

# Church Responses to the Faith-based Initiatives Program

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*President George W. Bush's Faith-based Initiatives, predicated on the idea that public and private sectors have a role to play in serving those in need, unites the government and non-profit organizations, including religious organizations, toward a common goal. Introducing Faith-based Initiatives within a country which believes in church-state separation is considered politically risky; however, what risk exists from the church's point-of-view? Should the church, in fact, help the government? The current exploratory study examines theological responses and factors which determine the relationship between churches of Christian faith and social services.*

The church and state relationship has been discussed extensively from the standpoint of the political world, but what exactly is being said from the world of the church (i.e., by religious leaders)? This study explores the perspective of the church at a local level—the area of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Instead of dealing with the common question “should the government help faith-based or religious organizations?” to which the title alludes in *Sacred Places, Civic Purpose* (Dionne & Chen, 2001), the study addresses whether faith-based or religious organizations perceive they should help the government. The study helps identify the social purpose of the Christian church as known by its leaders as well as the social purpose of the government as known by the Christian church. In addition, the study explores factors that could contribute to the views of the local church toward Faith-based Initiatives.

## Literature Review

### Compassionate Conservatism

The idea that private and charitable groups, including religious ones, should have the greatest opportunity permitted by law to compete for federal funds embodies what is known as Faith-based Initiatives. The concept of Faith-based Initiatives has its origin in an ideology known as compassionate conservatism. Four individuals have assisted in the foundation and shaping of the concept of compassionate conservatism as it pertains to the Faith-based Initiatives--Marvin Olasky, Myron Magnet, Stephen Goldsmith, and John DiIulio, Jr. These individuals advanced the progress of evolving Faith-based Initiatives, and by understanding their creative contributions, we can understand the thought-provoking actions of the Bush administration and the mission behind "the inspired" Faith-based Initiatives.

The influential force implied by the idea of compassionate conservatism was first articulated by an academic named Marvin Olasky. Olasky published what were the beginnings of his thoughts with *The Tragedy of American Compassion* (1992), later refined in *Compassionate Conservatism* (2000). Formicola, Segers, and Weber (2003) succinctly summarize Olasky's platform as maintaining that (1) the human spirit and human behavior are affected by the way individuals help; (2) individuals, rather than the government, should play the critical role in helping the under-served in society; (3) charity should be conducive to developing self-respect, helping the needy earn a living, and creating work; and (4) government growth of bureaucracies converted welfare benefits to gifts. These arguments established a foundation which, in turn, nurtured the life of compassionate conservatism as visualized by Olasky in the face of foreseen challenges:

Compassionate Conservatism. Many reporters see it as a sugary concoction, word candy for a political campaign that seeks not to offend. But that conventional wisdom is wrong. Compassionate Conservatism is neither an easy slogan nor one immune from vehement attack. It is a full-fledged program with a carefully considered philosophy. It will face in the twenty-first century not easy acceptance but dug-in opposition. It will have to cross a river of suspicion concerning the role of religion in American society. It will have to get past numerous ideological machine-gun nests. Only political courage will enable compassionate conservatism to carry the day and transform America. (Olasky, 2000, p. 1)

Prophetic in nature, the words of Olasky have rung true; the philosophy has faced many critics.

The philosophy or system of ideas providing breath to compassionate conservatism is described by Olasky through seven terms: (1) assertive, drawing on the preamble to the Constitution which speaks of government promoting the general welfare but not providing it; (2) basic, that is, providing the most basic means of bringing help to those who need it by looking first within the family, next to the neighborhood, then organizations, and finally the government; (3) challenging—not turning the poor into pets, but instead stretching their limits; (4) diverse, that is, offering a choice of programs—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, atheist—emphasizing education, family, and work; (5) effective—meeting two bottom lines of helping organizations, lives changed and funds used efficiently; (6) faith-based, building on research<sup>1</sup> suggesting faith-based programs are more effective in fighting poverty, on average, than their nonreligious counterparts; and (7) gradual, starting with a limited program and then expanding if the pluses outweigh the minuses (Olasky, 2000, p. 16). This approach applied forty years in advance could have possibly presented a counter-attack to what Myron Magnet (1993) recognized as a power culture led by liberalism which began in the 1960s.

