Urban Ministries
Urban Institute, Carol J. De Vita

KOJO NNAMDI: Hi, I am Kojo Nnamdi. On "Public Interest," you may have caught Friday's show with the Urban Institute on urban ministries. Well, today, we will talk about how that is reflected in the Washington area. We know we have got a lot of churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, but just how much faith-based community outreach is there? Many religious groups provide soup kitchens and emergency provisions, shelter and clothing. Others, however, see a need to evolve to fit the growing needs of the Metro area communities, to get involved in community development, and create new infrastructure to support that development.

Washington area urban ministries and their relationship to government after the news.

[News Break.]

KOJO NNAMDI: From WAMU at American University in Washington, this is "Public Interest." I am Kojo Nnamdi. Last Friday here on "Public Interest" we did one in our continuing series of broadcasts with the assistance of the Urban Institute, this one on urban ministries, where we talked about, at the national level, the extent to which faith-based organizations are providing a variety of social services in communities and whether or not those services were really making a difference, whether they fell into the category of soup kitchens and emergency shelters for the homeless or whether they were extended into the area of community development with the formation of community development corporations, the effect they were intended to have, and the effect they are in fact having. Today, we look at that in the context of the Washington area. For those of you who may be thinking that the discussion should be more localized, well, that is precisely what we are trying to do today, to say what is available here in the Washington area, and just exactly how much it is helping, and maybe what more needs to be done, how it can be done, and the extent to which the local and federal government might be involved.

Joining us to discuss all of the above topics, Carol De Vita is the senior research associate with the Urban Institute's Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy. Good to have you here.

CAROL DE VITA: Thank you. Good to be here.

KOJO NNAMDI: Joining Carol in our Washington studio is the Reverend Alice Davis. She is the executive minister of Shiloh Baptist Church. Alice, good to have you along.

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Thank you. It is great to be here.

KOJO NNAMDI: Also joining us is the Reverend Clark Lobenstein. He is director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington. Clark, good to see you again.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Thank you very much, Kojo.

KOJO NNAMDI: You too can join us at 1-800-433-8850. You can e-mail us at pi@wamu.org.

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CAROL DE VITA: Well, that is a major question these days, in terms of what is out there and how effective the services are. We did a study of congregations in the Washington metropolitan area about four years ago that looked mostly at the capacity. We weren't able to get into the effectiveness question as much as we would have liked, but that is our next hope, that we can look at some of those questions. We found that over
90 percent of the congregations who responded to our survey were offering some kind of community service, some sort of outreach. And most of those, about three-quarters of the services were what we characterized as emergency services. They tended to be things like food banks, homeless shelters, financial assistance for people in need of help paying their rent or an electric bill or something of that sort. We looked at both the suburbs and the District and found some differences between the kinds of services that were available between the District and the surrounding suburbs.

KOJO NAMADI: Could you talk about what those differences tend to be?

CAROL DE VITA: Sure. I think a lot of the differences may reflect the residents of those neighborhoods and of those areas. For example, we found that there were slightly more child care services in the suburbs than in the District. But the District had more than twice as much in terms of tutoring and mentoring programs for their school-aged children than what you found in the suburban schools. Also, things like senior citizen programs were more prevalent in the District. The growth of the senior citizen population in D.C. has been edging up, and so as families may be moving out of the District, older residents are turning to service providers for extra assistance. So I think some of the characteristics we were finding make sense given the population characteristics.

KOJO NAMADI: Carol De Vita, senior research associate with the Urban Institute's Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy. Clark Lobenstein, talk a little bit about how something like the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington can look at the changing needs in communities around the area and try to adjust the services offered by maybe individual congregations but by the Interfaith Conference as a whole accordingly.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, one striking example of that is our Emergency Food and Shelter Directory. The 18th edition, published in May 2000, listed over 450 providers, food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, health care clinics providing health care for those without insurance, and other services. Some of those services were job training and other services. In our first directory, in 1980, there were 48 services listed. Now, we are certainly more complete than we were back then, but there has been an enormous expansion in the services provided by congregations and nonprofit organizations. And the overwhelming number of those 450 organizations listed are either congregations or nonprofits that usually have congregational support in some way: volunteers, money, staffing. So it shows the enormous responsiveness of the religious community to the growing needs for emergency help of various kinds and the recognition by many of those emergency providers that they must provide a range of services.

