

# Welfare, Faith-Based Ministries, and Charitable Choice

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## Synopsis

*Based on interviews with staff of 14 congregations and 13 related social agencies in Hartford and West Hartford, this report summarizes their views of the current conditions for at-risk individuals and families, the responses of congregations and related social agencies, the character of their volunteer programs, partnerships, and funding, and their experiences and receptivity to government funding. We were especially interested in any shifts in conditions and programs since the revision of welfare legislation in 1996, with special attention to the impact of "charitable choice" in funding faith based programs for the at risk population.*

*In their contacts with at risk populations, leaders of congregations and related agencies reported changes in attitudes and programs, with a few who have made financial success and far more who are suffering and struggling, especially mothers with young families. We show a great variety of ministries, with city churches taking the initiative and suburban congregations in strong support. We take special note of the wide variety of financial and other resources that these historic Black Churches (and city churches in general) generate and manage in response to the social needs of their communities. Further we show how these city churches developed working relationships across boundaries of faith, race and politics, as seen in their personal networks of volunteers and organized structural partnerships.*

*Concerning government money in general and charitable choice in particular, we discovered that the mixing of government and private resources already exists in virtually every program of religious congregations and related agencies. Although no program has been designated as "charitable choice," state officials maintain that the religious guidelines are not problematic. Supporting their view, we found that, although congregations and related agencies did not know about charitable choice option, when informed and invited, they offer other reasons for not participating. We conclude with a personal observation: If charitable choice is to have an impact in Connecticut, it will need to be introduced by some mediating group or agency that has not yet show leadership in this task.*

## Introduction

### Background

*Hartford Seminary carries a great tradition that is present in all Abrahamic religions in our educational concerns— Christian, Jewish, and Islam— that we care about the people of the communities in which we are located. For centuries these faith-based groups were the center of community life, represented not only in places of worship, but also schools, hospitals, and centers of community life. In modern, secular world, religious groups have often been pushed out of the public arena to specialize for spiritual matters, which are then defined as private and marginal.*

*In the last half of 20th century, religious groups have reasserted their involvement in public policies and programs. Proclaiming their interests for the "whole person— body, mind and spirit," these groups have been grounded in the full theological spectrum. For example, in 1960s it was liberal, especially Democrats, who lead movements in civil rights under the inspirational banner of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. More recently the political conservatives in alliance with religious right, inspired by President Ronald Reagan, advocated as a religious crusade, the devolution of responsibilities toward states, cities, and individuals.*

*One expression of devolution was the "Welfare Reform" legislation passed in 1996, called "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act. " One section of that act was especially inspired by the religious conservatives to allow federal welfare funding for faith based social ministries, Section 104, commonly called "Charitable Choice."*

#### *Charitable Choice: Faith Based Involvement*

*Federal welfare reform legislation may affect the extent and nature of relationships between organizations of faith and governmental agencies. Section 104 of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PL 104-193), the so called "Charitable Choice" provision, specifically addresses the use of contracts, vouchers, and other funding to arrange for "charitable, religious or private organizations" to provide services under Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income and food Stamps (and has been interpreted as applying to certain other programs as well). The statute also requires that religious organizations be permitted to receive such funding "on the same basis" as any other non-governmental provider." In addition, the interim regulations for the new Welfare-to-Work Program explicitly permit faith-based organizations to apply for and receive competitive grants. Private Industry Councils and other entities administering the formula Welfare-to-Work grants are required to coordinate these activities with faith-based organizations....The immediate impact of Charitable Choice has been to highlight the issues of how state and local agencies can involve congregations and faith-based organizations in welfare reform, and how congregations can respond to the changing needs in their communities.*

*Although this section did not set aside a particular allocation of funding for faith based programs, the administration of several states has made special efforts to encourage the development of programs under the charitable choice option. In a recent "report card" on the use of charitable choice funding, nine states were rated highly (CA, IL, MA, MI, Miss, NY, VA, WI and esp. TX). Connecticut was rated as hostile to this program despite a Republican administration and a congressional representative, Nancy Johnson (New Brittan) who successfully sponsored an expansion of Charitable Choice funding in 1999.*