Magnet's interpretation of recent decades in *The Dream and the Nightmare* (1993) brought into perspective two separate classes—the elites or “Haves” and the underclass or “Have-nots.” He proclaimed a “radically remade American culture” and explained such a proclamation through what he observed as the cultural revolution of the Haves. According to Magnet, the Haves began their cultural revolution stimulated by a democratic impulse of establishing a more open and inclusive America. Behind this impulse lay two objectives: (1) the political and economic liberation of the poor and the black and (2) the personal liberation of themselves (the Haves). Each objective had its own share of residue. The political and economic liberation of the poor and the black led to the War on Poverty and Welfare Reform acts initiating entitlements for the poor instead of fostering responsibility. The pursuit of the Haves' personal liberation, as stated by Magnet, was comprised of a sexual revolution which ultimately reshaped family life, increasing divorce, illegitimacy, and female-headed families on all levels of society as well as a counterculture which was defined in the words “letting it all hang out.” Magnet noted the results of the revolution:

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<sup>1</sup> See Dionne and Chen (2001) for discussions of relevant studies.

Partly because of this confusion of the selfish and the civic, the cultural revolution failed in devastating ways in both of its large intentions. Instead of ending poverty for the Have-Nots—despite the civil rights movement, despite the war on Poverty—the new cultural order fostered, in the underclass and the homeless, a new, intractable poverty that shocked and dismayed ... that went beyond the economic realm into the realm of pathology ... because the new culture that the Haves invented—their remade system of beliefs, norms, and institutions—permitted, even celebrated, behavior that, when poor people practice it, will imprison them inextricably in poverty. (Magnet, 1993, p. 19)

The dichotomy surrounding the objectives of the Haves led to the dream becoming a nightmare. The dream of strengthening a generation of Americans, in turn, resulted in a generation continuing along the path of their forefathers, which was traveled by a larger number of Have-nots and a discouraged number of Haves. Individuals such as Stephen Goldsmith, however, provide another vision for assisting the Have-nots.

A Manhattan Institute scholar and the former mayor of Indianapolis, Stephen Goldsmith (1997) is known nationally for his works in revitalizing urban neighborhoods. Goldsmith entered the Indianapolis office of mayor in 1992. While in that position Goldsmith dealt with issues concerning ineffective taxation, poor urban education systems, increasing crime rates, and illegitimacy.

Goldsmith, in *The Twenty-First Century City: Resurrecting Urban America* (1997), discussed his policies and practices as mayor of Indianapolis. In his book, Goldsmith stated that “the government subsidized the breakup of the family” by making teen pregnancy and illegitimacy economically viable through welfare, while abdicating responsible enforcement of child support laws (1997, p. 7). Goldsmith believes in the ability to rebuild civility by giving authority back to families, churches, and neighborhood associations. Goldsmith referenced words voiced by Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (2002), regarding the 1961 War on Poverty:

There is a wistful myth that if only we had enough money to spend—the figure is usually put at a hundred billion dollars—we could wipe out all of our slums in ten years, reverse decay in great, dull, gray belts that were yester-

day's and day-before yesterday's suburbs, anchor the wandering middle class and its wandering tax money, and perhaps even solve the traffic problem ... but look what we have built with the first several billion: low-income projects that become worse centers of delinquency, vandalism, and general social hopelessness than the slums they were supposed to replace. (Goldsmith, 1997, p. 8)

Goldsmith suggested that the War on Poverty was rooted in the notion that the government knew better than the people how to solve their social problems.