So when you characterize, Carol, the shelters as being emergency services, yes, and that is a life-and-death issue in the middle of winter if you have a shelter you can go to and want to go to. But many of those shelters are also now providing transition services and second-stage housing, and welfare-to-work training, and helping people get benefits that they are entitled to so that they can move into apartments and be on their own.

KOJO NAMADI: I wanted to bring Alice Davis in in a slightly different way because you have been executive director of the Shiloh Family Life Center and you have been chairman of the board of directors of the Family Life Center. Having lived in Shaw for 20 years myself, I was there kind of at the creation of the Family Life Center, so I would like you to talk about what it was that the church, Shiloh Baptist, was doing before and why it felt it had to create a family life center because of the very issue that I was just discussing with Clark Lobenstein, the range of services or the need for the range of services clearly expanded?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, that is exactly what happened. Shiloh, we are 137 years old, and we have a history of serving the community and meeting the needs of the people in the community. We have been located on the corner of 9th and P since 1924, and all during that time we have provided some services for the community, with things like the Mutual Aid Society, the low-cost child care centers that we have been running for quite some time now. But it was the vision of Reverend Henry C. Gregory, III, to build the Family Life Center for the purpose of addressing the total needs, the holistic needs of the people in the community, including their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. And so what happens is when you provide services like that, you have got to have somewhere to do it. And so the Family Life Center was created for that purpose, for expanding our capacity to work with the community.

KOJO NAMADI: Is the Family Life Center technically a community development corporation (CDC)?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: It is not itself a community development corporation, although, depending on how you define it, it could be. But Shiloh also does have a community development corporation that was created I guess now about five or six years ago for the purpose of developing properties and creating jobs in the local community. So that is an expansion once again to meet the needs of the community.

KOJO NAMADI: Carol De Vita, one of the things we talked about on Friday was how many faith-based organizations are realizing the need for a community development corporation to not only actually participate in development but to create a new kind of entity that is not necessarily run by the congregation itself. To what extent do you see such CDCs developing in the Washington area?

CAROL DE VITA: When they develop, they are generally an outgrowth of larger congregations. The smaller churches and congregations in the area don't have the capacity in order to get that type of structure together, but the larger churches are the ones who tend in that direction.

KOJO NAMADI: I wanted to get Joyce in our conversation, Joyce who calls from Bethesda, Maryland, because Joyce wanted to add to this part of the conversation. Joyce, you are on the air. Go ahead, please.
KOJO NNAMDI: Hi, thanks very much. I appreciate this. I am president of the Interfaith Housing Coalition in Montgomery County. We have been in existence for about 13 years, and we have 24 congregations in the county that participate. What we do is we provide transitional housing for families who are referred from homeless shelters, from Linkages to Learning, from a variety of sources.

What is unique is that we started our program with two-year transitional housing and we found it was unrealistic, that the families needed—they came to us with multiple problems that got them into the homeless situation, and they wanted to work their way out of it. So what we do is we enter into a mutually agreed-upon goal. And we only accept families that want to work with us toward those goals. We have, at present, 11 families. We just were able to purchase, in partnership with the Peresky (ph) Building Group, a small apartment building in Wheaton where we have 10 of the units and the other 30 will be regular market-rate units. The nice thing about our program is we are able to economically integrate the families, and we have extended our transitional housing to five years—not that all the families stay there for five years, but some of them need that period of time.

The congregations offer support in a lot of different ways. It is an expensive program, so we get money from them. We can send out a SOS that we need a vacuum cleaner or a tutor or a mentoring team. But the lifeblood of this organization is the congregational base. And I just thought I would add that for you.

KOJO NNAMDI: Okay, Joyce, thank you very much for your call. Speaking of the congregational base, Clark Lobenstein, the extent to which many of these congregations get involved in community development is the extent to which they qualify for often federal and sometimes local funds. And, of course, that is in the middle of the debate right now over the faith-based initiative presented by President George W. Bush. But I am wondering, to what extent does the Interfaith Conference have to consider that as your own membership seeks to expand the services that they provide to communities?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: That is certainly an issue that is an important one, and we would recommend that congregations interested in participating in faith-based initiatives at the D.C. or federal or Maryland or Virginia state levels create such 501(c)(3)s as separate from the individual congregation itself. We don’t provide any direct services ourselves, but the issues of faith-based initiatives are key. And we are delighted to invite your listeners to a wonderful lecture by Ambassador Andrew Young on Thursday, April 5. A former mayor, a former congressman, now the president of the National Council of Churches, he will bring very special perspectives on “Faith-Based Initiatives: Promises and Pitfalls” at Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University, 21st and H Street at 7:30.

