

CHURCH COUNCIL BULLETIN

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Spring 2012

North Carolina Council of Churches

Spring Appeal Kicks Off

Please and thank you.

The North Carolina Council of Churches' spring appeal to donors can best be described with those words. In her letter to supporters, reprinted below, Lisa Talbott explains what a year working with the Council as an intern from Duke Divinity School meant to her. Hers is the "please" part.

But a "thank you" is also called for.

Late last year, Executive Director George Reed appealed to those who value the Council's work, asking for help to offset reduced support from some of our member bodies. The response from individuals was humbling. The Council received more than \$58,400 in the final quarter of 2011, a truly remarkable outpouring and one that allows work to continue. Thank you.

Individual support grows more critical to the NCCC each year, so please take a moment to read Lisa's letter and then help the Council continue and expand its works for Christian unity and social justice. Donate online at www.nccouncilofchurches.org or by mail to 27 HORNE St., Raleigh, 27607.

Dear Friends,

It's a long way from Alaska to North Carolina in more than just miles. Back home in Alaska, I was perfectly content being a high school English teacher until God placed a call on my life that I could not ignore. I was accepted at Duke Divinity School where I will soon be starting my senior year. I will earn a Master of Divinity and then continue in the ordination process to be an elder in the United Methodist Church.

I've always had a passion for social justice, but I didn't know how to combine that with the ordained ministry. People cautioned me that social justice was too political for the pulpit. I tended to shy away from preaching or teaching about issues that were too politically charged. Then I interned for the North Carolina Council of Churches. One of my first assignments was to watch "Harvest of Dignity" and co-write a study guide to help churches and other groups take action on behalf of farmworkers. Suddenly, social justice was not about politics; it was about people. People who suffer. People who are mistreated. People who put food on my table. People who are beloved children of God. I learned quickly that social justice is not something that I do as a Christian, it is something that I am. I was convicted.

As a Christian, I have the responsibility to speak for those who are not allowed to speak for themselves. As a Christian, I have the responsibility to steward God's good creation well. As a Christian, I have the responsibility to do as little harm as possible to my brothers and sisters. As I learned more about farmworkers, I also learned about the American food system. From farmworkers who have to handle dangerous pesticides and chemicals to factory farms that contribute significantly to global climate change, the food system is complex, and I am a part of that system. I realized that I could either continue to shop and eat the way I had before, when I was ignorant of the harm my habits were doing to creation and to other people, or I could make a conscious choice to change.

Social justice issues may be political, but they are also theological. Our faith impacts what we eat, how we treat others, and how we care for the temples of the Holy Spirit that are our bodies. The work I did with the North Carolina Council of Churches changed my outlook. Convenience food was no longer convenient when I realized the impact it was having on creation, including on our brothers and sisters who harvest our food yet often live in deplorable conditions with little to feed themselves or their families.

Working with the North Carolina Council of Churches has helped me discern my call to be a voice for prophetic social justice. I encourage you to support the North Carolina Council of Churches. It is the only statewide ecumenical organization in North Carolina addressing social justice issues from a faith perspective, and its work is life changing, not only for the people it serves, but for all those who become involved with it.

Blessings,

Lisa Talbott

Duke Divinity School, Class of 2013

Memory & Honor Gifts; Foundation & Organizational Support Appreciated

A number of individuals made donations in memory or in honor of friends and colleagues in 2011. In addition, several foundations provided vital support to the Council.

Gifts were given in memory of: Dr. Emily Barrow by Dr. Mary Wayne Watson; Henry Fairbank by Martha Fairbank & Elizabeth Kuniholm; Mildred Fry by Bette Hargrave; Mae Hawkins by the Norma Shepherd ALA Guild Council of Church Women United; Toni Joyner by Samuel W. Isley Jr.; Sister Evelyn Mattern by Bob & Isa Allen and Mary Lee Hall; Charlie Mulholland by Father George Kloster; Pearl Seymour by J. Edwin King; H. Shelton Smith by Jerry D. Murray; and Dixie Wells by Kay Crum.

