



# BLACK CHURCHES AND THE FAITH- BASED INITIATIVE

Findings from a National Survey

David A. Bositis

Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

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Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

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## PREFACE

Black churches have been major institutions in African American communities, providing focus for charitable giving, social support, and civic engagement, as well as spiritual strength. This may make them logical beneficiaries of the federal government's Faith-based and Community Initiative. But little is actually known about their level of engagement in this program, their interest in being involved, or their capacity to perform. This report summarizes major findings from a Joint Center study on black churches' views toward and interest in the federal program. It provides insights for government policymakers, churches who are interested in participating in the FBCI, and the general public. Future publications from the study will focus on specific aspects of the findings that might be of interest to special audiences. To find out more about these documents, visit the Joint Center's website at [www.jointcenter.org](http://www.jointcenter.org).

The study would have not been possible without the support of several outside funders. We are particularly grateful to two individuals at foundations who also provided substantive comments and guidance—Carole Thompson at the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Douglas Besharov, who is associated with the Mark and Carol Hyman Family Foundation. The study also benefited from the work of consultant Karyn Trader-Leigh, who conducted the focus groups. The Joint Center wants to thank her, the focus group participants, and the anonymous respondents to our survey.

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## INTRODUCTION

This report on black churches and the Bush administration's Faith-Based and Community Initiative (FBCI) examines the participation of black churches in the program, their interest in participation, and their capacity to conform to the federal regulations governing the program. Also examined are the nature of their experiences in attempting to seek such funds, the social service programs that they are presently offering and aspire to offer, and their attitudes toward the Faith-Based and Community Initiative.

This report is based on a national survey of 750 black churches conducted between November 11, 2005 and January 24, 2006. The churches were randomly selected from a national sampling frame of 18,000 black churches. The selection process was stratified by region, size of church, and denomination. The questionnaire development was informed by the findings from two focus groups of black ministers; the first was held at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 23, 2005, and the second was held at Howard University School of Divinity on October 27, 2005. The questionnaire development was also informed by input from the Joint Center's Faith-Based Advisory Committee.

## THE FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

The federal FBCI is based on executive orders, the regulatory process, and other administrative actions. The goal of the FBCI is equal participation of faith-based organizations in federally financed social welfare programs—in effect, to create neutrality in the awarding of government grants between secular and faith-based organizations.

The FBCI represents an extension of Charitable Choice, which was enacted as part of the 1996 welfare reform legislation, and later extended to Community Services Block Grants and substance abuse prevention and treatment services. The core components of the FBCI are the Compassion Capital Fund, which was started in fiscal year 2002 with an appropriation of \$30 million,<sup>1</sup> and the Regional and National Technical Assistance meetings.<sup>2</sup>

Four principles define the FBCI's goal. The first principle is that “faith-based organizations have an equal right to compete for funding under any federal social welfare program for which an analogous secular service provider would be eligible to compete.”<sup>3</sup>

The second principle is to protect the religious character of participating faith-based organizations in their places of service and forms of governance—i.e., faith-based organizations do not need to become secularized to participate in the program. Long before the FBCI, government has provided funding for the provision of social services to faith-based organizations, such as Catholic Charities, but only for the purely secular services they provided.

The third principle is that faith-based organizations providing services financed by the government keep their exemption under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, an exemption that permits them to exercise religion-based discrimination. This has been one of the most controversial features of the FBCI. Civil rights groups strongly oppose any weakening of this provision of the Civil Rights Act because it has had such a major impact on organizations and institutions that receive federal funds. For example, the major changes that have taken place in collegiate athletics programs—which resulted in the rise of women's sports—are due to anti-discrimination measures tied to receipt of federal funds. On the other hand, many faith-based organizations would be reluctant to participate in the FBCI if they were required to employ people whom they would not hire otherwise.

The fourth principle is the accommodation of religion, or a commitment to the accommodation of religion within social service programs; “Accommodations may be either mandatory—created by courts in order to address violations of a religious individual's or organization's free exercise rights—or permissive—created by statute or regulation, and encompassing a wider range of religious practice than might be required by the Free Exercise Clause.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Anne Farris, Richard P. Nathan, and David J. Wright, *The Expanding Administrative Presidency: George W. Bush and the Faith-Based Initiative* (Albany, NY: The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, 2004), 17.

<sup>2</sup> See [whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/technical assistance.html](http://whitehouse.gov/government/fbci/technical%20assistance.html).

<sup>3</sup> Ira C. Lupu and Robert W. Tuttle, “The State of the Law 2004: Partnerships between Government and Faith-Based Organizations” (Albany, NY: The Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, 2004), 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

The legal status of some parts of the FBCI has not been determined as yet by the judiciary. The U.S. Supreme Court has changed its interpretations of the Establishment Clause significantly since 1990, with attention more focused on the religious content of the service financed by the government, not on the religious character of the provider organization. A key ruling for the FBCI was *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*,<sup>5</sup> which the Bush administration has interpreted to mean that financing of sectarian activities is permissible provided that there is “beneficiary choice” (i.e., the beneficiaries of the service are free to choose between secular and faith-based providers).

Despite the changes in interpretation of the Establishment Clause, several legal limitations remain. There can be no direct government expenditures on inherently religious activities (except for direct financing of religion for individuals under significant government control), and there are restrictions on the use of government funds for religious structures.<sup>6</sup> Further, faith-based organizations’ exemptions under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act do not apply to many government programs, for which religion-based discrimination is prohibited by statute.