KOJO NNAMDI: Thursday, April 5.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Thursday, April 5. And that is an important part of our ongoing work with the religious and wider community around understanding these issues: What are the promises, what are the pitfalls. We are exploring a follow-up conference to help us do that in more detail. And we are also engaging lots of students in this process of getting involved in those issues by offering scholarships to the best essays written by those students.

KOJO NNAMDI: Our conversation is about urban ministries in the Washington area. You can join that conversation by calling 1-800-433-8850 or e-mailing us at pi@wamu.org.

Carol De Vita?

CAROL DE VITA: You had mentioned the possibility of getting government funding. When we took our survey, what we found is about 5 percent of the congregations that responded to our study said that they actually received some government funding. Most of these programs that congregations run are fairly small, although when you aggregate the dollars, it appears rather large. We estimated that about $19 million was provided—financially provided by congregations in terms of community services. But as I said, in terms of the congregations receiving government funding, only a handful went in that direction.

KOJO NNAMDI: The question, of course, is how effective are the services provided by faith-based organizations in the Washington area, a question we will answer after a short break. Our guests: Reverend Alice Davis is the executive minister of the Shiloh Baptist Church; Clark Lobenstein—Reverend Clark Lobenstein—is the director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington; and Carl De Vita is a senior associate with the Urban Institute’s Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy. You can join us at 1-800-433-8850 to offer your thoughts on the matter or e-mail us at pi@wamu.org. We will be right back.

[Commercial Break.]

KOJO NNAMDI: Welcome back to our conversation about urban ministries in the Washington area. Our telephone number: 1-800-433-8850. Our e-mail address: pi@wamu.org.

Alice Davis, it interests me that there were different stages of development for Shiloh over its 100-and-something-year history. The church was always providing services for the community. The late Reverend Henry Gregory decided that that needed to be attempted in a more holistic manner, and therefore the Family Life Center came about. And now there is a nonprofit in addition to that that you have formed. Tell us why.

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, I need to say also that when Reverend Gregory created the Family Life Center, he also created a nonprofit, the Family Life Center Foundation.

KOJO NNAMDI: Okay.
REV. ALICE DAVIS: Which is a separately incorporated 501(c)(3). And the reason for doing that is because at that time there was a lot more hesitancy of funders, whether they were government or the foundation community or corporate givers, to give directly to the church. And so our purpose was to have a separate governing body for the Family Life Center. And the first grant that we got through the Family Life Center Foundation was from the Ford Foundation to run an after-school mentoring program for youth, called the Mill Youth Enhancement Program. The creation of the community development corporation was under the guidance of our present pastor, Reverend Wallace Charles Smith. And that is more exclusively for the purpose of developing properties to create jobs, as well as to create housing and support. We are now looking at building an assisted-living facility for seniors because we see that as being something that is truly needed in the city. So it is just moving us to a different level. But we understand the need to have a separate 501(c)(3) for receiving funds from outside sources, which is what both of those 501(c)(3)s do.

KOJO NNAMDI: Can you talk a little bit about why there was some reluctance on the part of foundations to give money directly to the congregations for these purposes?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, I think until recently there has been a very clear concern about giving money directly to churches because the churches would use the funds to promote religious beliefs, as opposed to using the money for program services. And that is one of the central controversies right now facing the president's faith-based initiatives. So many of the organizations, such as Lutheran Social Services, the Catholic Charities, and others, simply avoid that problem by creating a separate corporation. But it is very important also for maintaining separate accounting so that when we have to have audits done or when we have our finances checked, we do not have to open the church's books, as well as for issues of liability. There are a number of logical reasons for creating separate corporations when you are going to be receiving public funds.

KOJO NNAMDI: Clark Lobenstein, when a congregation, as Shiloh has done, creates a 501(c)(3) corporation or a community development corporation, some people believe that the congregation begins to lose sight of its religious objective as it moves more and more into the secular world, and that the reason that faith-based organizations start these things in the first place, even though it is an expression of faith, it is often an effort to win members to the congregation. And if it isn't doing that, some members of the congregation feel then you shouldn't do it at all.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, sure, there are always people in every congregation who take one position or another. So what is new? There are folks at WAMU that think you ought to do this kind of program or that kind of program. I think what is essential in this process is to understand first of all that outreach ministries and job training programs and all kinds of things have been central to the life of the religious communities for centuries and millennia. In the 12th century, Maimonides wrote that there were seven stages of charity or of justice, zadaka, and the highest one was getting a person a job so he would be self-employed or working for someone but independent, so nine centuries ago, eight centuries ago.

