

WELFARE REFORM POSES NEW CHALLENGES FOR CONGREGATIONS

On Oct. 21, a diverse group of clergy, lay people, and non-profit leaders gathered at North United Methodist Church to discuss the impact of welfare reform on religious outreach programs. The daylong conference, "Congregations and Community Life," was organized through The Polis Center's Project on Religion and Urban Culture. The featured speakers were two national experts on religious charities and welfare reform.

Dr. Stanley Carlson-Thies, senior fellow at the Center for Public Justice, said the new federal welfare law features a "charitable choice" provision that expands cooperation between state welfare programs and faith-based and grassroots organizations. The provision also protects the right of recipients to receive services without religious coercion.

Dr. Carl Dudley, professor of Church and Community at Hartford Theological Seminary, said that community ministries, with or without government support, are not done by single people. The congregation – not just the pastor – has to "own" the project in order for it to succeed. He pointed out that a major resource possessed by religious organizations is a work ethic. Through efforts such as literacy and mentoring programs for youth, that resource can be spread through the community.

Intimate knowledge of the neighborhood is a pre-condition for seeking a role in its welfare. The neighbors must know you, and feel that you come as a friend, not a stranger. It's a good idea to talk with other neighborhood congregational leaders and community organizations, to share thoughts and build community ties.

Carlson-Thies recommended that congregations seeking to work in the community obtain "A Guide to Charitable Choice," published by the Center for Public Justice, PO Box 48368, Washington, DC 20002-0368. The cost is \$5, including postage and handling.

Locally, one office helping to open this new territory is the mayor's Front Porch Alliance. This office has information on grants available from the city. It also functions as a switchboard to connect people and organizations. The Front Porch Alliance number is 327-1372.

HISPANICS HAVE AN EXPANDING ROLE IN THE CITY

Those who have been studying Hispanics in Indianapolis don't have reliable recent information, according to Professor Charles Guthrie, associate professor of history at the University of Indianapolis. The last dependable statistical information came from the 1990 census, which placed the Hispanic population at

8,450. However, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Latinos are a growing segment of the city. Best estimates place the current Hispanic population at 16,000 to 20,000.

Some apartment complexes have become centers of small Latino communities. Dances and musical performances for Latinos, held in a mall at Raymond and Sherman, have attracted upwards of 2,000 people.

Spanish-speaking enclaves have become numerous enough that new immigrants do not have to learn English. St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Fountain Square holds two Spanish masses every Sunday. Other Spanish-language congregations have begun to emerge, sometimes using space in an established church and sometimes in buildings of their own.

Want more info? Send \$5.25 for "The Indianapolis Hispanic Community" by Charles Guthrie, Dan Briere, and Mary Moore. Make your check out to the University of Indianapolis, and send to Daniel Briere, 1400 E. Hanna Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46227.

CURIOUS ABOUT POST-MODERN PROTESTANTISM?

If you have heard about the growing influence of the "new paradigm" church movement that, locally, includes Calvary Chapel, Vineyard, and Hope Chapel congregations, you can learn more in Donald E. Miller's *Reinventing American Protestantism*, University of California.