*In the presidential election of 2000, the major candidates of both parties have endorsed it in principle, with significant difference in detail. In general, the role of religion in the political arena has been significantly increased with the Democratic nomination of an Orthodox Jew, Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman, for vice president. NY Times takes note of the radical reversal in the religious argument in the four decades since Jack Kennedy ran for president in 1960. Kennedy had to prove that religion did not matter, "No pope in the White House," while Lieberman tries to re-establish that religion does matter, for morality in politics, the media and throughout the nation.*

*Charitable choice has assumed a significant role in this campaign. It reflects not only the religious (but not sectarian) orientation of the candidates, but also suggests the power of transforming individual lives through spiritual intervention made possible by dedicated leaders and volunteers.*

*This news story from the midwest carries the basic story line about charitable choice:*

#### *CHENEY VISITS CITY, PRAISES MISSION'S "SUCCESS STORY."*

*GOP Vice Presidential nominee Dick Cheney ...singles out the Sunshine Mission's shelter for homeless men, its job-training programs and its teen-based ministry -- notably "Building Castles" -- aimed at helping youth fulfill their career dreams. "What Governor Bush and I want to do is to aid in the work of organizations like Sunshine Mission, specifically faith-based groups," Cheney said.*

*That aid would center on making it easier for such groups to compete for general dollars and rewarding taxpayers who donate to them. Cheney said Bush's proposals include:*

- *Offering a charitable tax deduction for the 80 million taxpayers who don't itemize and don't get any tax benefit for such giving.*
- *Providing federal support for faith-based organization's after-school programs, which Cheney said are often excluded from federal aid.*
- *Expanding "the 'charitable choice' idea that Sen. John Ashcroft has championed" to allow religious organization to compete for federal social-services contracts on equal footing with non religious groups.*

*Only three federal programs are now open to religious groups without "requiring them to conceal or compromise their religious character or nature," qualities that Cheney said contributed to their success. Such groups, he added, "should not be required to abandon their principles or their practices."*

*In the case of Sunshine Mission, Youth Director Chris Smith said that religious focus includes giving young teens "a solid biblical and theological foundation for work," along with their trips to businesses and their career-aptitude evaluations....*

*St. Louis Post Dispatch, August 10, 2000*

#### *Research Design*

*With a grant from the [Program on Non-Profit Organizations \(PONPO\)](#), we designed a brief study of an intentional sample of socially active congregations and related social agencies in the Hartford area. The sources of information and the audience for this research were the same groups, namely religious congregations concerned with welfare, welfare agencies looking for partners and support, neighborhood and community development groups, and legislators and other policy makers. These were the groups we interviewed, and then invited to our concluding conference on September 29, 2000.*

*More specifically, we interviewed staff of 14 congregations. These were located in Hartford: 2 Roman Catholic, 3 Protestant, 1 Evangelical, 3 Historic Black Churches; and in West Hartford: 4*

*Protestant and 1 Jewish congregation. Based on their responses we interviewed staff of 13 agencies divided into three broad groups: 4 Service, 4 Community Development, and 4 Advocacy, plus 1 Evangelical group that was both a church and a social agency. We also interviewed state officials in welfare and labor departments, and the staff for the election Democrat and Republican presidential candidates, and two candidates for congress and one for the senate. Although we did not use a set pattern, we covered the following questions:*

*I. What's their perception of conditions for at-risk individuals and families?  
especially any changes since welfare legislation of 1996*

*II. How have congregations responded to these at-risk conditions?  
City Churches: Mainline, Catholic, Black/Evangelical  
West Hartford Churches and Synagogue*

*III. What's the role and importance of volunteers?  
Were these different in city and suburban congregations?  
— between faith groups and agencies?*