The federal departments and agencies participating in the FBCI include Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Veterans Affairs, along with the Agency for International Development, the Corporation for National and Community Service, and the Small Business Administration. The amount of the grants made by the agencies and departments to faith-based organizations has been somewhat unclear. For fiscal year 2005, “the White House says faith-based organizations received more than \$2.15 billion in federal funds to operate social service programs in 2005—approximately 10.9 percent of the total dollars distributed.”<sup>7</sup> While the number of grants to faith-based organizations increased from the previous year to a total of 1,332, the overall share of grants to smaller congregation-based social service providers declined from 4.4 percent of the total in 2002 to only 2.9 percent in 2004.

The need for the FBCI program was expressed by the first director of the White House FBCI office, John DiIulio, Jr., who released a report in 2001 that argued that the “public administration of federal social service programs is irrationally biased against small nonprofit organizations, especially small religious ones.”<sup>8</sup> However, in an analysis in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Mark Chaves concluded that there was no substantial discrimination against religious organizations in funding streams, that congregations were not intensely involved in social service activity, and that religious organizations were no more likely than secular ones to deliver services in a personal way or focus on deep transformations rather than short-term solutions.<sup>9</sup>

## **BENEFITS OF FBCI PARTICIPATION FOR BLACK CHURCHES**

Churches are very important institutions in the black community, and most African Americans view their churches as central to their lives. Prior to the 1960s, churches were the only important institutions in black communities that were controlled by African Americans themselves. This independence from white society represents a major reason why black ministers played such an important role in the civil rights movement. Black churches remain central today in the social, political, and spiritual lives of their communities.

A 2002 study of IRS data found that while three-fourths of all charitable contributions nationwide went to religious institutions, African Americans contributed nine-tenths of their charitable contributions to churches. However, even among congregations in which all members contribute, a large proportion of black churches have limited revenue. Half the churches in this study that provided revenue estimates had yearly revenue of less than \$250,000, and only 12 percent of the churches in the study had yearly revenue in excess of \$1 million. Twenty-eight percent had yearly

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<sup>5</sup> This was the Cleveland school vouchers case, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2002 that the program did not violate the Establishment Clause because it was enacted for a secular, not a religious purpose; the key to the ruling was that the program involved beneficiary choice of service providers.

<sup>6</sup> Lupu and Tuttle, “The State of the Law 2004,” 73-75.

<sup>7</sup> Claire Hughes, “White House Report: Federal Grants to FBOs Up in 2005,” Roundtable on Religion and Social Policy (2006), <http://www.socialpolicyandreligion.org/news/article.cfm?id=3967>.

<sup>8</sup> John J. DiIulio, Jr., “Unlevel Playing Field: How Washington Discriminates Against Religious Social-Service Providers,” *Wall Street Journal*, Editorial page, August 19, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Chaves, “Debunking Charitable Choice,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Summer 2003), [www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/debunking\\_charitable\\_choice/](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/debunking_charitable_choice/). Chaves did note, however, that predominantly black congregations, *ceteris paribus*, were five times more likely than other congregations to say that they would seek public support for their social service activities.

revenue of less than \$100,000. In spite of these limited revenues, many of these churches continue to exist and serve residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods, providing many services that go well beyond spiritual needs.

Further, these black churches serve communities with substantial needs that cannot be met solely by charitable giving. A large proportion of black churches that serve disadvantaged communities—where FBCI funding is most needed—do not have the social networks to leverage funding from elsewhere; nor can they leverage extensively from their own congregations. In addition, applying for an FBCI grant requires harnessing some resources within the church that the church might not have.<sup>10</sup>

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS), African American family income in 2005 was \$35,464, compared to \$56,194 for the entire population; 22.1 percent of blacks lived in poverty, compared to the national average of 9.9 percent. The 2005 CPS reported that the percentage of whites without a high school diploma (9.5 percent) was about one-third of the percentage of those with a college degree or more (28.2 percent). The percentage of blacks without a high school diploma was equal to the percentage of blacks with at least a college degree (18.6 percent). In addition, on standardized tests, black students generally score lower than white students. Further, health disparities in communities of color are now recognized as a serious national problem. Finally, according to The Sentencing Project, 41 percent of all inmates in prison or jail are black, and 12.6 percent of all black males between the ages of 25 and 29 are incarcerated. Because of the issues and challenges facing African Americans, and the centrality of the black church in their communities, the FBCI could bring needed funds to help black churches better address these issues at a grassroots level.

A large percentage of black churches have social ministries that seek to ameliorate these conditions. The FBCI could certainly help address revenue needs if it represents a significant new funding stream previously unavailable to black churches and the communities they serve. This is certainly the view of a majority of the pastors interviewed for this study. However, many pastors—as well as civil rights groups and advocates for the poor—also see many drawbacks to the FBCI.

## **DRAWBACKS TO THE FBCI**

While many black pastors believe that the FBCI holds potential value, critics of the program have raised significant objections to it, including some that resonate with many black ministers. First, many ministers are concerned about “losing their prophetic voice”—i.e., their obligation not only to speak truth to power, but also to confront injustice and suffering wherever they see it. There is great concern about social inequality, and a belief that the government should be devoting far more resources to combating it. Many ministers are concerned that the FBCI represents a government effort to shift its responsibilities to the churches and then reduce its own social spending. Furthermore, there is also doubt that there are funds of any significance behind the program. This belief is understandable given that FBCI's spending of \$2.15 billion comes out of total federal expenditures of \$2.4 trillion.