So I think the second is to understand that faith-based initiatives is not new. It has been going on for decades, and that funding by government agencies, local, state, and national, has been done precisely because those groups understand the particular abilities of religious traditions, people of congregations and nonprofit organizations based in their faith traditions, of providing services that may have elements of caring and of depth and of understanding the connectedness of the physical, emotional, and spiritual, as Alice has talked about. I think the question of how they provide those services is one that is very important in understanding that if you are receiving government funds, you are not using that to promote your own particular religious purposes. And so the separate corporations allow you to create programs that are very strongly expressions of the faith of that congregation and of the individuals involved, but it is not programs that are explicitly using federal dollars for teaching those beliefs.

KOJO NNAMDI: Carol De Vita, the notion behind a great deal of this, as both Clark and Alice have expressed, is that these churches or mosques or temples or synagogues know the communities in which they find themselves and are therefore likely to bring a certain understanding, a certain sensitivity to the services that your basic government organizations may not bring, and that they are also likely to provide these services more efficiently and at lower costs. Does the record in the Washington area tend to bear that out?

CAROL DE VITA: I think the record is unclear on that. There haven't been a lot of research studies done that really compare the effectiveness of secular or sectarian services. So I think that is something that we are still looking at.

But I want to get back to the point of why to set up a separate CDC or grouping.

KOJO NNAMDI: Yes.

CAROL DE VITA: And I think both Alice and Clark have raised good issues. When the Urban Institute did its survey of congregations, we also were able to do a household survey of people in the Washington area, and we asked them how involved they were with their congregation: Did they attend church regularly, did they donate money, did they donate their time. And what we found is while roughly 60 percent of the people in this survey said they gave financial contributions, only 20 percent volunteered their time. And I think the creation of a separate structure that may be more formalized, that may be able to hire people for jobs on a regular basis, can bring some of these programs up to scale. We also went out and talked to a number of ministers and pastors in these various congregations, and they repeatedly talked about the difficulty of sustaining volunteer support. There was always a core group of volunteers that they could count on, but to run a program day after day could be wearing on their volunteer structure, and it was something they were very concerned about. So I think the creation of the Section 501(c)(3) may address some of that issue as well.
REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Let me just jump in with a related point. Bishop Ted Snyder from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America was speaking recently in one of our meetings of the Faith Completers around the challenges of Lutheran Social Services, which has been doing great work for lots of years and receiving federal funds and state funds to do that work. But as they grew bigger and bigger with these grants, they became more distant from the congregations that had created them and whose $1,000 or $2,000 were less and less important or the congregations felt less significant when you were getting $100,000 grants and whatever. So I think that is an issue to also remember in this process, that as congregations create these—or clusters of congregations or denominational bodies—that you have to maintain that balance of the important role of the congregation’s finances, volunteers, sites for these programs and not become overly dependent or focused on the outside funding.

KOJO NNAMDI: Got to get to the telephones; the number again, 1-800-433-8850. You can also e-mail us at pi@wamu.org. On to Michael in Shaw. Michael, you are on the air, go ahead, please.

MICHAEL: Hi, I live in the neighborhood of Shiloh Baptist Church. And although they did a great job rebuilding their church and renovating it and spent millions of dollars doing that, one of the biggest problems that we have in this area is all the abandoned properties that Shiloh owns that have been abandoned for 15 years. I mean, if they are interested in the community, what are they going to do about it?

KOJO NNAMDI: Alice?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, I am glad you ask that question. One of the reasons we created the CDC was to take those properties that the church owns and put them into use in the community. And we have been working on it for a few years now. We don’t own all the properties and so one of the things that we have to do is gain site control. And I would be happy to talk with you sometime later if there is any way you can help us gain site control over some of the properties so that we could build the senior assisted-living facility that we have been working on.

MICHAEL: Gain control over which properties?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: I would rather not talk about that on the air.

MICHAEL: Is this the Woodson property?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: No.

KOJO NNAMDI: What we can do, Michael, is put you on hold, and if you can leave your number with us, we can make sure that Alice gets back with you so that you can discuss the more specific aspects of this.