*IV. Who are their partners -- if any?  
How well do these partnerships work?*

*V. How do they fund their programs?  
Were there differences in city and suburban congregations?  
— between faith groups and agencies?*

*VI. What were their satisfactions? Why do they keep doing it?*

*VII. How did they feel about working with government?  
What about financial support? -- Charitable Choice?*

### *Insights from Interviews*

#### *I. Welfare 2000: Some Success, Many Suffering*

##### *Changing conditions*

*We heard some improvement, but at a significant cost, especially to single parent mothers with children. These were typical comments:*

*A very small percentage are doing much better; they are working and they have an improved sense of their self-esteem and are doing well; but there is a bigger percentage of people who are having a worse time than they ever had. (Established soup kitchen, O)*

*I think the theory that the State can save money by cutting Welfare is true. But what is not taken into account is the measurement of the impact especially on children. You have more and more families doubling up; what is a three-bedroom unit become a three-family unit. A two-family house becomes a five-family house. (Housing agency, V)*

*We are having more and more parents who are homeless who are coming to the shelter than we have had in the past... People are poorer, poorer than they were before and they have less money.*

*And then with that money that you have you have to go to work and then you have to pay for day care and transportation costs. So your expenses have gone up and your income has gone down. (Faith based shelter, R)*

*We heard contradictory comments about the human sensitivity of the agencies involved. Some major dislocations have been experience by both the recipients of welfare, and the agencies seeking to serve them. We report this comment as a hopeful, but not universal experience: ▲*

*One of the reasons that things have not been worse than they are, is because many of the provisions of the welfare reform stuff have not been enforced. There was some flexibility written in to the system, and you have to say, "Thank God- there are some people in the front lines administering that stuff who know that they cannot be rigid about this or it will be disastrous." (City wide advocacy program, W)*

#### *Transforming the soup kitchen*

*The most dramatic changes we found were taking place in the needs and schedules of the people using traditional soup kitchens. If we only counted the participants at noon, we would get a very distorted picture of success and struggle in the lives of these people.*

*The major change is that the people who have always been here on a very regular basis-- people who really rely on such places as Loaves & Fishes-- are honestly very, very small numbers at this point. There is a very great change in the picture. The reason that there are fewer numbers is because of Welfare Reform is primarily on women. The women are the ones who basically have care for the children, mainly because you have to have children under eighteen to be on welfare. Those people are basically in some sort of work... Consequently, where we used to have many women and children in the middle of the day, we do not have those. No one does. Those women are doing some sort of work. Their lifestyles often are worse because... most have lost the rent subsidy [and] most have lost food stamps. It depends on the amount they are receiving. (established soup kitchen, O)*

#### *Changing attitudes*

*Along with the observation that people have changed their attitude toward welfare, we hear comments about the emotional price they are paying in this transition.*

*Five years ago I would say that 98% of the people in the family shelter had been on welfare and that would have been the mainstay of their income and they would have been looking for an apartment that they could live in from the funds that they would receive from welfare. The thought of getting a job was not something that most of the people thought about... Even though they have work, they are finding life is so difficult with this work pattern, they are getting very discouraged. People are more discouraged that I have ever seen. (Faith-based shelter, R)*

## *II. Congregational Response: City Churches*

### *Emergency help*

*City churches we interviewed universally reflected a sense of being approached by neighbors in every kind of domestic and personal emergency. They often appeared as the last resort in a crisis*

*situation, and therefore set up procedures to provide for this pressure from "unexpected emergencies."*

*So often people will stop at the rectory and ask for assistance with their fuel bill or medications, that seems to be the two major issues. (Urban parish, E)*

*Anybody who comes in and says they are hungry, we don't give cash money out to nobody. If they say they want food, clothing, or some kind of furniture — we won't give you the money for it, we will get it for you. That's what we do. (Urban pastor, C)*