As urban problems continued, Goldsmith launched a counter approach guided by the following principles: people know better than the government what is in their best interest; monopolies are inefficient, and government monopolies are particularly inefficient; wealth needs to be created, not redistributed; government should do a few things well; and cities must not raise taxes or price themselves out of competition with excessive regulations (Goldsmith, 1997, p. 9). Goldsmith's small government approach to urban restoration brought much good fortune to the city of Indianapolis and afforded him the opportunity to meet Larry Mone, president of the Manhattan Institute, and Myron Magnet, editor of the institute's *City Journal* at the time, who were the encouragement for *Twenty-First Century America: Resurrecting Urban America* (Goldsmith, 1997, p. 10). The pragmatic nature of Goldsmith resembled that of John DiIulio, Jr., a man who advocates identifying approaches to solving the root of problems.

In *Body Count*, Bennett, DiIulio, and Walters (1996) attempt to explain America's violent crime plague during the 90's. They argue "Super-predators" were responsible for a rising tide of youth crime and violence: today's bad boys are far worse than yesteryear's, and tomorrow's worse than today's (p. 27). But in the midst of all the facts, they were most concerned with the "why" behind the astounding crime statistics. They attributed the root cause to moral poverty:

Moral Poverty. Moral poverty mocks well-intentioned programs and fills no frills prisons. Moral poverty makes some young men pull triggers the way some old men fire off angry letters. Moral poverty unleashes more murderers in a single year than America has executed in this century. Moral poverty makes both racism and legal loopholes mere backdrops in a crime drama featuring family disintegration, child abuse, and child neglect. And moral

poverty, not economic poverty, is what marks some disadvantaged youngsters for a life of drugs and crime while passing over others in equal or greater material distress. (Bennett, et al., 1996, p. 56)

DiIulio defined moral poverty as the absence of love from responsible individuals willing to take the time to teach children right from wrong. It also includes the desolate child without parents or authorities who can train the child to feel joy when others feel joy, pain when others feel pain, satisfaction when he/she does right, remorse when he/she does wrong (Bennett, et al., 1996, p. 56). Extreme poverty, as stated by DiIulio, is growing up severely abused and neglected by criminal adults (Bennett, et al., 1996, p. 56).

The preceding four schools of thought could be synthesized into two, where one would house the ideologists, Olasky and Magnet, and the second, the pragmatists, Goldsmith and DiIulio. The four are all united by four common factors: (1) a grassroots vision enabling strong functionality at a micro-level; (2) a valued belief system grounded in love and hope for self and others; (3) the idea that an individual can control his/her own fate in the proper environment; and (4) desirable results against poverty. All four common factors fit into Olasky's specific philosophy of compassionate conservatism.

### **Faith-based Initiatives**

George W. Bush embraced the philosophy underlying compassionate conservatism and used an infrastructure to officially put into motion his Faith-based Initiatives program. On January 31, 2001, Bush ordered the publication of "Rallying the Armies of Compassion," his blueprint for expanding faith-based and community groups across America. In it, Bush laid out the hierarchy of administrative power. He established a lead office called the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, which promotes faith-based organizations and keeps an eye on any improper federal barriers through regulation of charitable or faith-based programming. Bush also instituted parallel supporting offices within the Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Education. In addition, he appointed Stephen Goldsmith Domestic Policy Advisor and John DiIulio, Jr., the first Director of the Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives. The Bush team confronted the problems of millions of Americans: drug addiction, alcoholism, homelessness, welfare dependency, and financial poverty (United

States, 2001, p. 6). The objectives to combat such problems did not rely on tearing down a government structure but simply enhancing its current position. The Faith-based Initiatives program is a successor to the less potent Charitable Choice Act. The Charitable Choice Act was a provision enacted on a state level into the Welfare Reform Act of 1996 which entitled faith-based organizations in non-profit status the right to government funding. Bush expanded upon this platform and pushed the faith-based program nationally with greater funding.

