

CHURCH COUNCIL BULLETIN

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North Carolina Council of Churches

New Members Join Executive Board

The North Carolina Council of Churches welcomed new members to its Executive Board and reelected officers during its meeting in May. The Council also said goodbye to several board members whose time of service had come to an end.

New to the board are Anita Thompson of Greensboro, representing the African Methodist Episcopal Church; Judy Haughee-Bartlett of Summerfield, representing the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Friends); and John Richardson of Wilson, representing the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina.

Also joining the board are John D. Rights of Winston-Salem, representing the Moravian Church-Southern Province; and Gene Carpenter of Goldsboro, representing the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina. Rotating off the board are Kathy Campbell, Stuart Zimmerman, Linda Hiatt and Joe Cooper.

Returning officers are Sèkinah Hamlin of Greensboro, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in NC, as president; Jean Rodenbough of Greensboro, Presbytery of Salem, as first vice-president; Stan Kimer of Raleigh, Metropolitan Community Churches, as second vice-president; and Alberta Hairston of Greensboro, Catholic Diocese of Charlotte, as third vice-president. Secretary is Edna Campos of Asheville,

the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; treasurer is Owen Peeler of Shelby, the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church; and Mike Cogsdale of Lenoir, Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina, remains as Immediate Past President.

Joanne Sharpe of Liberty is fourth vice-president, an office which goes automatically to the president of Church Women United or her designee, a position to which Joanne was elected last fall. She replaces Katherine Marable. Also within the Board's top leadership, Joe Mann of Charlotte, North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, will serve as chair of the Business and Finance Committee, and Charles Smith of Raleigh and also of the UMC's NC Conference returns as Personnel Committee chair.

We are always grateful to those who serve the Council as volunteer leaders, and we offer best wishes to board members who now move on from those roles, said George Reed, the Council's executive director. We welcome our new members whose leadership will be particularly crucial as the Council approaches its 75th anniversary year of working for social justice and Christian unity. "

Alice Loyd Retires as Interfaith Power & Light Director

Alice Loyd, who has helped lead a reawakening of faith-based efforts focused on care of Creation across North Carolina, has stepped down as director of NC Interfaith Power & Light. Alice, who has served as director for six years, plans to continue her work for a healthier planet.

NC IPL is a program of the North Carolina Council of Churches. Alice first attended an NCCC training event in February, 2001. She initially worked as a volunteer for what was then called the NC Interfaith Campaign on Global Climate Change. She joined the staff in 2002 as a part-time regional coordinator. When Sr. Evelyn Mattern, who originally led the care of Creation effort for the Council, became ill, Alice stepped into that position. In a manner that honored Evelyn's legacy, Alice has worked ever since to educate faith communities about global climate change and the role they can play to address it.

Under her leadership, the program has grown to offer

speakers and printed materials, monthly e-newsletters, energy audits, a video lending library and a shopping cart through which congregations can purchase energy-efficient appliances, compact fluorescent light bulbs and other similar devices.

In 2005, the program was named the 16th state affiliate of the national Interfaith Power & Light organization, officially becoming NC Interfaith Power & Light.

Alice's name has become synonymous with the faith community's growing effort to educate about global climate change and to seek solutions to it, said Council Executive Director George Reed. She has done outstanding work, and activists across the state are grateful for her commitment to this cause. "

Portions excerpted from The Climate Connection, June 2008.

Works and Words of Your North Carolina Council of Churches

"Why Don't All Those Immigrants Just Get Legal?"

By Sr. Attracta Kelly



Contrary to what seems to be a common misperception, an immigrant can acquire legal status in the United States in only a limited number of ways. This article provides a very basic overview of the major avenues. Readers should use it as a general guide. Those seeking legal advice on a specific situation should contact a qualified attorney.

The most common way for an immigrant to obtain legal status is through an application filed by a **Family Member**. The Family Member category is, in turn, divided into two general areas:

- 1) A current United States Citizen (USC) may apply for his/her spouse, children (under 21), and parents. This is called the **Immediate Relative Category**. Such applicants can acquire legal status relatively quickly (usually in as little as one year).
- 2) The second most common way for an immigrant to obtain legal status is through the **Preference Category**. A USC may also apply for his or her *unmarried* sons and daughters (21 and over). Processing usually takes about six years (unless the petitioner is from Mexico or the Philippines, in which case it takes about 15 years). A USC may apply for *married* sons and daughters, but processing takes about eight years (18 years for petitioners from the Philippines and Mexico). A USC over 21 may apply for siblings with a waiting period of about 11 years (with Mexico, the waiting period is 14 and with the Philippines it is 22 years).

A **Legal Permanent Resident (LPR)** who has not yet become a naturalized citizen may apply for his or her spouse and children and for unmarried sons and daughters. The waiting periods to get legal status for applicants in this category range from six to 20 years, depending on the nature of the family relationship and the applicant's country of origin.

It is important to note that just because the spouse or parent has filed a petition for their family member in this **Preference Category**, it does not give the family member any immediate legal right to live in the United States. Under the law, the family member must wait until the designated

number of years has expired.

A second path to legal status involves a petition filed by an **Employer** for a necessary skilled worker. This process must first be approved by the United States Department of Labor after the employer has established that there is no citizen or legal permanent resident worker available to fill the particular position.

A third way for an immigrant to gain Legal Permanent Resident status is to first obtain **refugee/asylum** status. To qualify for asylum one must *prove* that he or she was the victim of persecution in his or her home country under one of the five protected areas (race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion). An applicant must apply within the year one enters the US. It is a very time-consuming process because one has to document all allegations of persecution. It is always difficult to find such documentation. Often, attorneys try to get it through State Department Reports and other international news sources, in affidavits from country experts and from whatever sources we can find to show that this particular individual was targeted and would most likely be targeted if he/she returned to the home country.