Again, the number to call: 1-800-433-8850. Our e-mail address: pi@wamu.org.

I got an e-mail from Stephen with the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, who says, “The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington raises about $20 million a year from the local community to care for the local vulnerable, as well as overseas Jewish needs. We have just completed an aging study that determined [that] in 15 years, the elderly population in our local area will double. The federation is trying to meet the needs of the elderly through local agencies that will allow them to age in a place with transportation, day care, home hygiene, and social worker visits. Do any of your guests wish to talk about the similar services to expand this kind of reach?”

Clark Lobenstein?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, for example, the Archdiocese of Washington, the Roman Catholic Church in Washington and nearby Maryland, has been very active in the creation of senior citizen housing. The downtown cluster of churches has a very active day program for seniors. And those would be two of just dozens and dozens of examples of how congregations and denominational bodies are responding to the growing needs of seniors. We are just starting entering a partnership with the D.C. Commission on Mental Health and the Interfaith Conference to help train congregational leaders, lay and clergy, to better meet the mental health needs of seniors. And that will involve getting people trained to better understand those mental health needs and how to respond to them.

KOJO NNAMDI: Carol De Vita, this raises the question of the difference between what your congregation down the street can provide and what a coalition or a national religious network can provide. Is there a way to characterize the differences in what you can expect?

CAROL DE VITA: Well, I think the local congregation can play an important role. For example, for seniors, just in terms of visiting, there are a lot of services that older people need that don’t require more than a helping hand, a friendly phone call once in a while to check up and make sure that someone has had lunch today or just has somebody to talk with. And I think congregations, the congregation on the street corner, can play a very important role. And, in fact, they are doing that now. In terms of more assistance where you are talking of more professional services in terms of housing or health care, then perhaps the umbrella organization, the Catholic Charities or the Lutheran Social Services, may be a more appropriate vehicle for something like that.

REV. ALICE DAVIS: May I?

KOJO NNAMDI: Go ahead, Alice.

REV. ALICE DAVIS: I would just like to point out that one of the things that we have been doing is working
with other organizations in the local community. As Baptists, we don't have the large denominational structure that would afford working together on a national level, but on a local level, we have worked with a number of organizations. And one of the organizations that we are working with right now to see if we can provide a more umbrella of services for people in the community is Emmaus Senior Services, which is going to be moving right down the street next to us. And so we have been gathering with them and with Bread for the City and with some of the other—Manna, Incorporated—and others to see if we can work together to provide a stronger network of services. And I think that is what the local church can also provide.

KOJO NNNAMDI: This is "Public Interest." I am Kojo Nnamdi. Talking about providing a stronger network of services and how local congregations get together in an effort to do that, training often becomes a problem. How do you deal with that, Clark?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, I want to share a marvelous example of that collaboration that deal specifically with job training. The Jobs Partnership Program in D.C. grew out of a national model in Raleigh that is now in more than 20 cities. And a Presbyterian layman from Germantown learned about the program at a national conference, came back to Washington, talked with some others about that, particularly pastors of black churches, and a partnership developed that now involves some 80 different churches that have been involved in some way in this project. And it is an intensive 12-week program and it speaks to the impact that a religiously-based, explicitly religious program can have, because one night a week it is a spiritually based, Biblically based program on growing yourself and personal understanding of your role and connections with others. And the second evening a week in this 12-week program is focused on job skills. Clergy and lay people teach the first night. Business people teach the second night. And of their 119 graduates, over 90 percent have jobs and are holding them as an ongoing mentoring process. Fifteen percent of those graduates are starting their own businesses and have a three year commitment from a mentor who meets with them monthly in their job development program. So I don’t think that any city-sponsored job training program has a 90 percent success rate in getting people into jobs.

KOJO NNNAMDI: One indication of how faith-based programs may indeed be more effective than programs run by the government.

Alice, I am interested in finding out if Shiloh is also in the business of trying to provide jobs in the local community.

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, one of the things that we want to do when we create the senior assisted-living facility, that in itself would provide a number of jobs for the community. But we are also working with an organization called Noah, which is doing job training. We have a computer center as a part of our Family Life Center, and in our community center, people are given the skills that they need, as well as information and counseling and support to move into the job market. So we hope to provide some jobs at a later date. And the Family Life Center itself creates jobs. We have a restaurant and a banquet facility. And so by doing what we do, we hire folks, many who are from the community. But we want to expand that as well as to help continue to train folks to move into better jobs.