*Whatever comes in, usually goes right out. Whatever doesn't go right out, gets picked over — and we usually send it to the third world. The things are usually in good shape — winter things that don't move in the summer, but will do well in the Andes. So there is a constant recycling going on in the parish. (Urban pastor, F)*

#### *Creating new programs*

*Beyond the constant emergencies, congregations are often involved in developing new ministries for those who fall between the cracks.*

*This is a sort of an entrepreneurial church, in that if a lay person comes and says, "I have an idea," we'll say, "We'll get a group together and see if we can make it work." (City church, G)*

*We have a technology center for the community. We also have a project where we will take students and train them to fix cars and then they can buy them. (Inner city church, B)*

*We have identified about 58 ministries. We are partnering with the Board of Education, and we partner with the different social service areas, social service providers and with different churches.... We have food banks [and] an after school tutoring program, ... [etc.] (same, B)*

*We have a food pantry, which is supplied mostly by suburban Catholic churches, that are donating food to us. We are also a member of food share, so if we need to, we buy extra food. And that is distributed to the people once a month - free. (Urban parish, F)*

*The tutoring program was started with the Community Renewal Team, and we have worked in conjunction with suburban parishes, which supply us with materials for the kids, notebooks, and nutritious snacks, that kind of thing — plus monies. (Urban parish, E)*

#### *Suburban Congregations*

*Although city churches are confronted daily with the needs of their communities, these suburban churches had to make an intentional choice to become involved ministry with at-risk people. These are typical comments from suburban congregations about their sense of vocation in choosing to work with city ministries that were at a distance from their own neighborhood.*

*The congregation about 4-5 years ago decided that they were not doing enough in Hartford and so we wanted to analyze the need in Hartford and what our congregation wanted to do. So we interviewed 18 agencies of the city and chose one as the agency that we wanted to partner with. For our focus we really tried to focus on that agency as a way to get people working together on a common goal. (Suburban church, N)*

*Food collection has been a major effort through the Social Action Committee for twenty years... People are asked to bring food when they come to Yom Kippur, and then all the food we collect is then sent over to Food Share, the regional food bank. We now collect between 17 and 18 thousand pounds of food in that single day. (Synagogue, M)*

*Habitat is working closely with the neighborhood association and not coming in as some outside agency "doing good". but working with the community. (Suburban church, J)*

### *CONG'L Programs*

*Notes:*

- a) Food, shelter, and education are primary concerns.*
- b) City churches offer local, neighborhood programs*
- c) City churches offer more programs in health, prisons, community development, etc.*
- d) City churches develop many partners and referral agencies to share the load.*
- e) West Hartford congregations are partners for volunteers, funding and other resources*

*\*Designates congregational programs that are conducted in other locations.*

### *III. The Importance of Volunteers as Seen by Congregations and Social Agencies*

*Many people join this church because they have a bent to work in Hartford. They want to do something to make a difference. In fact after we had the celebration [of volunteers on] Sunday, people kept saying, "Well, what are we doing now?" I have to find other things... We are working with the neighborhood, with other churches, with community groups... I have volunteers! like I need 8 volunteers on a Saturday and I will get 17 sign up. When I talk to people I am almost embarrassed. We have a real problem here. We have more people who want to be involved than we have involvement places. (G)*

*So we had a Mitzvah Day in which we asked our congregants last May to participate in about 45 projects within the community. Most of them were in general kinds of programs which ranged from building a sandbox at Camp Courant, to planting flowers at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, to working at My Sisters' Place... [etc.] (M)*

*Quite a few suburban Catholic churches help with clothes collection or sending people into do something with the mission work in the inner city. It works out very nicely because it opens up their lives to new experiences, and some nice relationships have developed. Getting people from suburban churches to volunteer in this area is such a rich resource — because rather than just being on the altar committee, in the city they can work with indigent elderly, they can work with teens, and working with the tutorial program, and even with the handicapped. (F)*

