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“First Fruits for California’s Working Poor?”

California Council of Churches offers Congregational Study Guide on the next five years of CalWORKs

With the status of social programs the primary news in California’s budget crisis, California Council of Churches has prepared a new congregational study guide that will unite the factual issues in the federal and state ‘welfare-to-work’ programs with faith principles concerning care for the poor.

The guide is the outgrowth of a collaborative project between the Council and California Catholic Charities and produced with funding from the California Wellness Foundation. The project goal is to bring greater awareness to people of faith about the lives and conditions of those receiving federal Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) through the state’s CalWORKs (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids) programs.

Created and written by CCC Associate Director, Kathy Cooper-Ledesma, the guide offers six study sessions ranging from the exploration of personal values concerning work, learning, dependence, and other issues that affect public policy followed by a review of theological teachings on those same issues. Participants will learn how TANF participants live, how much money they receive, how much they need to work, what survival strategies they must make, whether they can receive training and education, and how their children fare while parents work and go to school.

The guide will look at the current status of TANF and CalWORKs and proposals for change at both federal and state levels that threaten to reduce educational opportunities and eliminate benefits for both adults and children. The link between those who are blessed with material comfort and those who have little or none is examined in light of theological precepts that are the core of our faith traditions. Finally, practical suggestions

for congregations as to how to help the growing numbers in need are offered.

Designed in part to be used as a Lenten study session, the guide may also be used in various other settings, in compressed numbers of workshops, or divided into more lessons. The interactions and group processes are based on the “Study Circles” methods of creating meaningful, respectful dialogue around difficult temporal and spiritual issues.

In order to make the guide most useful, California Council of Churches is offering “train the trainers” sessions around the state. Both clergy and laity who are interested in leading the sessions can obtain information on both the basic material and the processes of interaction in two-hour sessions. Sessions will also offer a third hour of legislative advocacy training for those interested in learning how to provide a voice of faith at local, state, and federal governmental levels.

To reserve a spot for training on using the *First Fruits for California’s Working Poor?* Please fill out the registration form and mail or FAX it to California Council of Churches, 2715 K Street, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95816. FAX; (916) 442-3036 or Los Angeles (323) 256-3162. You may also phone Administrative Coordinator Mike Zwahlen at (916) 442-5447 to register for the training of your choice.

**Please register early.
Space is limited!**

**Look inside for training
locations and dates**

Save the Date: Annual Legislative Issues Briefing Tuesday, March 23, 2004

The California Council of Churches and California Church IMPACT, as part of the California Interfaith Coalition, will once again sponsor the ever-popular annual Legislative Issues Briefing set for Tuesday, March 23, 2004, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. including a light continental breakfast and lunch.

The focus of this year's LIB will be the impact of cuts to the social safety net including health care. The morning sessions will cover panels and workshops on various related topics plus a discussion of faith principles and how to present our voice of faith to legislators on these issues.

Following our box lunches and strategy session trainings, we will make targeted visits to legislators' offices to present our unified voices on these topics. After capitol visits, we will reconvene for faith reflections on what we've learned from our experience and from our legislators' reactions to our message.

Cost for the entire program including meals and training materials will be \$35. A registration form will automatically be sent to those who have attended previous Legislative Issues Briefings. If you have not participated before and wish to be notified, please complete the form below to have your name added to the LIB mailing list. Please mail or FAX the form to: California Council of Churches, 2715 K Street, Suite D, Sacramento, CA 95816. FAX: (916) 442-3036. You may also email us at: cccinfo@calchurches.org or call our Administrative Coordinator at (916) 442-5447.

____ Yes! Please add my name to the Legislative Issues Briefing mailing list to receive registration forms.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
Phone _____ email _____
Congregation or other affiliation _____

From the Executive Director

We welcome the **Independent Catholic Churches International (ICCI)** as the newest judicatory members of the California Council of Churches and California Church IMPACT! You can find out more at www.independentcatholics.org. The ICCI is "an ecumenical religious association of men and women of good will within the Holy Catholic Church. It is a free association of individual Christians, independent churches, dioceses, denominations, and interchurch fellowships." The ICCI has a progressive, faith-based, foundation on social justice issues and fully support our Legislative Principles (www.calchurches.org/action5.html).

We also welcome **The Most Rev. Frederic H. Jones, Ph.D., Presiding Bishop** of the ICCI as the newest member of our IMPACT Board of Direc-

tors and spouse, the **Rev. Judith Jones**, as the newest member of our Council Board. Both were elected to four-year terms and hold ordination credentials in both the ICCI and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Have you participated in our **Building Bridges of Understanding?** If so, please be sure to let us know what you think. You can find links to evaluation forms for both participants and facilitators on our home page at www.calchurches.org

Congratulations and prayers of rejoicing go to the **Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord** on both her recent consecration as a deacon in the Episcopal Church and her election as Chair of the Interfaith Alliance.

-Rick Schlosser

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**Legislative
Issues Briefing
March 23, 2004
Sacramento, CA**

***First Fruits for California's
Working Poor***
**Look inside for training
locations and dates**

Legislative Advocacy Training

In addition to our annual Legislative Issues Briefing, Public Policy Director Elizabeth ("Libby") Sholes conducts Legislative Training Advocacy Workshops around the state helping people of faith walk the walk by learning to advocate for their faith perspective in the public arena. For the date and location of a workshop near you, or to schedule a workshop for your area or organization, please visit www.calchurches.org/ or call (916) 442-5447.

Legislative Activist Opportunities

There was an insert in the last issue of *Justice Seekers* outlining and offering a number of legislative activist opportunities. If you haven't yet gotten around to taking advantage of these important social justice and advocacy offerings, please print out and send in the online version at www.calchurches.org/activistops.html