Faith in Democracy

Bee Moorhead, Executive Director
Texas Impact
Texas Interfaith Center for Public Policy
Statewide, interfaith advocacy
Membership based
Citizen leadership
development
Policy implementation

Faith-based issue education
Policy and theology research and analysis
Faith in Democracy

Why should people of faith participate in developing public policies?
What does our faith tell us about our role in community?
From Judaism:

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself…What is hurtful to yourself do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the remainder is but commentary.”

From Christianity:

“A new commandment I give to you, That you love one another even as I have loved you…Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, for this is the law and the prophets.”
From Islam:
“No one is a believer until he loves for his neighbor, and for his brother, what he loves for himself.”

From Taoism:
“Regard your neighbor’s gain as your own gain; and regard your neighbor’s loss as your own loss, even as though you were in their place.”

From Hinduism:
“A man obtains a proper rule of action by looking on his neighbor as himself.”
Who is our neighbor?
There are many neighbors that we never see.

In the United States, participating in democracy is one important way we ‘love our neighbors,’ especially those we never see.
In a democracy we all share responsibility for the public policies that structure our lives.
Common understanding of policy development

Problem → do charity → identify justice concern → identify solution → Adopt approach → Problem solved!
Spinning Plates

How can the local congregation establish a justice program and integrate it with other key ministries?
DEMOCRACY All Year Long

January, February, March
Legislative session
Primary season
Coalitions

Epiphany
Sunday School
Lent

April, May, June
Legislative session
Issue forums
Local media

Easter
Synod Assembly
Pentecost

October, November, December
Elections
In-district meetings
Recognize/celebrate

Stewardship
Advent
Christmas

July, August, September
Candidate forums
Voter registration drives
Local leadership development

Hot
Hotter
Hottest
Building Community Through Advocacy

Dr. King’s Beloved Community: the kind of society in which every person is valued and where all conflicts are reconciled in a spirit of goodwill and mutual benefit.
Current Texas Conflicts

- Money
- Regulation
- Redistricting
- Immigration
- Recent Elections
- Political Rhetoric
- Crime and Punishment
- How to Educate Our Children
Civility

Civilus—relating to citizens appropriate behavior for a citizen
Community

Com (together)  
+ Munus (gift, exchange)  

Share-together
Civility versus Community

Civility is what we do individually

Community is what we have together
Storytelling and Advocacy

Vocare—voice, summon help

For, not against
Story: Building a foundation for policy
Telling and Listening

Preserve...

Love...

Know...

Storytelling is how we know.

Others know about us

We know about others
Sept. 24, 1935

To Rev. A.F. Whitehurst, Kingfisher, OK

"I am particularly anxious that the new Social Security Legislation just enacted, for which we have worked so long, providing for old age pensions, aid for crippled children and unemployment insurance, shall be carried out in keeping with the high purposes with which this law was enacted. Your high calling brings you into intimate daily contact not only with your own parishioners, but with people generally in your community.

“I am sure you see the problems of your people with wise and sympathetic understanding.”

From FDR
Using Advocacy to Build Community

Use your participation in public dialogue to “build” something, not to “get” something.

Create a narrative about the kind of community you want to live in with the other people.

Find out what kind of community other people want to live in.
Communication that Builds Community

Committing to be together even though we don’t always agree

Respect for the other’s worldview

Acknowledging the “historical moment”

Describing how and why we hope the future can be better
Community-Building “Elevator Speech”

It would be great for Texas if...
I encourage you to...
My greatest hope for this session is...
I’m proud of Texas when...
I want to work with you to...
Books on Community, Civility and Public Life

– *Habits of the Heart* (Robert Bellah)
– *Bowling Alone; American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us; Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (Robert Putnam)
– *The True and Only Heaven* (Christopher Lasch)
– *Dialogic Civility in a Cynical Age: Community, Hope, and Interpersonal Relationships* (Arnett and Arneson)