KOJO NNNAMDI: Carol De Vita, I don't know the extent to which the Urban Institute has studied this phenomenon, but in an increasing number of cases, you have churches that are in the city who have congregants who live outside of the city, who may have at one time lived in the city. I know Shiloh is experiencing that, with congregants who now live outside of the city and therefore may not be as interested in the provision of services in that particular community.

CAROL DE VITA: We did a study in three neighborhoods within the District and talked to congregations about that issue, and it was a real concern for many churches that their congregants were commuting to services on Sunday but living in the suburban areas. I am not sure that I would say that they moved away from providing services in those neighborhoods, but the difficulty of how to orchestrate those and provide the services themselves are more of a challenge for those congregations.

KOJO NNNAMDI: Alice, talk a little bit about how you bring the congregation along with you in the programs that you intend to provide, and is that necessary, is it easy?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: It is very necessary. One of the things I like to point out to people is that when we receive funds from outside sources, it does not necessarily mean that we do not have to make a commitment of funds as well. Even when you receive money from the federal government, it doesn't mean that you can do everything that needs to be done. There are usually funds necessary for infrastructure and other things. And volunteers play a very important role in helping to keep the operating costs of the program down. Plus we consider it a part of learning how to be good disciples. So we encourage through our preaching, through our teaching, that what we do is not because we need to try to make everyone who comes into the doors believe as we believe, but that we provide the services because the services are needed.

KOJO NNNAMDI: Got to take a short break. When we come back, our continuing discussion on urban ministries in the Washington area. We will be right back.

[Commercial Break.]

KOJO NNNAMDI: Urban ministries and what they do in the Washington area. I am frankly surprised that we haven't received a call yet from an individual who makes the argument that these shows are simply promoting what these faith-based organizations are doing and not talking about government abdicating its responsibility and not doing these things that the government is elected to do and taxpayers expect to be done. It would appear that there seems to be some agreement, if not unanimity, that faith-based
organizations play an increasingly crucial role in providing these services, and regardless of the controversy
over whether or not they will proselytize, there seems to be little controversy over the nature of the services
they provide. I say that because we have been receiving a number of e-mails from individuals simply telling
us exactly what their own faith-based organization, church, synagogue, or mosque happens to be doing.
However, an e-mail that I think is especially for you, Clark Lobenstein—the Reverend Clark Lobenstein is
director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington—and this comes from Tom, who says, "A
guest just mentioned a name of a historical figure who wrote about seven stages of charity. Could you ask
him to repeat and spell the historical figure's name or written work title?"

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Maimonides was one of the greatest Jewish scholars ever living, who ever lived,
M-a-i-m-o-n-i-d-e-s, Maimonides, 12th century, I believe.

KOJO NNAMDI: Okay, Tom, hopefully that fits the bill. But, Clark Lobenstein, you also wanted to talk about a
combination among or between religious organizations in one jurisdiction in Virginia and in another in
Washington that you thought would be a good example.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Right, the Interfaith Conference has a Congregational Partnerships Project to
stimulate and strengthen existing partnerships to do more and to develop new ones. And a shining example
of an existing partnership is that between the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in McLean and the Garden
Memorial Presbyterian Church in Anacostia. And after several years of getting to know each other, exchanging
pulpits, choirs, programs, picnics, retreats for their sessions, their governing boards together, they launched
on the first I Have a Dream Project sponsored by congregations, and that involved weekly tutoring of kids
from an Anacostia school starting in the sixth grade. The previous year only 3 of those kids in sixth grade,
out of about 65 kids in the sixth grade, graduated. And the commitment of the I Have a Dream Foundation
with these partner churches was through intensive work of those congregations, a social worker provided by
the program, and the guarantee of funding for advanced education, college or technical training or others, if
you graduated. Thirty-three kids, instead of three, graduated from that sixth-grade class. And now many of
them are finishing college this June. So it is a phenomenal example of both intensive work, significant dollars,
a half-million-dollar commitment by the congregations to this process. No government funds involved. And
the difference they made.