Critics of the FBCI also have pointed out that black churches have a historically close relationship with civil rights organizations, and those organizations are opposed to federal grants to churches because of their Title VII exemptions. Critics have further questioned the constitutionality of the FBCI with regard to separation of church and state. They emphasize that the receipt of federal funds by churches will permit the government to interfere with those churches' activities. Black pastors also voice the concern that accepting government money will require them to rigidly follow bureaucratic rules, and that if they inadvertently violate those rules, they might be in legal jeopardy. Most black churches have traditionally operated in an autonomous and flexible fashion, which is reflected in their organizational structure. Entering into a government contract may result in a change in the current organizational culture and structure toward greater rigidity. It is worth noting that the Rev. Floyd Flake, former Democratic congressman and the head of a mega-church in New York City, was indicted in 1990 for conspiracy, fraud, and tax evasion in the alleged embezzlement of funds from a federally subsidized senior citizens housing project run by his church; after a jury trial, Rev. Flake was acquitted. This example may have had a “chilling effect” on other black ministers.

Since the FBCI is closely associated with President Bush, it has also been criticized as politically motivated. This criticism has taken various forms, including the arguments that the FBCI represents a political payoff to Christian

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<sup>10</sup> See Stephanie Boddie and Prema Thirupathy, “Way to Give: A Guide to Connecting, Giving, and Asset Building” (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2005).

right and conservative Evangelical churches for their political support, and that the program is being used to lure conservative black ministers and the voters in their congregations into supporting the Republican party.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the resistance to the FBCI may be due to mistrust and unfamiliarity with the program. The question of whether there can be greater participation by black churches depends on whether black ministers see the FBCI as an opportunity or a liability, which in turn depends upon the information provided to them about the program.

## BLACK MINISTERS AND THE FBCI: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

On balance, most black ministers in the Joint Center's survey view the Faith-Based and Community Initiative favorably. As expected, Evangelical and Pentecostal ministers and ministers from churches with a conservative theology viewed the program more favorably than others. Further, those ministers who have spoken with members of their congregations about the FBCI report that their members largely favor it. Overall, however, the ministers were less certain how their congregations as a whole would feel about participation in the FBCI, with roughly equal numbers believing their participation would be viewed positively and negatively, while the modal response was that they did not know. While three-quarters of the ministers had heard of the FBCI, less than one in three of the ministers interviewed had any detailed understanding of the FBCI or had discussed with a lawyer or accountant the requirements for participation in the program.

A majority of the black ministers indicated that their churches were interested in participating in the FBCI, with Evangelical and Pentecostal churches being the most interested. Ministers from larger churches and urban churches expressed more interest in participating than smaller or rural churches. While some view the FBCI as primarily a conservative initiative, that is not borne out in terms of the pattern of expressed interest. Churches in the Northeast were more interested in participating than those in other areas of the country, and churches with progressive theologies and socially liberal congregations were more interested in participating than conservative churches; this is consistent with previous research.<sup>12</sup>

Only a small percentage of the black ministers surveyed expressed doubts about the political motivations behind the decisions concerning which churches were receiving FBCI grants, although about three in ten said that they had no idea what types of churches were receiving grants. Among those expressing an opinion, almost half thought that the grants were going to all churches that applied, while about one-third of the ministers believed that the grants were going to mega-churches. Relatively few of the ministers thought that FBCI grants were primarily directed at Christian right or conservative Evangelical churches.

The black ministers who were lukewarm toward or skeptical of the FBCI expressed a variety of philosophical and practical reasons. Among them were the beliefs that the government was trying to shift its responsibilities to the church; that involvement with the government was problematic (in part because they believed that acceptance of money from the government led to the loss of the right to criticize it); that the government would insist upon exercising control of their work; and that there were serious issues involving separation of church and state. There were also those who doubted that funds were really available and who objected to competition for funds. Additionally, some ministers said that they were not interested because the application process was too cumbersome or they lacked the technical capacity to participate.

While only one in nine churches had applied for an FBCI grant, the profile of ministers from churches that had applied was notable. They were much more likely to have been personally contacted about applying, to have spoken with congregation members about the FBCI, and to report that their congregations were supportive of FBCI participation. The churches that applied for an FBCI grant were generally larger churches with higher revenues, more likely Evangelical or Pentecostal than Baptist or Methodist, and suburban rather than rural. Most of the churches that applied had consulted with a lawyer or accountant. Churches from the Northeast were more likely to have applied than those from other regions, and churches with a liberal theology were more than twice as likely to apply as those with a conservative theology. Also, churches that applied were more likely to offer certain services, including clothing banks, prison ministries, healthcare programs, after-school programs, drug abuse counseling and education programs, and shelter for the homeless.

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<sup>11</sup> See Thomas B. Edsall and Alan Cooperman, "GOP Using Faith Initiative to Woo Voters: Office's Officials Have Appeared With Republican Candidates in Tight Races," *The Washington Post*, September 15, 2002: Page A05.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Chaves, "Religious Congregations and Welfare Reform: Who Will Take Advantage of 'Charitable Choice'?" (Aspen Institute, Working Paper Series, 1999), 12.