In the foreword of “Rallying the Armies of Compassion” (The White House, 2001) Bush stated:

The indispensable and transforming work of faith-based and other charitable service groups must be encouraged. Government cannot be replaced by charities, but it can and should welcome them as partners. We must heed the growing consensus across America that successful government social programs work in fruitful partnership with community-serving and faith-based organizations—whether run by Methodists, Muslims, Mormons, or good people of no faith at all.

Stephen Goldsmith (2003) voiced his understanding and support of what Bush envisioned in *The Wall Street Journal* in an article titled “The ‘Compassion’ Factor,” suggesting that Bush had adopted the view that society can improve the lot of Americans without making them passive clients of government.

### **Churches’ Concerns and Criticisms of Faith-based Initiatives**

Apart from the force of political advisors’ support, there have been some nationally recognized religious leaders of faith-based organizations who have spoken in opposition to the Bush initiative. Bishop T. D. Jakes of the Potter’s House Church in Texas worries that the spiritual mission of the church could be compromised. “We don’t want to end up in a situation where the government is telling us what to preach or how to minister,” Jakes told AgapePress, later reported in *Church and State* magazine (October 2004, p. 19). Television preacher Pat Robertson was recorded stating that faith-based funding could become “a real Pandora’s box” and that controversial groups might get funded (Faith-Based Fall-Out, 2004). Critics affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) fear it will encourage discrimination and unhealthy competition for the funds. They

also have concerns regarding regulations surrounding accountability that could foster government intrusion and control (Disciples News Service, 2001). Clergy of the United Church of Christ corresponded with literally hundreds of religious leaders nationwide and took it upon themselves to address the President directly by letter. They concluded the letter with the following:

Such new legislation is not necessary. For decades many houses of worship have set up separate religiously affiliated institutions to perform government-funded social services, a system that has protected both the autonomy of houses of worship and the integrity of government programs. Partnerships between religion and government must be undertaken with great caution so as not to undermine the very integrity and freedom that allows both the followers and the institutions of religion to practice and keep faith in our nation. We urge you to protect the sacred role of religion in our nation by rejecting this avenue of infusing government funds into America's religious institutions. (United Church of Christ, 2001)

A partnership requires two or more to be in agreement, and many religious organizations and leaders for which the Faith-based Initiatives are intended appear to have left the President's office without having signed across the line.

### **Research Focus**

This study examined the attitudes of religious or pastoral leaders, as a representative of their respective churches, toward the Faith-based Initiatives. More specifically, the study sought to contribute to insight into the churches' views of government and faith-based/community organization partnership. Some guiding questions were: How do local churches, out of the view of media, regard Bush's faith-based program? What factors affect whether or not a religious organization accepts the Faith-based Initiatives? What are the social service objectives of Christian churches and the government?

### **Methodology**

This comparative study involved cross-comparisons of the views of various Christian ministerial leaders toward Faith-based Initiatives in order to identify factors which determine response.

Participants in this study were ten ministers in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, selected due to convenience to campus and a special interest in denominational diversity. The participants were contacted by personal visitation at their churches. If they were available, an interview was either conducted immediately or a later time was scheduled. If they were not available, an appointment was scheduled through an office secretary or voicemail message. All ten ministers contacted agreed to be interviewed.

The interviews were focused and directed by three leading questions: (1) How would you describe our country's social services structure? (2) Are you aware of Faith-based Initiatives? and (3) Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services? Further queries encouraged participants to elaborate on relevant points. A total of ten interviews lasting from fifteen to twenty-five minutes were conducted and voice recorded upon consent; interviews were later transcribed for analysis and interpretation. (See Appendix for complete protocol.)

## **Results and Findings**

The ten pastoral leaders interviewed served in one of the following denominations: Baptist (1), Catholic (1), Church of Christ (1), Disciples of Christ (1), Episcopalian (1), non-denominational (1), Presbyterian (1), or United Methodist (3).

### **Faith-based Initiatives**

All ten participants were aware of the Faith-based Initiatives program, and seven out of ten stated a willingness to receive faith-based funding. Three had applied or knew of someone who had applied personally for faith-based funding, but only two had actually received funding. The funding received had been used to finance projects establishing food outreach, homeless shelters, and community youth centers.