KOJO NNAMDI: No government funds involved, how important is that? Because the question I am about to
raise is, in that situation, would government funding be an advantage or a liability?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, I think there are clearly huge limits on how many congregations,
partnered or not, can make that kind of commitment. Three-quarters of the congregations in this country
can't even employ a full-time pastor or rabbi or imam or whatever. So there are very serious limits. And I
think when you engage partnerships that can involve faith-based initiatives with government funding, you
expand clearly what congregations are able to do, but it has got to be carefully thought out, how you are
doing that, and within legal limits of what the funds can be used for.

KOJO NNAMDI: Carol De Vita, I can just see small congregations saying, "Look, this is not for us. We can't
do this."

CAROL DE VITA: Well, I think many of them feel that way. When we did our survey a couple of years ago,
we asked how they viewed their capacity and whether they were full to capacity, about 20 percent said they
were already full to capacity in the number of services and people that they could provide services to. But we
also asked them if the demand increased, what they would do. And about half of the respondents said to us,
"Oh, we would collaborate with other groups, and we would pool our resources." When we probed a little
more about whether they were actually doing that or had done it in the past, the numbers dropped radically
to around 15 percent. So we talk a lot about collaboration, and I think in the abstract it is an important way
to go, but the reality is that far fewer congregations can put together those mechanisms for a variety of
reasons, whether lack of interest or lack of common ground. But there is less collaboration currently in place
than maybe what we hope for in the future.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: I would add that there is I am sure at least a dozen community ministry groups
in the metropolitan area, Prince George's Community Ministry, Montgomery County Community Ministry,
Rockville Community Ministry, Mid-County Community Ministry in Montgomery County, so that there are
larger bodies with staff that have been doing a variety of services, some relatively recently developed for that
collaboration, some 20 years. But I would certainly agree more is needed as well.

KOJO NNAMDI: Bailey in Mount Rainey, you are in the air. Bailey, go ahead, please.

Q: Hello, yes, I had a question specifically inquiring on ethical responsibilities of faith-based organizations and
perhaps questioning also the effectiveness that they sometimes state in their statistics on how effective they
are in helping people. My experience is that some faith-based organizations discriminate against people
basically on moral reasons because they feel those particular people don't fit their faith's moral standards as
such. And they are not so effective if you consider all the people who need help who could be served by their
organizations. Essentially, I am making the argument that there is some discrimination by some faith-based
organizations that would not be allowed by government standard charities.

KOJO NNAMDI: Anyone care to respond?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: I would agree. I think there are some who discriminate in the services that they
offer and that also may be discrimination based on neighborhood because they feel as a congregation they
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offer and that also may be discrimination based on neighborhood because they feel as a congregation they
can only handle the needs that are there from a 10-block radius or whatever of that congregation, they
choose to focus in that way. I don’t support that discrimination, but I do think that that is an issue that must be dealt with when we are dealing with—if you receive any funding from other sources, governmental sources, you clearly have to be clear about not discriminating.

KOJO NNAMDI: Bailey?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: And I would just add that the vast majority of organizations, religious groups doing that are not discriminating.

KOJO NNAMDI: Bailey?

BAILEY: If they are not discriminating, then that would mean that they would certainly meet all standards of civil rights nondiscrimination on certain criteria of people, whether they be in these protected categories or not. I found that some faith-based organizations are outright blatantly discriminatory on those matters. What can we do to make sure, especially if they are receiving any form of government funds or future governments, that they will be totally nondiscriminatory?

KOJO NNAMDI: The condition of receiving federal funds is that [the recipients] be nondiscriminatory. But you do raise what is I think a broader question, Bailey, for many faith-based organizations, and that is, how does a faith-based organization approach situations in which they might be working with individuals whose lifestyle, on the basis of their doctrines, they are opposed to? How do faith-based organizations approach with working with gay people who may have AIDS if in fact the doctrine of that particular faith-based organization is that being gay happens to be a sin? How do you deal with those issues?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, the Interfaith Conference was one of the first groups working—religious group—working in the city on AIDS issues starting in the mid-1980s. At that point, there were only two religious organizations specifically focused on AIDS ministries: one part of a denominational body structure, and one not. And as a result of that work and clarifying the kinds of roles and responsibilities that the religious community had, many other denominational bodies and congregations developed AIDS ministries for persons with HIV and AIDS and clarified the importance and the moral responsibility of serving these who are also children of God.

KOJO NNAMDI: Go ahead, Carol.

