

Interfaith Groups Bring Justice with Spirit

by Elizabeth Shole



There are many progressive faith organizations working on social justice issues including challenging global corporations and protecting the environment. Some are national in focus, and therefore well known such as the National Council of Churches (www.nccusa.org) and the Interfaith Alliance (www.interfaithalliance.org). Still others are new, growing, and welcome participants to engage in social and political activism with them.



A number of states have Councils of Churches with regional Councils. Many support public policy advocacy as well as programs dealing with social change. The largest advocacy operation is California Church IMPACT, the sister organization of the California Council of Churches.



With 1.5 million members, they are active on both state and federal legislation, training and mobilizing activists on how to speak with individual moral voices on legislation and social justice issues. CCC/CCI are progressive on gay rights, women's right to choose, universal health, sustainable economics, democratic communities, and environmental justice. www.calchurches.org and www.churchimpact.org



In Illinois, Protestants for the Common Good maintains an advocacy presence at both state and federal levels. Protestants for the Common Good educates and mobilizes people of faith to participate in political democracy for the sake of social justice and the community. Based in Chicago, their advocates also witness on public policy for a wide range of progressive issues including GLBT rights, economic justice and other matters.

Virtually every denomination has federal and some state legislative advocacy operations. One such leader is Friends Committee on National Legislation (www.fcnl.org) with issues supported at the state level by groups such as The Friends Committee on Legislation in California (www.fccla.org) and the Indiana Friends Committee on Legislation (www.quakerifcl.org). They have been leaders on matters of war and peace, capital punishment, and prison reform.



The Shalom Center raises issues of peace, war, torture, and justice in the Mideast from both a traditional Jewish view and from a broader 'Abrahamic' tradition uniting Christians, Jews, and Muslims on issues of common ground. www.shalomctr.org

CrossLeft has an ambitious program of creating a clearinghouse for all groups and individuals grounded in faith-related social, political, and economic justice. They maintain a news site and a blog through which activists can engage with one another around common interests and actions. They have developed the Institute for Progressive Christianity, to provide philosophical reflection to counter religious conservatism through scriptural analysis of justice issues, and to develop progressive public policy.



Organizations engaged in 'on-the-ground' social change include Progressive Christians Uniting in California, which brings people together around a range of social justice issues such as sweatshop action, labor rights, criminal justice, drug policy reform, and environmental justice. They also provide education on legislative issues and critical public policy debates. www.progressivechristiansuniting.org

Other groups like Bread for the World and Church World Service focus on specific issues, such as hunger and sponsor actions such as the CWS "Crop Walk" to raise money for hunger programs around the world.



www.bread.org and www.churchworldservice.org. Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life unites congregations on myriad environmental issues. See www.coejl.org