The percentage of churches that actually received money from the government was the same as the percentage that had applied for FBCI grants. However, not all of these churches received money from the FBCI. In reality, only about one-quarter of the ministers who said that their church received money from the government said that the funds were from the FBCI.<sup>13</sup> However, the fact that some of these ministers may have unknowingly received money from the FBCI through intermediary organizations, including local governments, suggests that the actual rate may be higher. Since 11 percent of the ministers reported receiving money from the government to provide social services, but only 2.6 percent said that they were FBCI funds, the actual percentage receiving FBCI grants must fall between those figures. Nonetheless, only the smaller percentage of black ministers perceived their churches as beneficiaries of the FBCI program.

The specific profile of the churches that have received money from the government differs in some respects from that of churches whose ministers approved of the FBCI. Ironically, the churches with ministers who disapproved of the FBCI were more likely to apply for an FBCI grant than churches with ministers who approved of the FBCI. This relationship reflects the fact that liberal<sup>14</sup> ministers were less approving of the FBCI than conservative ministers, but liberal churches are more likely to be engaged in active social outreach ministries than conservative churches—and hence, more likely to apply for grants to provide services. Large churches with high yearly revenues, churches in the Northeast and Midwest, Methodist churches, and churches with progressive or moderate theologies were more likely to receive money from the government.

Ministers from churches with a progressive theology differed from those with a conservative theology in interesting ways. While the ministers from the progressive tradition were more likely than their conservative brethren to have an unfavorable view of the FBCI, to believe that the government was reducing social spending because of the program, and to think that diminishing social services was a major problem, these ministers were more interested than their conservative colleagues in participating in the FBCI, more likely to believe that black churches play a major role in providing social services, less likely to believe that complying with the FBCI rules would require them to change the content of their religious services, and more likely to have been contacted about, to have applied for, and to have received funds from the FBCI.

Based on the 2.6 percent of churches receiving FBCI grants, the success rate of FBCI applicants was about one in four (again, if some of the ministers misidentified the source of their funding, that rate may be higher). Churches with a progressive theology were more likely to receive FBCI grants than those with a conservative theology. Furthermore, churches in “blue states”—i.e., states won by Gore in 2000 and Kerry in 2004—were more likely to have received FBCI grants than those in “red states”—i.e., states won by Bush in 2000 and 2004. Churches in New Jersey and New York led the list of recipients, while in Ohio and Florida only one church had received an FBCI grant. These findings seem to cast at least some doubt on the view that the FBCI represents a political tool—at least insofar as black churches are concerned.

Finally, while a majority of black ministers approve of and would like to participate in the FBCI, there are serious challenges facing smaller churches and churches with limited revenues. It is clear that even the larger and wealthier black churches need legal advice and help with paperwork, policy information, the formation of collaboratives, and program evaluations, while the needs of smaller and (especially) rural black churches are even greater—so much so that many are not interested in participating because they believe that they lack the capabilities to apply. As noted earlier, churches need to invest or leverage resources in order to complete an application for the FBCI—and some may even need to overhaul their administrative structure once they receive the funding. It is likely that smaller churches do not have these resources and do not know how to network in order to leverage them from sources outside the congregation. In short, they not only have limited resources, but they are also embedded in a very limited network.

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<sup>13</sup> Professor Ira Lupu of George Washington University Law School suggested at a meeting of the Joint Center’s Faith-Based Advisory Committee that some of the ministers whose churches received money from state or local government sources may not have been aware that those funds originated through the FBCI, and thus a larger proportion (than 24 percent) of the funds received from government may have been from the FBCI.

<sup>14</sup> Liberal here means having a progressive theology. Baptist churches were the most conservative, with 46 percent having a conservative theology and only 32 percent describing their theology as progressive. Ministers from Methodist churches mostly described their theology as moderate (48 percent), with only 20 percent describing their theology as progressive. Pentacostal and Evangelical churches were equally divided between those having progressive and conservative theologies (41 vs. 40 percent). Independent churches were the most likely to have a progressive theology (45 percent), but 36 percent of the Independent churches were described as conservative leaning.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The findings from the Joint Center's survey suggest several policy implications for black churches and the FBCI. These address the questions: are ministers from black churches informed about the program, are they interested in participating in the program, and are they capable of participating in the program?

Clearly, there has been insufficient outreach to inform black churches about the program. Two-thirds of the ministers said that they did not know the rules for participating in the FBCI, and only about one in six churches had been contacted about applying. Significantly, one-quarter of the churches contacted subsequently applied for an FBCI grant, and 31 percent of those churches that applied received an FBCI grant. Overall, a majority of the churches that received FBCI grants were contacted about applying.

While the ministers who said that their churches were not interested in participating in the FBCI expressed reservations about the program, some of those reservations could probably be assuaged. Churches that lacked the technical capacity to participate or thought the application process was too cumbersome could be provided with capacity-building assistance or could network with other churches to create the combined capacity to participate.