*Volunteers also come from a variety of sources but we try pair up the youngster with a tutor, a one-on-one tutor, so we have several hundred people who are involved in that aspect as well. (P)*

### *Changing programs to meet new conditions*

*We have a wonderful volunteer effort of people helping us with that. People at [congregation] have been just incredible; they have a large lunch bag program that people will bring the lunch bags to*

*church on Sunday, and they volunteer one Monday a month to bring the lunch bags here. Very big lunches - meat and cheese sandwiches, baked cookies, fruit juice, fresh fruit - a meal, definitely a full meal - every person who comes in get them including children; we will have 200 go out a day. They love them! (O)*

#### *IV. Partnerships as Seen From Congregations*

*We want to work with other churches... (C)*

*And we wanted to find a big project and we started to educate ourselves and realized that we couldn't do this by ourselves. No more of this "Lady Bountiful" stuff, we needed to work in partnership with the community and that is why it has taken six years to get there. (N)*

*This church has worked with [agency]. We have a group that goes down there, we not only write a check for \$1000 and have a group that goes down there every month and has 12 members that serve meals. So it is a good partnership. (J)*

*Most of our partners are in the religious arena.. Some of the secular groups that we partner with, their motivation is slightly different... With the Ministerial Alliance and the Board of Ed, we are forming some programs... We have a very powerful, a very strong partnership with the Jewish community especially Beth Israel. (A)*

#### *Agencies' View of Partners*

*Well, when we first started, we decided that church-based organizing was the best way to go. Every incident we have ever dealt with, we usually find a local church which has the most impact within the targeted area, and get them involved right away, and we launch from there (V)*

*A lot of things I have been able to pull together are because of my business contacts. In cooperation with other people, well, networking is the name of the game...[However]*

*Hartford has a very serious problem just with repetition of programming. (O)*

*In advocacy, this is the most uncoordinated state I have ever seen...I would go further and say it is not only uncoordinated, it is uncooperative. We look to move forward coalitionally. (X)*

#### *V. Funding for Faith-Based Ministries*

*The Day Care does not provide any monetary support for the church. It is a mission of the church... providing day care for people who might not otherwise be able to go out to work. (I)*

*We are not involved in these ministries because we think it will bring financial support to us. We are not expecting to find financial support for the church. We want the ministries to take care of themselves and continue to feed themselves so they can enlarge themselves. We don't desire no money from these to support our church. (C)*

*I think there were over forty funding sources from it last summer. We applied, and just sent out a raft of proposals to foundations and corporations. (W)*

#### *For Faith Supported Agencies*



Three views: Yes, No, and Maybe:

*You would have no problem in applying for government grants? Oh no! We would certainly do it if it looked like something that fit into our mission and was available to us. And we have had DCF funding since the second year we were around... DCF requires that we fund a minimum of 25% of our budget, so we have to find it somewhere. If we could find it through federal funds that would be dynamite. (P)*

*We are completely privately funded. We do not have a cent of City, State or Federal money. Really, that is a wonderful comment on this community. It really truly is. Our funding breaks down almost exactly one third, one third, one third. One third religious organizations (churches and synagogues), one third foundations and corporations; and one third in small gifts.*

*We have a wide variety of people who support us. Specific congregations. Congregational churches, Episcopal churches, Lutheran churches, Assembly of God churches... I think that people recognize the work that is being done. [Although] to some people we are perhaps too socially minded and to other people we preach too much! There is evidence that we change lives. That is what we want. That's what we see. And I think that the people who want to be a part of that are glad to support us. [Int. There is no United Fund money?] Rev. There is now. The United Way has a program called Donor's choice. If you work for a company you can give to the United Way and designate your gift. Also we have access to a program through the State of Connecticut, it is a reimbursement program, for individuals who are going through a drug and alcohol program like this. They qualify, if they are indigent, for their costs for staying in a program of recovery via a state reimbursement to help them access the service. That has been a great help to us. (D)*

