



## The Diocesan Office of Immigration and Social Justice Diocese of Southeast Florida

### Report to the 40<sup>th</sup> annual Diocesan convention 2009

**Immigration:** Most people in the nation and those directly involved in matters of social reform awaited anxiously for the possibility of some drastic changes in immigration policy by the summer 2009; clearly that has not happened. Actually, comprehensive immigration reform has still not been presented in Congress, yet meetings are taking place, and lobbying especially from the faith based organizations is on-going. The national church and our presiding bishop have repeatedly requested that the administration move towards a fair and compassionate comprehensive immigration reform bill. Our office has on many occasions given full support to the actions of the national church.

At the local level, we continue as we have mentioned on various occasions to work in cooperation with the other faith communities in addressing particular issues affecting individuals, groups, i.e. Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians and Mexicans. It is very important that we support our representatives in Washington who are pushing for fair immigration reform.

**Social Justice:** Again for the present, immigration remains the hottest issue of social justice in this country. It has to do with 12 million undocumented individuals and their families; it is tied to so many facts: education, health care, census, etc.

In the midst of all this, we want to make sure that we as a diocese do not ignore certain other forms of injustice or discrimination that prevent us from working effectively together as a community. To this end, we plan to continue with the forums we have started in cooperation with the Union of Black Episcopalians, The commission on Anti-Racism, and the Hispanic Commission, the Haitian Commission and Integrity. These gatherings give us the opportunity to discover the potential of working together to eradicate prejudices and preconceived ideas about ethnic differences and to instead celebrate our diversity.

The second action is the creation of the diocesan Social Justice Commission. The following deaneries have already selected representatives to serve on this commission:

North Dade - Ingrid Clark, Ruben Cao, Hanno Mueller  
South Dade – Rev. Corinna Olson  
Broward – John Piedrahita  
Palm Beach – The Very Reverend Carol Barron

In the Keys deanery, the Reverend Debra Andrew Maconaughey (Marathon) is already a liaison with our office. Other representatives include: Father Smith Milien, priest-in-charge, St. Paul et les martyrs d’Haiti; Kathleen Walker, president of the Theodore R. Gibson chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians; Dr. Gay Outler, Chair, the Commission on Anti-Racism; Marthe Dassas, member, Haitian Commission.

The role of the diocesan Social Justice Association is to create in every deanery a local committee that will assist in making sure that social justice issues are kept alive in the life of parishes through announcements in Sunday bulletins, Bible study, workshops and involvement in actions for justice.

**Ethnic Ministry:** Recently we have been celebrating some success in Hispanic ministry. With assistance from the Nehemiah process, Todos Los Santos has reached parish status and some models of cooperation such as San Francisco de Asis and St. Margaret’s show great possibilities; we are looking with hope as St. Paul et les martyrs d’Haiti continues to work with Trinidad in North Dade.

While we encourage these ministries in Spanish, French or Creole we want to prevent any form of cultural isolation. The strength of ethnic ministries is in their being part of the diocese at all levels. Their participation in diocesan activities is vital to their survival and to that of the diocese as a diverse community.

The “Black” church does share some unique traits with other ethnic ministries and must continue to be a strong participant in every aspect of diocesan life.

Our diocese has been so blessed with diversity: ethnic, cultural and theological, yet we have been able to agree to disagree but definitely as Episcopalians we are invited to implement our baptismal covenant “strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being.”

*The Ven. Dr. J. Fritz Bazin, Archdeacon for Immigration & Social Justice*