Gifts were given in honor of: Jimmy Creech by Cy & Carolyn King; Julia Elsee by William & Sarah Anderson, Sharon Castleberry, and George & Susan Reed; Jim Ferree by J. Alexander Ward & Miriam Helderman Ward; Bishop Larry Goodpaster by Carolyn Shinn; Belton Joyner by Samuel Isley Jr.; Collins Kilburn by Joseph & Elizabeth Holsopple, Jerry Murray, L.K. & D.A. Textoris, and R.A.L. "Bud" Walker; Cy King by Edward G. & Elizabeth King; Cy and Carolyn King by Barbara & Dick Volk; George Kloster by Tom & Tish Rokoske; Chris Liu-Beers by Beth Meyer Synagogue; Joe Mann by Ione Ferguson; Jud & Alice Milan by Tom & Laura Spangler; Joe Moran by Jack Causey; George Reed by Julia Elsee, Ed & Lois Gibbon, Jennifer McGovern & Steven Unruhe, and Art Ross; George Reed & the Council staff by Jerry & Cathy Markatos; Rollin & Betsy Russell by Andrew Short & Andrea Vizoso; Elbert & Lois Wethington by Mark & Beth Wethington; and the Council staff by George Reed.

Foundations providing support included: Blue Cross

and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, Franciscans of the Holy Name Province, Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation.

Organizational and congregational support, in addition to member body support listed in the Winter 2012 CCB, came from: Asheville Friends Meeting, Beth El Congregation, Beth Meyer Synagogue, Beth Or, Blueprint NC, Chapel Hill Friends Meeting, Christ Episcopal Church, Church of Reconciliation, Church of the Brethren Virlina District, Church of the Nativity, Church Women United in N.C. Durham, Church Women United in Raleigh, Circle of Mercy, Coalition for Peace with Justice, Community United Church of Christ, Durham Congregations in Action, Elon Community Church, First Baptist Church Outreach Fund, First Baptist Church, First Congregational Church, First Congregational UCC, First Reformed Church of Cary, General Board of Church & Society UMC, Glenn School Road Baptist Church, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Interfaith Alliance of Wake County, Land of the Sky UCC, Lower Dryad Music, UMC NC Conference/Advance Special, Meredith College, National Religious Campaign Against Torture, NC Hillel Foundation, New Garden Friends Meeting, Pilgrim United Church of Christ, Shallotte Presbyterian Church, St. Brendan Catholic Church, St. Francis of Assisi Church, St. James Episcopal Church, St. John's Baptist Church, St. Julia AME Zion Church, Student Action with Farmworkers, Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting, Umstead Park UCC, United Methodist Women Western NC, University Presbyterian Church, Weeping Willow AME Zion Church, White Memorial Presbyterian Church, and Yavneh.

Number of PHW-Certified Congregations Grows

The North Carolina Council of Churches' faith-based health initiative, Partners in Health and Wholeness (PHW), has received continued support from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation. This enables PHW to offer mini-grants to PHW-certified congregations; personalized support to individuals, congregations and judicatories that wish to lead healthier lifestyles; and detailed instruction and technical assistance to clergy who join the PHW Faith and Health Leadership Council.

PHW is also partnering with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, the American Red Cross Health

and Safety Services of North Carolina, and Representative Becky Carney to reduce the number of deaths from sudden cardiac arrest by providing free Automated External Defibrillators and CPR trainings to places of worship across the state. This initiative, called Strive to Revive, will be launched statewide in August.

Since January, twenty congregations, representing more than 5000 people of faith in North Carolina, have demonstrated their commitment to health as a practice of their faith by becoming PHW-certified. PHW has a lot in store for congregations throughout 2012 and beyond. To learn how to

get involved, please contact Willona Stallings, PHW Program Coordinator, at willona@nccouncilofchurches.org.

PHW Job Opening

PHW is looking for a Regional Consultant to work 30 hours per week in Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Randolph, Rockingham, Stokes and Surry counties.

For more information, visit <http://www.healthandwholeness.org/regional-consultant>. Applications must be received by **Monday, June 11**.