**FUNDING OF FAITH-BASED MINISTRIES**

	Hartford Churches Bl Ch's(3/1)	Catholic(2)	Mainline(3)	West Hartford Cong's (5)
Funding Sources				
Their members	4	2	3	5
Government agencies/programs including schools, prisons, HUD, DCFS, etc.	4	1	1	
Foundations	4	1		
Business	2		1	
United Way				
Misc.	1		1	

Notes (from this very limited sample):



- a. All congregational ministries are supported by funds and in-kind donations of their members.
- b. Black churches have developed support from all categories of financial resources.
- c. All city churches have or have had government support (financial and other support).
- d. United Way does not provide support for faith-based welfare programs -- I.e., the United Way maintains the separation of public and religious funding, more than government agencies.

#### FUNDING FOR FAITH-SUPPORTED AGENCIES

Agencies:	Service(4)	ComDev(4)	Advocacy(4)
Funding Sources			
Government agencies/programs	4	3	0*
Foundations	2	2	2
Business	3	1	2
United Way	3	1	1
Congregations	3	1	4+
Misc.	4	1	2

\*2 advocacy agencies receive government funding for programs, not advocacy.  
+includes local, regional and national religious organizational support.

- a) Service agencies receive the most comprehensive financial support.
- b) All funders are moving from agency support to contracts for particular programs.
- c) Government is the primary support for community development agencies.
- d) Business funding is disproportionately directed to service agencies.
- e) Religious groups do advocacy more through agencies than congregations.

#### VII. Satisfactions — Why They Keep Doing It

##### Caring for others

What we have found by adopting a street is being visible in the community. People begin to look at the church in a more positive view because when you think that you are just inside and don't care about people on the outside. So in order to do that, to fight that mindset, you have to be visible. That's the object. So we try to revitalize and transform this neighborhood. That is what church is all about. (C)

I think that it helps us come together as a congregation and it seems to have remained bigger if not grown. You might expect that a year or two after something like this that people would be tired. Rather it has grown. That is a good sign. I think that it actually has become part of the fabric of the congregation so that new members see that as a benefit. (N)

*The clergy and the congregation members have often said, "This has revitalized us!" or "This has brought a new perspective to our outreach ministry." That is wonderful. That is what we wanted. This is what it was intended to do. It is extremely rewarding in that respect because some congregations were looking for a shot in the arm as far as connecting their faith to the purposes that they felt were very important.... The other piece is the satisfaction of gaining the entry into the congregation to begin to help them realize that the children are suffering, and to begin to educate them along the way that there are things they can do to alleviate that. (P)*

#### *Justice*

*I am going to move on their behalf, to be a voice for the voiceless and a champion for the oppressed. I preach a lot in the church that, "If it ain't about justice, it ain't about Jesus." (A)*

*I would like to see us take some risks...I think what we are doing is wonderful but the issues of the city are extremely daunting and we need to take some risks and try to advocate for change. (X)*

*Advocacy. The word "advocacy" scares a lot of them [church people]. There are very simple things they can do which would be considered advocacy, including paying a great deal of attention to how they vote and what is going on in the legislature, and holding their legislators responsible for some of their decisions they are about to make. (Y)*

*We are connected with Office of Urban Affairs, which is the social justice arm of the Catholic Church. I think that is one of the things we try to do - social justice advocacy and not just outreach and bandaging, but trying to create social change. (F)*

#### *Future generations*

*Welfare Reform I think will probably have very little positive effect on the adults who are involved in it because most of them are going through such a difficult time.... I hope that their kids will benefit by that whole sense of going to work, a good attitude toward work - and I think that is where Welfare to Work is going to make a difference, and I think that is wonderful. But I think this generation is pretty much lost to a real change for the better. (O)*