There was also some evidence suggesting that the FBCI may be out of reach for the smallest churches (125 registered congregants or less). While the smallest churches are as likely as other churches to have social ministries, they are less likely to offer services that are funded by the FBCI. Specifically, they are 20 percent less likely to have a food bank, 28 percent less likely to have a prison ministry, 37 percent less likely to have an after-school program, 29 percent less likely to have a healthcare program, 35 percent less likely to have an elderly program, and 40 percent less likely to offer housing for the homeless. Although the smallest churches were only slightly less likely than other churches to have been contacted about the FBCI, only three percent of the smallest churches applied for an FBCI grant, and none received one. (Four percent of the smallest churches reported having received funds from other government sources.) Furthermore, ministers from the smallest churches were the least likely to report having consulted a lawyer or accountant about applying for a government grant, and were less likely than ministers from larger churches to say that they had technical assistance needs like access to public policy information, legal advice, and help with program evaluation. Given that these churches do not have greater capabilities in these areas than larger churches, this expression of lesser technical needs suggests that they have little intention of applying for government grants.

Despite these barriers to participation in the FBCI, most black churches have an interest in participating, have a variety of social service programs in place, and would seem capable of participating in the program. However, this potential capability clearly needs to be enhanced by technical training, including grant application training, help in forming collaborations with others, legal advice, assistance with program evaluation, and better access to public policy information.

Some of the specific forms of assistance that ministers identified do not appear to represent significant barriers, such as receiving help from the government and foundations in training church personnel to understand the rules for government grants or getting their denominational organizations to foster better communication between the government and churches. However, other assistance that they sought from foundations and the government is probably less likely. Given the nature of government funding, bureaucratic rule making, and previous decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court (as well as many state constitutions), it is difficult to believe that the rules are going to be changed much to make them less restrictive. It is likely that the Bush administration has put a great deal of effort into making the rules as unrestrictive as possible. But it is not clear that foundations and the government are going to generally make funds available when they are most needed. Since the needs are ongoing, a later provision of funds is not unhelpful, but many churches do not have the resources to continue to provide services while applying for a grant that helps down the road, and thus, they may be unwilling to sacrifice the one for the other.

One of the most promising avenues for addressing the capacity-building needs of black churches is for denominational and intermediary organizations to facilitate partnerships with other churches and organizations in order to seek funding for social services.

Of the three broad areas identified above—information, interest, and capability—that delineate the barriers between black churches and their participation in the FBCI, the easiest barrier to remove is clearly information. While there

are capacity-building needs and reservations about the program, the largest group of black ministers consists of those with an interest in participation, but little information on how that might be expedited.

**DETAILED DATA ANALYSIS**

***The Role of the Church: Services They Provide***

Almost half (48 percent) of the ministers thought that black churches played a major role in providing social services; 31 percent thought that they played a contributing role and 21 percent thought that they played a small role. Pastors from the churches with the largest budgets were the most likely to believe that black churches played a major role in providing social services (57 percent), while those located in rural areas were the least likely to believe that they played a major role (38 percent).

Nearly all (93 percent) of the black churches surveyed reported having a social outreach ministry. The most frequently offered service programs were youth programs (79 percent), food (71 percent) and clothing (66 percent) banks, and prison ministries (58 percent) [Table 1]. The provision of food, clothing, and prison ministries (which generally represent occasional visits to inmates or their families) usually involve short-term contact with service recipients; this is consistent with earlier findings.<sup>15</sup> However, a substantial proportion of the churches offered services that involved longer-term contact with recipients; these services included youth programs, childcare services, and housing programs. Churches that applied for an FBCI grant were more likely to have clothing banks (74 percent versus 66 percent for churches that did not apply), prison ministries (67 vs. 58 percent), healthcare programs (66 vs. 49 percent), after-school programs (65 vs. 46 percent), drug abuse programs (55 vs. 46 percent), and housing for the homeless (37 vs. 30 percent). Churches with a progressive theology were more likely than those with a conservative theology to have clothing banks (70 vs. 64 percent), prison ministries (64 vs. 56 percent), healthcare programs (56 vs. 43 percent), after-school programs (54 vs. 36 percent), drug abuse programs (52 vs. 42 percent), and neighborhood revitalization programs (47 vs. 29 percent).

When asked what additional services they would like to offer, two areas dominated in the responses—programs for youth and the elderly—with 37 percent of the pastors mentioning youth programs, including mentoring and childcare, and 25 percent mentioning programs for the elderly, including housing. Drug abuse counseling and education programs were mentioned by 11 percent of the pastors.

**TABLE 1. What social and community services does your church offer?**

Programs	Churches Offering Program (%)	Churches that Applied for FBCI Grant Offering Program (%)	Churches with Liberal Theology (%)	Churches with Conservative Theology (%)
Youth Programs	79	78	81	78
Food Bank	71	72	70	70
Clothing Bank	66	74	70	64
Prison Ministry	58	67	64	56
Healthcare Promotion/Treatment	49	66	56	43
Seniors' Programs	46	48	47	45
After School Program/Mentoring	46	65	54	36
Drug Abuse Counseling/Education	46	55	52	42
Neighborhood Revitalization	39	40	47	29
Childcare	36	34	37	30
Housing for Homeless	30	37	33	25
Housing for Elderly	18	16	19	16

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> See Stephanie C. Boddie, "Social Services of African American Congregations in the Welfare Reform Era," *African American Research Perspectives* 10, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2004): 36-43; and Mark Chaves and William Tsitsos, "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action, New Orleans, November 2000), 18.

Most churches serve either the people in the surrounding community (40 percent) or a mix of congregation members, people in the community, and people elsewhere (42 percent). Only 14 percent said that they mainly provide social services to the people in the congregation. Churches whose members live in the surrounding community (as opposed to commuter churches) were the most likely to serve people in the surrounding community (55 percent).

Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the respondents said that pastors and/or assistant pastors made the decision whether to offer social outreach, while 31 percent said that the “Board” made such decisions and another 13 percent said that the congregation made these decisions. Methodists—the most likely to have to consult with higher church officials—were the least likely to report that the pastor made such decisions (49 percent), while churches with the largest numbers of ordained personnel (eight or more) were the most likely to report that the pastor(s) made these decisions. Churches in which the head pastor was a woman were less likely to report that the pastor(s) made these decisions (52 percent). The decision making about social ministry offerings was mostly internal to the congregations themselves (54 percent), but 37 percent said that the process involved both internal and external decision-makers. Only 11 percent of the ministers said that their churches would not provide certain services, such as AIDS counseling, even if money was available.

### *The Role of Government in Local Communities*

A majority of the ministers interviewed said that government services in the area near their church were fair or poor (51 percent) rather than excellent (eight percent) or good (32 percent). Urban churches (60 percent) and those located in the Northeast (58 percent) were the most likely to report that government services were fair or poor.

A quarter of the ministers thought that the availability of government services had increased due to the receipt by faith-based organizations of federal funds, while 23 percent thought that the availability of government services had decreased; 52 percent thought they were unchanged. Respondents from Pentecostal and Evangelical churches (31 percent), those from the West (31 percent), and ministers from churches that had applied for FBCI grants (37 percent) were the most likely to believe that government services had increased. Ministers from churches headed by women (33 percent) and those from the Northeast (31 percent) were the most likely to believe that government services had declined because federal funds were now diverted to faith-based organizations.

There was some concern that the government was trying to shift the safety net to religious bodies and diminish its own role; 32 percent of the ministers thought that this was a major problem and another 28 percent thought it was a minor problem, while 40 percent thought that it was not a problem at all. Methodist ministers interviewed were almost twice as likely (42 percent) as Evangelical and nondenominational ministers (24 percent) to consider this a major problem.

### *The Faith-Based and Community Initiative*

About three-quarters of the ministers said that they were aware of the FBCI, and by about three to one they had favorable (59 percent) rather than unfavorable (20 percent) views of the initiative [Table 2, next page]. Evangelical ministers (68 percent) and those from churches with a conservative theology (70 percent) were the most favorable toward the FBCI. Churches with a female head pastor were less favorable toward the FBCI (46 percent). Most ministers (83 percent) said that there were no barriers, due to denominational policy or other reasons, that prevented their participation in the FBCI.

The principal reasons that ministers gave for unfavorable views of the FBCI involved issues of involvement with government [Table 2.1, page 10]. These reasons included opposition to involvement with government (22 percent) and issues concerning government control (18 percent) and separation of church and state (12 percent). Methodist ministers (55 percent) and those from churches whose only engagement in politics is the provision of nonpartisan information (63 percent) were especially concerned about involvement with government. Two other reasons why some ministers had an unfavorable view of the FBCI were voiced: some said that they would not compete for funding (16 percent) and others indicated doubt about whether funds were truly available (13 percent).

A significant number of the ministers (39 percent) said that congregation members had discussed the FBCI with them. Ministers from churches that had applied for an FBCI grant (75 percent) were the most likely to report discussions with congregation members. Ministers from churches with socially liberal congregations (50 percent) were

**TABLE 2. Do you have a generally favorable or unfavorable view of the Faith-Based Initiative?**

	Favorable (%)	Unfavorable (%)	D/K (%)	(N)
Total	59	20	22	750
Male Head Pastor	60	20	21	696
Female Head Pastor	46	20	33	54
One Pastor	56	18	26	207
Two Pastors	56	27	17	100
Three/Four Pastors	57	23	19	149
Five/Seven Pastors	62	18	20	142
Eight+ Pastors	63	15	22	148
Northeast	55	22	24	143
Midwest	53	25	21	135
South	61	18	21	405
West	66	15	19	67
Baptist	55	21	23	305
Methodist	54	28	18	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	68	11	21	187
Nondenominational	60	13	27	75
Progressive Theology	55	22	23	243
Moderate Theology	46	27	26	205
Conservative Theology	70	13	17	302
Actively Engaged in Politics	56	23	21	298
Provide Nonpartisan Information	62	19	19	237
Not Engaged	62	13	25	173

*Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.*

more likely to have discussed the FBCI with congregation members than those from socially conservative churches (34 percent). Ministers from churches more actively engaged in politics (49 percent) were more likely to have had such discussions than those from churches that were not engaged in politics; active engagement in politics characterizes those churches actively engaged on matters of social justice. Regionally, ministers from the Northeast (47 percent) were the most likely to report discussions of the FBCI with congregation members.

The ministers who reported conversations with congregation members about the FBCI generally characterized congregation members as supportive of the idea (72 percent) with few voicing opposition (14 percent). Ministers from churches that had applied for FBCI grants were the most likely to report supportive congregation members (85 percent). However, roughly equal numbers of ministers said that participation in the FBCI would positively (30 percent) as opposed to negatively (28 percent) affect their congregation's attitude toward the church; 42 percent said that they did not know what effect it would have. Again, ministers from churches that had applied for FBCI grants were the most likely to report that involvement with the FBCI would be viewed positively by the congregation.