**Advantages of Faith-based Initiatives.** Respondents gave three reasons for participating in the Faith-based Initiatives program: (1) availability of funding, (2) empowering of people, and (3) diversity of service. The pastoral leaders endorsed having funds available for programs. The majority of participants also felt potential existed for the faith-based programs to empower people by providing them with opportunities. Finally, the participants favored the diversity of services the Faith-based Initiatives encourage by supplementing economic provision with a more holistic service offering available through religious partnership (see Participant #1 under Church-Government Relationships below).

**Disadvantages of Faith-based Initiatives.** The pastoral leaders also noted possible disadvantages to the Faith-based Initiatives: (1) potential of inefficiency, (2) control of government, and (3) exclusion of people. The first demerit given to the Faith-based Initiatives program is the chance the program is a zero sum venture or, even worse, a do-more-with-less strategy. For example, if all the federal government is doing is reallocating “x” amount of dollars from a previous fund to the Faith-based Initiatives program, then, in order to see the benefit, those receiving faith-based funding would have to put forth greater effort to meet previous levels of service met by the previous fund. Regarding government control as a disadvantage to the program, the religious leaders did not want to risk the mission of the church by having undesirable limits placed upon them by receiving government funds. Finally, participants felt that people who would not desire to receive social services from a religious institution would be left out.

### **Church-Government Relationships**

In discussing Faith-based Initiatives, ministers elaborated on church and government relationships, (1) as partners in providing social services and (2) in terms of separation of church and state.

**Social service partnership.** Following are a sample of the questions and responses that were given by participants regarding social service partnership. “I” refers to the interviewer, “R” to the respondent. Excerpts from four interviews were selected to show the diverse range of opinions expressed.

#### **Participant #1**

**I:** Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services?

**R:** Yes, they can. They can see how we work with the people and learn the people’s different cultures; recognize the people’s need by coming and interacting with the people, not just providing resources, but social interaction is the primary means for change; so there must be social interaction, not just providing the means but also developing the people as a whole; they should learn you cannot just give handouts without the development; so there must be social development as well as providing the need.

**I:** How could the state/government work with faith-based organizations to help those in need?

**R:** It all comes from being humble because you have been the ones who have been put in place, empowered--the government, they have to come alongside the church and humble themselves and say, “we don’t know, we don’t know how to serve these people;” so through humility they can come and learn how to serve the people by coming in and asking questions, doing surveys, and one-on-one dialogs with community leaders.

**I:** What needs to be done in order to ensure public/private partnerships work?

**R:** Overall monitoring; monitoring the progress, the initial launching process of the ministry or the program and then monitoring the growth of the project or program ... having ministers in place and overseers to give direction to the program of ministry. They must have insight and vision to make it through all of the different stages of growth; so it can work by getting the proper direction and proper enhancement over a period of time like with giving them the money needed or the resources needed and walking them through the process to help the people as they get developed a program or ministry.

**Analysis:** The participant is concerned with the effectiveness of support given by the government. The government has an agenda to combat poverty, but at the same time if economic distributions are being made without proper follow-up, then poverty is repeated due to misuse of economic distributions. The government at some point should be willing to submit to those organizations that have experience with serving people. The government appears to be making an attempt through the establishment of Faith-based Initiatives; however, this participant as well as others suggest that government control or the government way of monitoring is that of a “watch dog” mentality. Instead of monitoring from over the shoulder of private partners, the government should consider monitoring shoulder-to-shoulder—a more collaborative approach.

## **Participant #2**

**I:** Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services?

**R:** Certainly. And the church can learn from government. We can certainly learn from government in the way ... services are available to all... The church can learn not to be conditional on that part; on the same hand, the government can learn from the church and their ministry in that there is more, there is a holistic approach ... that often time some of the greatest work requires the least of funding and offers a hope that kind of takes care of future funding... . I think it's a little of both. We can learn from both, and I think we need to work together on some things but we each have a different purpose and a different role.