*The difference that I see is this: it used to be that public assistance was the permanent system and church intervention ... was the temporary fix, because the state welfare was there. Now we have turned that on its ear. We have said that welfare is the temporary fix, the short-term kind of a solution. So we don't know what the other permanent one is going to be. Churches and non-profit agencies have not been able ... to figure out new ways to work with people. (S)*

#### *Summary statements*

*{Three new priorities:} One is the importance of volunteers, recognizing that relationship is critical to what we do; second, we are a faith-based organization and we want to affirm that in ways that change people's lives, without proselytizing; and third is we want to go deeper rather than broader. (Q)*

*But the need is greater than our ability to meet the need. We know that we are not able to do it alone. We are not the only church in Hartford. There are many churches, thank God. Really the State is counting on the church — they might not want to acknowledge that they do. But the church has*

*always been there. There are some regulations about receiving money, but something has happened to the people we work with. I can't just ignore that or act like it didn't happen, or act like it is attributable to something else because that would be to take away the heartbeat of the motivation. (D)*

#### *VI. Reservations About Government Support*

*The red tape --- they give you something, and then they put so many restrictions on it, you can't use it... Because you see, when the government give you a dollar, they put a thousand restrictions on it. They give it to you to do this, but then they turn around and say you can't do it. So we need funds to do what we can do, what we have been designed to do -- and that is, to get a child, bring him or her in, and begin with our program of training and discipline. Sometimes that does not meet with the government's standards. (C)*

#### *Distrusting politics*

*With almost thirty years of ministry now, I confess to you that I am very cynical about the political process...(A)*

*I used to be a politician one time ...and I figured out that pastors ain't got no business being politicians. (C)*

*Part of the frustration is that we know there are a lot of state dollars, for instance, that are there to be used, and just don't get used for this. There were allegations that there was forty million dollars worth of State TANF money that could have been used for providing day care and training — and it just disappeared! It got absorbed into the State budget and was reallocated. (S)*

*Our experiences with the City of Hartford have been horrible! The politics! Horrible. Every single grant and contract ... One grant [we] have had with the City of Hartford has been frozen for two years because of political problems. (V)*

*Maybe it is because I made that choice when I took the job, knowing that politics in Hartford is a combat sport. (G)*

#### *Tax \$ to Faith Based Programs- Charitable Choice*

*So that the real question of Charitable Choice is I think - two sided: one side is a smokescreen - it pretends that there are alternatives to governments support for welfare, when there really are not; and the second is that the churches are conned into accepting responsibility so that the feds and the state can dump on the churches and say, "now it is your problem, not ours". (Z-who recognized the term)*

*[All congregations and most agencies needed to have Charitable Choice explained:]*

*Actually, we have never received any information about that Charitable Choice. I remember a letter about it a while back when it was getting started. It has been mentioned to me by the Capital Work Force Development, and I am aware of it through other things, but I haven't really gotten anything here. So it has not had an impact. (P)*

*I had the impression the welfare legislation was just to make the churches pick up the tab for things - and that's what I think it is — just rhetoric. (J)*

*In our parish there is really a desire for separation of church and state. It is still very strong. But people get around it in other ways. (F)*

*Jews feel very, very strongly about the separation between church and state. So we are not supporters of that notion of public funding through religious based organizations for social service, because there will always be some kind of content related to it. (M)*

*Our Board feels so strongly that they did not want to compromise what they knew to be the "active ingredient," that is, faith. Interfacing with the state sometimes you are dealing with agencies that might not feel comfortable with the spiritual component. But they don't have a problem because the roof is provided, the shelter, all the support services, heat in the winter, hot water, three meals a day for all the residents, transportation to and from clinic appointments. (D)*

*Would we try to get federal monies? I don't think we would have any scruples if we saw a need that was not being met and our parish could do that for the neighborhood. It certainly is one of our goals to be responsive to the needs of the community. (E)*