Less than a third (32 percent) of the ministers said that they were aware of the rules for participation in the FBCI; this correlated quite closely with those who reported that someone from their church had discussed with a legal advisor or accountant what they would need to do to apply for a grant under the program (29 percent). Ministers

from the largest churches were the most likely to have sought counsel from a lawyer or accountant (39 percent) and to understand FBCI participation rules (41 percent), while those from the smallest churches were the least likely to have consulted (19 percent) or to report knowing the rules (27 percent); ministers from churches with eight or more ministers were almost three times more likely to report professional consultation (42 percent) than those from a church with a single minister (15 percent). Similarly, ministers from churches with revenues greater than \$500,000 were five times more likely to report receiving professional advice than those from churches with revenue less than \$50,000 (60 percent vs. 12 percent). A large majority of the ministers from churches that had applied for an FBCI grant reported consulting with a lawyer or accountant (71 percent).

When the ministers who said that they understood the rules for FBCI participation were asked what they understood them to be, about 70 percent were able to articulate at least in part what the rules were. They mentioned proper accounting for funds, nonprofit status, limitations on proselytizing and praying, and nondiscrimination.

Only 16 percent of the ministers said that they had been contacted about applying for a grant under the FBCI [Table 3, next page]. Ministers from smaller churches—i.e., those with only one pastor (12 percent) and those with yearly revenue less than \$100,000 (11 percent)—and those from rural areas (11 percent) were less likely to have been contacted. Ministers from large churches—i.e., those with eight or more pastors (20 percent) and those with

**TABLE 2.1 Why do you view the Faith-Based Initiative unfavorably? (respondents who view the Faith-Based Initiative unfavorably only)**

	Opposed to Involvement with Government (%)	Separation of Church and State (%)	Funding Not Available (%)	Won't Compete for Funding (%)	Government Controls (%)	(N)
Total	22	12	13	16	18	148
Male Head Pastor	23	12	12	15	18	137
Female Head Pastor	18	18	27	18	27	11
One Pastor	19	16	19	19	16	37
Two Pastors	22	7	7	19	26	27
Three/Four Pastors	14	14	9	14	20	35
Five/Seven Pastors	36	4	12	16	16	25
Eight+ Pastors	18	18	18	9	14	22
Northeast	23	19	13	13	16	31
Midwest	24	9	6	15	24	34
South	18	11	16	19	19	73
West	50	10	10	--	--	10
Baptist	23	8	11	20	15	65
Methodist	25	13	13	13	17	52
Evangelical/Pentecostal	19	14	24	14	24	21
Nondenominational	10	30	--	--	30	10
Progressive Theology	26	19	11	22	17	54
Moderate Theology	14	9	14	13	23	56
Conservative Theology	29	8	13	11	13	38
Actively Engaged in Politics	21	12	15	13	15	68
Provide Nonpartisan Information	27	16	11	20	20	45
Not Engaged	14	9	18	18	27	22

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.

**TABLE 3. Has anyone ever contacted you in person, by phone or mail about applying for a grant under the Faith-Based Initiative?**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	(N)
Total	16	84	750
Male Head Pastor	17	83	696
Female Head Pastor	15	85	54
One Pastor	12	88	207
Two Pastors	15	85	100
Three/Four Pastors	18	82	149
Five/Seven Pastors	17	83	142
Eight+ Pastors	20	80	148
Northeast	22	78	143
Midwest	19	81	135
South	14	86	405
West	16	84	67
Baptist	18	82	305
Methodist	16	84	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	14	86	187
Nondenominational	13	87	75
Socially Liberal Congregation	23	77	109
Socially Moderate Congregation	18	82	274
Socially Conservative Congregation	12	88	308
Urban	18	82	364
Suburban	17	83	226
Rural	11	89	160
Church Revenue < \$100,000	11	89	107
Church Revenue \$100-500,000	23	77	167
Church Revenue > \$500,000	28	72	99
Applied for FBCI Grant	39	61	79
Had Not Applied for FBCI Grant	14	86	671

*Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.*

yearly revenue more than \$500,000 (29 percent)—were more likely to have been contacted about the FBCI. Interestingly, ministers with socially liberal congregations (23 percent) were more likely to have been contacted than those with socially conservative congregations (12 percent). And, possibly reflecting a selection bias (i.e., contacts were made with churches known to be active in offering social services and seeking grants), 39 percent of those ministers from churches that had applied for FBCI grants report having been contacted about applying for a grant.

Only seven percent of the ministers indicated that their churches had requested technical assistance to upgrade their capacity to manage FBCI grants and satisfy the legal requirements; the only subgroup difference of note was that 37 percent of ministers whose churches had applied for FBCI grants requested technical assistance. Among the small percentage of churches requesting assistance, the requests were most frequently for either assistance in the grant application process (23 percent) or for additional information (13 percent); 77 percent of those requesting assistance reported that the technical assistance was either very or somewhat helpful.

A majority (53 percent) of the ministers said that their church had an interest in participating in the FBCI [Table 4, next page]. Ministers from churches in which the head pastor was male (59 percent), those from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches (61 percent), and churches from the Northeast (59 percent) were among those expressing the most interest. Also, ministers from churches in which there were five or more pastors (58 percent), from urban churches (58 percent), and from churches with a progressive theology (58 percent) expressed above-average interest. Ministers from churches in which the head pastor was female (39 percent), from churches in the West (40 percent), and from churches in rural areas expressed the least interest.