Government's role is to protect and maintain an environment where I can be all that God created me to be, and that involves where I have equal access to both basic means of life and the opportunities of life that come through what are social programs, defense programs, whatever part of that, that's the environment they create. The church's role is to help me understand who it is that created me, to help me understand that I was created for a purpose, that I was created with meaning, that actually molds me into all that God created me to be. So, one actually just provides the environment and it gives me freedom to that, and the other gives me a place to actually be formed, and molded, and nurtured. I don't think it's government's role to mold and nurture and form. I think that takes place within the church, and those are the differences between those two ministries. One's making opportunity or removing obstacles and the other is actually formation and nurturing and caring.

**I:** How could the state/government work with faith-based organizations to help those in need?

**R:** Again, more than funding; working with, to find out what programs are available in different communities, what's being duplicated, who is doing what, whose purpose is what so that we can go back, and government faith-based programs can go back, and allocate both material resources and human resources ... continuing what one is doing but don't duplicate what the others are doing.

**I:** What needs to be done in order to ensure public/private partnerships work?

**R:** The same thing, communication; communication, dialogue, and time with working together.

**I:** Is there anything else you would like to address?

**R:** I don't think Faith-based Initiatives are anything new. I think it's always a part of community life and working together. When communities were smaller, all those things worked together, all of them were close together in the center of the town where folks came together. Education took place in the church house and then the church became a place of worship; it was a place where multiple needs were met, so there's nothing new. And more than resources, it's about relationships, being involved in our communities and working; then through that, it's amazing how the material resources and the human resources are there. That's where the church can do what the government can't do. The church can offer hope and vision for a community to come together. The government has to provide the environment which allows that.

**Analysis:** The participant feels there can be lessons learned from the government listening to the church and vice versa. In order for the lessons learned to be mutually beneficial, the church must learn to be less conditional, for example, by not limiting services to individuals who are a part of their congregation or community. The "if" when it comes to serving others should not outweigh the need. The government is more inclusive in most situations but can learn to be more holistic.

### **Participant #3**

**I:** Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services?

**R:** Well, let me give you a history lesson, which you probably know, but basically the government learned from the church the whole concept of social security. Now, I know that the present administration is trying to radically change that, but the whole concept of social security came from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's work within the context of his own church ... . And so what he proposed was very close in many regards to what the [church] had done first for its employees, primarily for its employees. So, obviously, the church can be a great training ground, as social security has proven, for effective governmental programs. That's the best example I can give.

**I:** How could the state/government work with faith-based organizations to help those in need?

**R:** My sense is that the state-based government organizations do what they can already. For example, DHR [Department of Human Resources] ... very often we will receive calls from those state-based organizations to provide help for people that are well unable to provide for themselves. So, we already have that kind of working relationship. I am well aware of, apart from receiving more funding, apart from equitable tax bases and so forth, there is no more money out there right now from the state. But the state and the churches, I do think, work together well. I've had five calls today so far from organizations, most of them receiving some funding from the United Way and some receiving funding from the city and the state, asking if we could help individuals with very specific needs. So, I think we have a good working relationship.

**I:** What needs to be done in order to ensure public/private partnerships work?

**R:** We need to be very diligent to be sure the tax base does not change in such a way that donations to charitable organizations are eliminated or reduced. There is some talk, of course, about exactly that happening ... so we have to be sure that this continues, that people do receive tax credit for money given to charitable organizations. That, I think, in itself will do as much to ensure that that flow of money enables the state and the charitable organizations such as the church to do their work more adequately.

**I:** Are there any other comments you would like to add?

**R:** ... 501(c)(3), churches might need to consider incorporating like that to enable the flow of money through their programs ... . It enables us to go to people at other corporations and other places for funding for our programs that sometimes we can't do as a church.

