.	30 days before an election.
Florida	29 days before an election.
Georgia	The fifth Monday before a general primary, general election, or presidential preference primary. The fifth day after the date of the call for all other special primaries and special elections.
Hawaii	30 days before an election
Idaho	25 days before an election by mail; 24 days for in person; or election day at the polls.
Illinois	29 days before primary; 28 days before a general election
Indiana	29 days before an election
Iowa	Delivered by 5 pm 10 days before a state primary or general election; 11 days before all others. A postmark 15 or more days before an election is considered on time.
Kansas	Delivered 15 days before an election.
Kentucky	28 days before an election.
Louisiana	24 days before an election.
Maine	10 business days before an election or delivered in person up to and including election day.
Maryland	9 pm on the fifth Monday before an election.
Massachusetts	20 days before an election.
Michigan	30 days before an election.
Minnesota	Delivered by 5pm 21 days before an election; also election day registration at polling places.
Mississippi	30 days before an election.
Missouri	28 days before an election.

State Registration Deadlines for all Elections	
Montana	30 days before an election.
Nebraska	The fourth Tuesday before an election or delivered by 6pm on the second Friday before an election.
Nevada	9pm on the fifth Sat. before any primary or general election. 9pm on the third Sat. before any recall or special election unless held on the same day as a primary or general election. Then it remains the fifth Saturday.
New Hampshire	Must be received by city or town clerk 10 days before an election; or register at the polls on election day.
New Jersey	29 days before an election.
New Mexico	28 days before an election.
New York	25 days before an election.
North Carolina	Postmarked 25 days before an election or received in the elections office or designated voter registration agency by 5pm.
North Dakota	North Dakota does not have voter registration. All eligible voters may vote on election day.
Ohio	30 days before an election.
Oklahoma	25 days before an election.
Oregon	21 days before an election. (There is no deadline for applications for change of name, change of address or to register with a party.)
Pennsylvania	30 days before an election.
Rhode Island	30 days before an election. *Check Saturday Hours
South Carolina	30 days before an election.
South Dakota	Delivered 15 days before an election.
Tennessee	30 days before an election.
Texas	30 days before an election.
Utah	20 days before an election.
Vermont	Delivered to the town clerk before noon, postmarked or submitted to DMV on the second Sat. before an election.
Virginia	Delivered 29 days before an election.
Washington	30 days before an election; or delivered in-person up to 15 days before an election at a location designated by the county elections officer (usually the county courthouse).
West Virginia	30 days before an election.
Wisconsin	13 days before an election; or completed in the local voter registration office 1 day before an election; or completed at the polling place on election day.
Wyoming	30 days before an election or register at the polling place on election day.

Voter Rights and Responsibilities

It is your right to...

your right

- Inspect a sample ballot.
- Ask a poll worker for a demonstration/further instruction of the voting mechanism.
- Receive voting assistance at the polls.
- Have someone accompany you into the polling booth to assist you with voting if you are illiterate or physically unable to cast your vote due to a disability.
- Ask to cast a provisional ballot if your status as a qualified voter is in question.
- Request a replacement ballot if you make a mistake or if your ballot is damaged.
- Vote if you are in line by the time the polls close.
- Vote for the candidate of your choice.

It is your responsibility to...

your responsibility

- Know the local voter registration requirements and register to vote.
- Notify the registrar of any change of address or circumstances that might affect your voter registration status.
- Know the rules and options for absentee ballots and early voting.
- Know the hours and location of your polling place.
- Know if any identification is required and bring it to the polls.
- Familiarize yourself with the candidates and issues.
- Ask for help if you need it.
- **Vote!**

This is not a comprehensive list. If you have any questions about your rights and responsibilities, contact your state or local election authority or the National Association of State Election Directors at www.nased.org.

National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice Board of Directors

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