Critical Issues Seminar Draws About 200



The Council's Critical Issues Seminar took place in April at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Winston-Salem. The theme, *Eating Well: For Ourselves, For Our Neighbors, For Our Planet*, reflected the Council's work on food as a social justice issue. It was a day filled with information and fellowship, starting with Bishop Michael Curry's homily during the opening worship through a presentation at day's end by Alexia Kelley, the Director of the Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships Center with the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. During lunch, longtime Council board member Father Joe Vetter received the Distinguished Service Award. Above left, Bishop Curry begins the day; above right, Father Vetter and former Council President Bridget Brown Johnson.

NCCC Statement Following the Passage of Amendment One

On May 9, Council Executive Director George Reed issued the following statement:

In light of yesterday's vote to add a discriminatory amendment about marriage to our state's constitution, it is important to consider what was accomplished through this campaign and what it tells us about progress.

First, the fine work of a committed group of people has resulted in alliances and coalitions that hadn't existed before. People with very different political beliefs spoke together against Amendment One. Secular and religious groups worked side by side to defeat it. Individuals who may not believe in gay marriage have come to realize that they also do not believe that the state's foundational document, its bedrock of freedom, should be used to discriminate. These are not the results we sought, but they are ones we value.

It was just 1991, 21 years ago, when the North Carolina Council of

Churches voiced its opposition to harassment, violence, and discrimination against people who are gay or lesbian. While that statement seems rather bland now, it was issued when some religious leaders in our country were proclaiming AIDS to be God's punishment on gay men. It was a prophetic and controversial step for the Council at that time.

To come from that point to an election in which about 40% of a huge primary turnout voted against Amendment One is a clear reminder of how rapidly our society is changing. I suspect that Speaker of the House Thom Tillis, one of the architects of Amendment One, was correct when he said recently that this is a generational issue and that the amendment would be repealed within twenty years.

Sadly, we will live for those decades with discrimination written into our constitution, and we will have years of court cases to determine exactly what the manifestations of that

amendment will be.

Christians sometimes talk about being citizens of two realms: the secular state and the realm of God. So I am a citizen of North Carolina, but I am also a citizen of God's realm. Yesterday's vote determines where the state of North Carolina is, at least for now, but it does not change my beliefs that God loves all of God's children equally and that all of us are welcomed as full and beloved members of God's family. Most Christian denominations profess those beliefs in their official statements. The task for all of us, during these interim years, will be to practice what we preach, to live in ways that manifest that we believe what we say we do.

Twenty years is a long time if you are one of the people being discriminated against, but it's only a brief period in the arc of the moral universe about which Dr. King spoke. And we know that the arc is bending towards justice.

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General Assembly Short Session Underway

The North Carolina General Assembly has convened for its 2012 short session. The Council is again publishing Raleigh Report, a legislative newsletter to inform people of faith about important issues and to give suggested action steps for grassroots activists. Items which we anticipate covering this session include:

- The state budget and whether the General Assembly will add back some of last year's cuts in funding, especially for education, human services, and environmental protection. The Council will be working with other groups to support a restoration of the emergency one-cent sales tax and to create a new income tax bracket for millionaires.
- Repeal of the Racial Justice Act, which allows defendants in death penalty cases to introduce statistical evidence of racial bias. Governor Perdue vetoed a bill which would have negated the RJA. That veto is subject to an override vote this year. The Council supports the RJA.
- Photo ID, which would require voters to produce a photo ID in order to vote. Hundreds of thousands of North

Carolinians do not have a driver's license or other similar ID, making it harder for them to vote. This bill is also subject to a veto override. The Council opposes photo ID.

- Hydraulic fracturing, which would open the state to the harmful effects of "fracking" as a way to produce natural gas. The Council's Rural Life Committee and NC IPL are opposed to fracking.
- Reduced unemployment benefits, as the NC Chamber of Commerce is proposing a reduction in the weekly amount of these benefits and in the number of weeks they can be collected. The Council opposes cut-backs in unemployment benefits, especially in this economic climate.
- Immigration, monitoring committee activity to insure Arizona-like legislation is not adopted in North Carolina.

To guarantee you get all the information the Council is distributing and as soon as it comes out, subscribe to Raleigh Report at raleighreport@nccouncilofchurches.org. Or check our website www.nccouncilofchurches.org.