**Analysis:** The participant makes it known that the government can not only learn from churches in the present but has in the past learned from churches (e.g., the development of the social security structure). It is clear that churches must establish working relationships with state or community sources providing social services and information. The church should also, if not already, look into establishing non-profit designation that could restrict less the flow of money from public entities to private initiatives.

## Participant #4

**I:** Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services?

**R:** Yes. I think a lot of times the government loses sight of what the goals are. A lot of times the government is looking at statistics. They want to take statistics down. They want to be able to say, “We have reduced poverty by this amount.” Whereas the/a church or community [of us] we are looking at mothers in the face, we are looking at children who don’t have shoes, and we’re doing what it takes to get shoes on their feet. And I think that’s where it goes terribly wrong, is that it’s just not personal enough. And we have social services because you want to help people. Why not design it where it’s a very personal process?

**I:** How could the state/government work with faith-based organizations to help those in need?

**R:** I think you have to have a lot of training on who needs money or tithing ... the resources (and how to do that) and budgeting that money, but I think it always comes down to finding a way to put a face and a name on it; every time it’s finding a way to make it a very personal thing and trying to maximize those dollars and finding the ways not only for it to help in the short term but find ways to help an individual to a point where we can turn communities around and not just families.

**I:** What needs to be done in order to ensure public/private partnerships work?

**R:** Well, there have to be some checks and balances. There has to be some credibility to where that money goes and will have to be, no doubt that they would have to be, separate from our church funds and our initiative funds ... but I think that “the proof’s in the pudding.” Do you see turnaround in the community? Do you see progress in the area where that money has been going? And if you have a group that is using the resources, that is not getting the type of measurable results, you might have to question whether or not they deserve to have funding.

**Analysis:** The government, given its size and scope of services, is limited. By operating solely off statistics, the government allows some people to be more likely to fall between the cracks. Change begins with meeting the need of an individual at a personal level; therefore, plans must

be made to meet as many specific needs of individuals as possible. Programs developed at this level will require consistent checks and balances over an extended period of time to ensure overall effectiveness.

**Separation of church and state.** These are a sample of the questions and responses that were given by participants regarding the church-state relationship. “I” refers to the interviewer, “R” to the respondent. Excerpts from three interviews were selected to show the diverse range of opinions expressed.

### **Participant #1**

**I:** Do you think churches have a role in the social service structure and, if so or if not, why?

**R:** The churches play a major role because we are the cornerstone of the community. We provide all the spiritual insight and growth-sight of the community. But the vision, the motivation, to the community as far as the churches, we are going to be the landmark ... the pace setters of social services.

**I:** What does the separation of church and state mean to you?

**R:** I don't believe in separating the church and state because the church is the one who, that enhances the state. There is no separation between church and state because we are the ones that bring about the empowerment to the people—the church. So when the church empowers the people, the state benefits, so there should be no separation between church and state.

**Analysis:** It is clear that the participant does not believe in the separation of church from state, stating that the churches, through the service they provide, assist the government in providing for the general welfare of people.

### **Participant #2**

**I:** Do you think churches have a role in the social service structure and, if so or if not, why?

**R:** I think churches definitely have a role. I'm not for sure they need to be joined up with government programs. I think both are important. I think when you join them up you wind up draining the resources from either the government or the church end and the other end does not make up the difference; they take advantage of the other end. I think from the very beginning of the Christian church that social healing has been tied in with what we call our gospel message, and that salvation and healing are holistic; it's not just a spiritual thing, it's a physical, emotional, mental, "love the Lord with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength," which shows that kind of different aspect of our being, so we have to address them all.

**I:** What does the separation of church and state mean to you?

**R:** I think you either have a negative or a positive view of that. I have a very positive view of separation of church and state; that it gives the church more freedom to stand against or for, but certainly stand up for what is right whether culturally it seems right or not, like the war in Iraq; for a church to sanction any type of war goes against all of our scriptural teaching. It doesn't mean that we can't be patriotic and Christian at the same time, but the church does not need to be the voice of the government and the government does not need to be the voice of the church. We have two very, very different functions. Government can do somewhat of what I call band-aid ministry; it can do some deep root in terms of poverty and education. The church is the only one who can do a holistic approach to any service, and both are needed. The church can't do without the government and the government can't do without the church, but they need to be two distinct voices.

