

Helping communities work for social justice and ecumenism through its staff and program committees is central to the NC Council of Churches. To that end, the Council's Community Forum Series is offered to communities and groups, both faith-based and secular, on matters of shared interest. Each forum consists of a program, one or more speakers, and materials provided by the Council for presentation to an ecumenical group in your community. Individuals, groups or communities interested in hosting a Forum would commit to:

- Arrange for and provide a location for the selected program
- Select a date and time for your community most convenient for your audience
- Publicize the program.
- Bring together at least 40-50 attendees from across the community.
- Provide travel expenses for speakers. Honoraria are not required.

Our list of topics is updated periodically at [www.nccouncilofchurches.org](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org). Current offerings include:

Job Loss in North Carolina: What Congregations Can Do  
How can people of faith deal with the loss of jobs and the low wages that keep one-third of NC families from making

ends meet? This workshop is based on a new publication from the Council's Economic Justice Committee and it will explore avenues for continuing local study and action. Presenters include Program Associate Barbara Zelter and members of the Economic Justice Committee.

Economic Justice, Community Development, and Social Action: The Inward and Outward Journeys  
This session is designed to help integrate economics and activism into a framework for helping others in a way that is accountable both to the environment and to people who are financially under-skilled and under-informed. Issues covered will include debt, wealth, giving, lifestyles, consumption, investments, power, community, and faith. Discussion will involve techniques and information to help lead those struggling economically to understanding they have the power to transform their lives and communities with personal action plans for economic justice. Presenters include John D. Parker of Good Work and members of the Economic Justice Committee.

Congregation and Community Communications  
Spreading the good news about your church and its work can be a challenge, whether within your own congregation or to the outside community. And if you work for a non-profit organization or volunteer for a cause that's dear to

you, getting your group's story told is also critical to its success. Aleta Payne, communications associate with the North Carolina Council of Churches, will lead a session on everything from creating better bulletins and newsletters to writing press releases and building media contacts.

Latino 101  
A workshop designed for non-Latino groups who want to become more aware of issues facing Latino communities in North Carolina and learn culturally-sensitive ways to partner with these new neighbors in work and ministry. Leaders will be of both Latino and Anglo heritage and will facilitate discussion of topics such as: Who are Latinos? Culture versus Ethnicity; the Biblical Basis for Welcoming the Stranger; Values, Traditions, and Cultural Differences; Issues Facing Latino Communities-immigration policies, language barriers, access to resources, etc.; Models for Ministry; and Resources for Further Action.

An Introduction to Racism  
A simple yet powerful workshop that will allow participants to explore their personal experiences with racism and relate personal histories with the formal history of racism. By reviewing the origins of organized racism, this workshop will help participants understand the individual and community responsibility to confront and overcome this persistent societal

disease. The workshop will conclude with a simple seven question survey, which provides a good base to use as a discussion starter, especially when trying to address diversity issues as part of an overall planning process. Leadership will be of European American and African American heritage.

Farmworkers  
Workshops are available ranging from a one hour presentation to a daylong experience in the fields. Topics include an overview of farmworkers in NC; abuse in the fields; immigrants in NC; and involving your church in the issue. Workshops are also available specifically for youth. And, beginning in Spring, 2004, a farmworker curriculum for adult and high school church school classes will be available with an optional half-day visit to a migrant labor camp. Sessions will be led by members of the Farmworker Ministry Committee.

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE SPEAKERS FORUM  
Call 919-828-6501 or e-mail  
[ssmith@nccouncilofchurches.org](mailto:ssmith@nccouncilofchurches.org).

## Mental Health Issues in Rural Communities

The growing farm crisis takes a great human toll with increasing rates of alcoholism, drug abuse, spousal abuse, and suicide among farmers and farm families. This program is designed to assist clergy and lay leaders with some of the skills and information to assist farm families in crisis. Included are an overview of major trends in agriculture as they affect North Carolina farms; specifics of the experience of North Carolina farmers and rural communities struggling to stay in business; analysis of mental health issues for farmers; and providing direct support and referrals to other sources of help. Presenters include Scott Marlow of RAFI-USA, a member of the Council's Rural Life Committee and one or more mental health professionals

## Faith Active in Public Life

This workshop comes in two sections. 1) The "L" Word. "Lobbying" doesn't have to be a bad word. It's how people in a democracy (including people of faith) communicate their policy preferences to those elected to represent them. This section will look at the legislative process in North Carolina (including things they didn't teach you in Civics class!) and at how people of faith can most effectively have an impact. What does it take to see a bill through to passage? To kill a bill? What's the most effective way to communicate with your legislators?

How do you even know who they are?

2) Legislative Update. This section will look at bills currently before the North Carolina General Assembly that are of greatest interest to people of faith. These may include the death penalty moratorium, budget cuts, tax fairness, state lottery, health care for everyone, and others. This workshop will be led by George Reed, the Council's Executive Director, who has more than twenty-five years experience in representing people of faith at the NC General Assembly. (Either of these two sections can be presented as a separate two-hour workshop if the local host prefers.)

## Good News about Environmental Justice

"Every time I hear about the environment I get discouraged." There is a lot of bad news about human impact on nature, but people of faith can become people of hope as they move into positive actions. This workshop offers practical ways Americans can help to slow the rate of global climate change, species loss, and selfish use of shared natural resources. Learn about energy audits of home and church, NC GreenPower's renewable energy offering, and conservation and waste reduction opportunities appropriate for busy lives. Conducted by members of Climate Connection: Interfaith Ecojustice Network.

## What is the NCCC?

The Council has been in existence since 1935, and yet, as one of our biggest supporters notes, we are one of the best-kept secrets in North Carolina. The Council is made up of twenty-four judicatories (conferences, dioceses, etc.) of fifteen Christian churches, plus six congregations. Throughout our history, our ministry has been related to two broad goals: 1) to promote and model Christian unity and 2) to enable us to work together on issues of justice, compassion, and peace. This workshop will introduce the work of the Council, our history, and what we are doing today. What is meant by "Christian unity"? Why is it important? Which justice issues is the Council involved with? How can people of faith be involved with the Council? Workshop presenter is George Reed, the Council's Executive Director, and other Council leaders.



## Called to Action

### The NC Council of Churches' Community Forum Series

Providing Speakers and Resources on Issues of Social Justice and Christian Unity

[www.nccouncilofchurches.org](http://www.nccouncilofchurches.org)

1307 Glenwood Ave.,  
Suite 156  
Raleigh, NC 27605  
919-828-6501