Finally, immigration law also allows a limited number of persons in very specific categories to **self-petition** that is to apply for legal status on their own behalf. This includes: 1) certain specified groups of Salvadorans and Guatemalans, 2) persons afforded protection under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), 3) a category known as Special Immigrant Juveniles (these are children who have been neglected, abused or abandoned by their parents), 4) victims of human trafficking, and 5) certain victims of other crimes.

Other than the ways mentioned in this article, it is currently almost impossible for an immigrant to attain legal status in the US. And as noted above, even for those who may be able to attain legal status, the waiting period can be measured in decades, not in months or years.

The North Carolina Justice Center's Immigrants Legal Assistance Project helps a limited number of low-income immigrants with certain kinds of legal problems related to immigration law. To learn more about the kinds of cases the project is able to help with, visit www.ncjustice.org/content/index.php?pid=36.

Sr. Attracta Kelly is an attorney who specializes in immigration law. She directs the Immigrants Legal Assistance Project (ILAP) at the North Carolina Justice Center, a private, nonprofit, anti-poverty organization. Client intake for immigration law matters takes place on Tuesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. only. They do not accept "walk-in" clients. To contact ILAP, call 1-888-251-2776 (toll free), (919) 856-2159, or (919) 856-2153. ILAP staff speak English and Spanish.

Immigration Statement Focuses on Hospitality and Justice; Sign-ons Welcome

The North Carolina Religious Coalition for Justice for Immigrants is inviting people of faith from across the state to add their signatures to a statement that views immigration as a justice issue and puts a Biblical perspective on what has become a highly debated political issue.

The Coalition had its beginnings with the NC Council of Churches but is not limited to Council members. People of faith regardless of denomination are invited to join in and sign on as an individual act of conscience. The statement is a follow-up to the Council's Critical Issues Seminar in May which focused on immigration, according to Program Associate Chris Liu Beers. It affirms the belief that people of faith are called to welcome immigrants and to offer them hospitality and justice.

The 500-word statement quotes representative passages from the Hebrew Bible, Christian New Testament and the Muslim Qur'an, reflecting the interfaith nature of the coalition. It reads in part:

We recognize that immigration policy is complex and multi-faceted, but we agree that all immigrants are made in God's image and that our religious traditions demand that we care especially for the stranger. We call on all people of faith to stand with immigrants as a matter of religious responsibility, to advocate for their well-being and protection, and to educate our local communities about issues affecting immigrant peoples.

"There are times when it is important just to speak out publicly, to bring together individual voices to produce a chorus of people of faith," said Beers. "This seems to be such a time on the issue of immigration. Please join us in supporting this statement of hospitality and justice."

To view the statement and sign on, visit www.nccouncilofchurches.org. For more information, e-mail cbeers@nccouncilofchurches.org.

Save the Date

The NC Council of Churches will sponsor a series of programs on the theme
**Sharing Peace in the Middle East:
 Opportunities for Iraq, Iran and
 Israel-Palestine.** "

November 17-20, 2008
 Asheville, Greensboro and Wilmington

Featuring Jim Fine,
 Legislative Secretary on Foreign Policy,
 Friends Committee on National Legislation
 along with Members of NC Churches
 with recent experience in the
 Middle East.

Contact Spencer Bradford
 (sbradford@nccouncilofchurches.org) or
 visit the Council Web site in the coming
 weeks for more information.

Council Seeks to Fill NC IPL Director's Role

The NC Council of Churches has an opening for a full-time director of North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light.

The mission of NC IPL is to work with faith communities to address the causes and consequences of global climate change through education and public policy advocacy. This position calls people of faith to nurture reverence and wonder for Creation; learn causes and impacts of climate change; apply energy solution in their lives; and work for life-affirming public policy.

The NC IPL director is responsible for overall development and management of the program. Responsibilities include administration and financial management, fund raising, public policy advocacy, program development, communications, working with coalitions, and steering committee relations.

Requirements for the position include personal religious faith; working knowledge of the science of global climate change; familiarity with public policy solutions and energy generation technologies; ability to communicate effectively and work collaboratively; proficiency in Microsoft Office, e-mail usage and internet applications; and a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree.

For more information visit www.nccouncilofchurches.org or contact greed@nccouncilofchurches.org.

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News and Notes

The Council welcomes two new **interns** this summer.

Liz Costello is a full-time student at Duke Divinity School and a part-time community manager at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The focus of her internship at the Council is on peacemaking, immigration and community gardening.

Sarah McCoy is a student at Campbell Divinity School pursuing her M.Div. She is a graduate of North Carolina State University and is working with North Carolina Interfaith Power & Light.

The **Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation** has awarded NC IPL a \$45,000 grant to be used for general operating

support with \$10,000 contingent on matching funds being raised from new sources.

In its history, the Foundation has awarded more than \$423 million in grants. It currently gives special focus to community and economic development, the environment, democracy and civic engagement, pre-collegiate education, and social justice and equity.

Prominent social activist **Shane Claiborne** and artist and theologian **Chris Haw** will bring the **Jésus for President Tour: Re-Imagining Politics** to First Baptist Church, 101 S. Wilmington St. in **Raleigh** on **July 22**.

The authors of the book *Jesus for President* offer an alternative to divi-

sive two-party politics and redefine political as how we relate to the world. Christian discipleship is politically and socially engaged but in a way that transcends parties.

The event takes place from **7 to 9 p.m.** and features teaching by both authors as well as multimedia storytelling, art, music and worship. For more information, visit the Council Web site or www.jesusforpresident.org.

The Council Welcomes Your Do-
nation

to Support Our Work for
Social Justice and Ecumenism
919-828-6501

or
www.nccouncilofchurches.org