#### *Comments and Recommendation*

##### *7 Myths challenged by these interviews*

*Myth 1. That the "1996 Welfare Reform" has moved the majority of former welfare recipients into self sufficient employment. Leaders in the churches and agencies we contacted reported mixed results. They observed changes in both attitudes and resources, with a small minority that have achieved a stable new life, and the vast majority of former welfare recipients struggling to survive (especially mothers with young families), without direct welfare support but working with less money for more expenses.*

*Myth 2. That city churches are primarily places for spiritual retreat. These city churches see themselves as the front lines of emergency care for families and individuals in their communities. As compared with the suburban congregations we contacted, these city churches have many more social ministries, from prisons to day care, from personal health to community development. In addition, these churches have pioneered new programs when they recognized people who fell through the cracks between existing services.*

*Myth 3 That the affluence of suburban congregations inhibits involvement in social concerns. By contrast, these suburban congregations feel a vocation to become involved in both the emergency and the long range social programs of city churches and agencies, typically at some distance and additional effort to travel from their own locations.*

*Myth 4 That Historic Black Churches lack managerial experience to handle these ministries. These Black Churches (even more than other city churches) showed far greater ability to discover and use a wide variety of income sources and managerial skills to support their far more numerous social ministries. These city churches were significantly more complex than suburban congregations in*

*managing their funding sources, although the social needs in their communities continued to exceed their capacity to respond.*

*Myth 5 That these social ministries are the result of heroic efforts by superhuman leaders located in unusual congregations. Rather we found every ministry, although often initiated by highly motivated individuals, these transformations occur more realistically through the long term commitments of many partners across racial, religious, and political boundaries. Charitable choice hype should not be confused with realistic planning for sustainable ministries.*

*Myth 6 That there is some invisible wall between church and state in funding and sustaining these ministries. In these interviews with churches and faith-based ministries, the mixing of government and private resources already exists in virtually every social ministry. This implies that religious leaders develop more carefully nuanced language to understand the complexity of these ties, but no less vigilance to guard against using tax money to favor one faith over others.*

*Myth 7 That legislation supporting Charitable Choice legislation will make this option immediately available. Nationally we have seen some state administrations that have advocated for charitable choice and received significant funding. Locally we heard both negative resistance and yet a positive need for the funds that could be made available through this option. From the current political campaign, we can assume that this option for funding will increase in the immediate future, but state and local leaders will need to intentionally organize to make the most of this opportunity for new and anticipated funding.*

*Based on both the need and the fears expressed in these interviews, the religious community needs to develop "mediating organization" (or several organizations) for advocating and managing charitable choice funding. Such a mediating function would help:*

- a) to unify the requests of many faith-based ministries and agencies;*
- c) to separate the funding recipients from allocation and oversight of those funds; and*
- b) to administer the "red tape" that holds government, agencies and ministries accountable.*

### **Welfare and Religion Interviews**

#### **City Congregations**

- A. A.M.E. Church*
- B. C.M.E. Church*
- C. Baptist Church*
- D. Nondenominational Church\**
- E. Catholic Church*
- F. Catholic Church*
- G. United Church of Christ*
- H. Church of Christ*
- I. United Methodist Church*

#### **Suburban Congregations**

- J. Episcopal Church*
- K. Presbyterian Church*

*L. Lutheran Church*  
*M. Reformed Congregation*  
*N. Unitarian congregation*

**Agencies**

**Direct Service**

*O. Soup Kitchen*  
*P. Family Aid*  
*Q. Clergy Association*  
*R. Salvation Army*

**Community Development**

*S. Neighborhood Development Program*  
*T. Community Job Center*  
*U. Job Consortium*  
*V. Neighborhood Development Program*

**Advocacy**

*W. Christian Council*  
*X. Christian Conference*  
*Y. Catholic Organization*  
*Z. Conference of Churches*

*D. Substance Abuse Program\**

NOTE: This article comes from Carl Dudley's book *Community Ministries: Proven Steps and New Challenges to Faith-Based Initiatives* released in 2002.