CAROL DE VITA: Bailey, I think he raises an important point that will be highly debated in terms of the president’s proposed faith-based initiatives. There is some discussion in those initiatives of making certain exemptions from civil rights legislation in terms of who can be hired. I am not aware so much that it is who can be served. But clearly exemptions have been proposed for hiring people to work in some of these faith-based programs. And I think this will be a point of contention as the legislation and these proposals move forward. I don’t think there will be full agreement among the faith-based community in terms of how this should be disentangled, but I think it is a major issue that will be debated in the months ahead.

KOJO NNAMDI: Alice Davis, I would like to know what Shiloh’s experience may have been in the past on that?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Our experience is that—and I would suggest that any church that is interested in getting involved in receiving funds from outside sources be very aware of what the requirements are and make a decision up front as to whether or not they are willing to comply with those requirements or not—we have never had any issues with being nondiscriminatory in our hiring policies. We simply don’t discriminate. And that is just a part of who we are, and we wouldn’t have done it probably anyway, whether we were receiving funds from outside sources or not.

KOJO NNAMDI: This is "Public Interest." I am Kojo Nnamdi. We got an e-mail from someone who did not want to be named, who says, "Because of a job loss, I suddenly found myself trying to get through the ‘help system’ to keep utilities from being cut off and the house from foreclosure. And there seems to be no help for someone like a 40-something educated professional female who has been paying into the system since my teenage years through taxes on jobs and the arts and the nonprofits. So you know what kind of money I am talking about. And I just wonder," says no name, "what your guests have to say about that?"

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, I think that is the kind of person that we are set up to serve on a limited basis right now. We do provide emergency funds for rental assistance, public utility payments, food support. But one of the things that we would like to be able to do, and that is one of the reasons why we are meeting with the local social service providers in the Shaw community, is to be able to provide more in-depth services so that we can get that person through the system to get the needs met.

KOJO NNAMDI: But, Carol De Vita, I am sure, again, somebody is saying, "That is not their job. That is the government’s job. This woman has been paying taxes. She finds herself in a difficult situation because she does not have a job at this point, and we are confronted with a city that says that for budgetary reasons, ‘Sorry, we can’t help you. When your unemployment runs out, that is it. You have to go do something else.’"

CAROL DE VITA: Well, certainly our policies, our public policies, have been shifting from one in which the government provides to one emphasizing self-reliance. And so I think this is a good example in terms of how people may be falling through the cracks of that shift in policy.

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: If this caller or e-mailer would contact the Interfaith Conference at (202) 234-6300, we do not provide any direct services ourselves, but through our directory, I believe we will be able to make some suggestions of where this person might go.
KOJO NNAMDI: Clark Lobenstein, some churches offer services like shelter or help with drug addiction in exchange for attending or listening to a worship service. How do churches negotiate that fine line, or any religious or faith-based organization, between providing a service and proselytizing?

REV. CLARK LOBENSTEIN: Well, if the funds are privately provided, the congregation can require what it wills. I would say if the funds are state provided, federal provided, that it cannot be required. And under Charitable Choice, there is good basis for that. Charitable Choice and the faith-based initiatives legislation talk about the requirement that the city provide alternatives to persons who do not wish to participate in those services. The reality, one study I showed is that in perhaps 20 percent of neighborhoods—of communities, not neighborhoods, across the country, and we are talking about rural areas—there is only one provider. So it gets into stickier situations. But I think that it is important to understand that if the funds are privately provided, the provider can make whatever requirements that they wish. And if they are not privately funded, then there are some issues.

KOJO NNAMDI: We are running out of time very quickly but, Alice Davis, you heard Carol De Vita mention earlier that in many ways the evidence is still not clearly in as to how effective faith-based organizations are, but as an individual faith-based organization, how do you measure success?

REV. ALICE DAVIS: Well, success can be measured in many ways. I measure success when I see a young boy who came into our Male Youth Health Enhancement Program who is now a college graduate who is coming back to say, "If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be where I am now." I measure success when I get a letter from someone who we helped with some emergency funds who says that they were able to go and get that job that they had been after and it was because of what we did. Unfortunately, that kind of anecdotal information sometimes doesn't get computed.

KOJO NNAMDI: And I am afraid we are out of time. Reverend Alice Davis is executive minister with Shiloh Baptist Church; Carol De Vita is senior research associate with the Urban Institute's Center for Nonprofits and Philanthropy; and Reverend Clark Lobenstein is director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington. Thank you all for joining us. This has been "Public Interest." I am Kojo Nnamdi.

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- Carol J. De Vita

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