**Analysis:** The participant is in favor of the separation of church and state for positive reasons. The government not being the voice of the church gives the church freedom to be the church. Since the relationship between the government and the church is less clear from a joint programming viewpoint, a relationship between the two at that level could lead to communication gaps that would lead to inefficient use or mishandling of each other's resources. Nonetheless, the church and the government are mutual benefactors of one another, in that one benefits the other when social enhancement objectives are reached. The government is distinctly independent from the church, but at the same time dependent on the church.

### Participant #3

**I:** Do you think churches have a role in the social service structure and, if so or if not, why?

**R:** Absolutely ... Absolutely. I think churches have two roles, well, they have three roles. First of all, I think prayer does change things, and I think that intentionally praying for our communities and those who live in them is a very important part of the duty of every Christian. Churches are, Christian churches, are places where people are called to respect the dignity of every human being and seek to serve Christ in all persons. The way that we do that is by our own funding of outreach and by our gaining volunteers for programs like West Alabama Aids Outreach (WAAO), literacy, education ... nutritional programs and so forth. So we pray, we give, and we exhort volunteers to help. Those are the three things I think Christian churches are called to do.

**I:** What does the separation of church and state mean to you?

**R:** Of course, that is a real hot issue right now with the Supreme Court ruling. Separation of church and state really is pretty clearly delineated in the Constitution it seems to me, that is, that Congress shall make no law enforcing one religion as a state religion, basically. That Congress shall not say you all will be Christian, you all will be Muslim, you all will be Jewish. That it's not, it is very clearly lined up to be sure that the church and the state, while they may have the same goals and often do, they are not the same; and that gives the church great freedom. If we were the state institution, we would not have the freedom we have to pursue things as the church. We would have to be concerned more about politics and who are we offending and everything else, but in the church I can stand in the pulpit and say, "You all need to be more responsive to the needs of people in [the] community here; you just got to get off your duffs and go out and do something; give money to do something," in a way that I could not if I was a representative of the state. So I think it is a wonderful safeguard which keeps the state from interfering with the church and which allows the church to call the state to task when the state falls short.

**Analysis:** The participant has similar feelings as participant #3. The issue of separation of church and state is seen in a positive light in favor of the church. The church does not have to be concerned with politics and who is being offended every time a word is spoken. The belief in

separation of church and state establishes a safeguard for the church that keeps the church free from external restrictions that could be imposed by the government.

### **Project Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

The project was limited most by time. Time allowed me to speak with only one to three pastoral leaders within the Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalian, non-denominational, Presbyterian, and United Methodist Christian denominations. Suggestions for future research would include speaking with more people of each denomination to enrich the diversity of responses. Also, interviewing more religions within the American religious spectrum would move the project from a focus on one specific religion.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

- A. How would you describe our country's social services structure?
  - a. What needs are being addressed?
  - b. What needs are not being addressed?
  - c. What programs are needed in this area?
  - d. Do you think churches have a role? Why?
    - i. Are there any precepts in your faith that state your church's position? Explain.
    - ii. What does the separation of church and state mean to you?
  
- B. Are you aware of faith-based initiatives?
  - a. How would you describe faith-based initiatives?
    - i. What do you think are the advantages to faith-based initiatives?
    - ii. What do you think are the disadvantages to faith-based initiatives?
    - iii. Is the faith-based initiative program reasonable? Why?
    - iv. Would you consider receiving faith-based initiatives funding? Why?
    - v. Do you know of anyone who has applied to the faith-based program?
  - b. OR What do you think it means?
  
- C. Can the government learn from ministries in effective social services?
  - a. How could the state/government work with faith-based organizations to help those in need?
  - b. What needs to be done in order to ensure public/private partnerships work?