When the ministers who said that their churches were not interested in participating in the FBCI were asked to explain their lack of interest, they gave a mix of philosophical and practical reasons [Table 4.1, page 13]. Some believed that the government was trying to pass its responsibilities to the churches (31 percent), others had concerns about the constitutionality of the FBCI (27 percent), and 18 percent believed that there were too many strings attached to FBCI participation and that they would lose their right to criticize the

government. Practical concerns expressed included the cumbersome application process (22 percent) and lack of the technical capacity to participate (11 percent). While ministers from Evangelical and Pentecostal churches were more likely to be interested in participating in the FBCI, those Evangelical and Pentecostal ministers who lacked interest were the most likely to be critical of the process as too cumbersome and of the government as passing off its responsibilities (41 percent). Nondenominational ministers who expressed a lack of interest in the FBCI were the most concerned about losing the right to criticize the government (36 percent).

Eleven percent of the ministers reported that their church had applied for a FBCI grant [Table 5, page 14]. Churches that had been contacted about applying for an FBCI grant were much more likely to apply (25 percent) than those that were not contacted (eight percent). Churches with eight or more pastors (19 percent) were almost five times more likely to have applied for a grant than churches with one or two pastors (four percent). Churches in the Northeast (13 percent) were the most likely to have applied for a grant, while churches in the West (three percent) were the least likely to have done so. Evangelical, Pentecostal, and nondenominational churches were slightly more likely (13 percent) to have applied for a grant than Baptist or Methodist churches (nine percent). Ministers from churches with a progressive theology (16 percent) were more than twice as likely to have applied for a grant as ministers from churches with a conservative theology (seven percent). Ministers from churches in suburban areas (14 percent) were almost three times as likely to have applied as ministers from rural churches, and ministers from churches actively engaged in politics (14 percent) were twice as likely to have applied for a grant as those from churches not engaged in politics (seven percent). Remarkably, churches with ministers who disapproved of the FBCI were more likely to have applied for an FBCI grant (22 percent) than churches with ministers who approved (16 percent). Finally, the factor appearing to have the strongest relationship to application for an FBCI grant was church revenue. Only two percent of churches with annual revenue of \$50,000 or less applied for an FBCI grant, and only eight percent of churches with revenue between \$50,000 and \$100,000 did so. However, 28 percent of ministers from churches with revenue in excess of \$1 million reported having applied for a grant.

Eleven percent of the ministers reported that their churches had received money from the government (any government source) to provide social services [Table 6, page 15]. The larger churches (five or more ministers) were more likely (15 percent) to have received money from the government than smaller churches (eight percent). Ministers from churches in the Northeast (15 percent) and Midwest (14 percent) were more likely to report receiving money from the government than those from the South (nine percent) or West (three percent). Methodist churches (14 percent) and churches with progressive (13 percent) or moderate (14 percent) theologies were more likely to have received government money; only seven percent of churches with conservative theology received money from government sources. Urban (13 percent) and suburban churches (12 percent) were about equally likely to have received money from the government, but very few rural churches did so (three percent). Churches with low yearly revenue (five percent) were less likely to receive money from the government than churches with higher yearly revenues (12 to 14 percent). Churches actively engaged in politics (14 percent) were more likely to receive government money, and churches that applied for FBCI grants (29 percent) were about

**TABLE 4. Does your church have an interest in participating in the Faith-Based Initiative?**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	(N)
Total	53	47	750
Male Head Pastor	59	46	696
Female Head Pastor	39	61	54
One Pastor	45	55	307
Two/Four Pastors	53	47	149
Five+ Pastors	58	42	290
Northeast	59	41	143
Midwest	56	44	135
South	52	48	405
West	40	60	67
Baptist	51	49	305
Methodist	48	52	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	61	39	187
Nondenominational	55	45	75
Progressive Theology	58	42	243
Moderate Theology	52	48	205
Conservative Theology	49	51	302
Urban	58	42	364
Suburban	50	50	226
Rural	44	44	160
Actively Engaged in Politics	56	44	298
Provide Nonpartisan Information	54	46	237
Not Engaged	47	53	173

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.

**TABLE 4.1 Why do you have no interest in participating in the Faith-Based Initiative? (respondents who say their church has no interest)**

	Application Process too Cumbersome (%)	Concerns about Constitutionality (%)	Lack Technical Capacity (%)	Government is Passing Off its Responsibilities (%)	Too Many Strings Attached/ Lose Right to Criticize (%)	(N)
Total	22	27	11	31	18	355
Male Head Pastor	22	28	11	33	19	322
Female Head Pastor	21	15	12	18	6	33
One Pastor	18	25	14	32	24	100
Two Pastors	15	21	13	28	9	47
Three/Four Pastors	24	27	11	36	12	70
Five/Seven Pastors	26	30	9	35	18	57
Eight+ Pastors	26	28	6	25	24	65
Northeast	22	24	12	29	18	31
Midwest	28	30	15	25	16	34
South	19	28	9	34	21	73
West	23	23	13	30	5	10
Baptist	15	24	11	35	16	150
Methodist	18	29	11	24	18	98
Evangelical/Pentecostal	41	33	12	41	15	73
Nondenominational	21	21	6	15	36	34
Progressive Theology	22	28	7	31	17	102
Moderate Theology	22	27	14	31	12	98
Conservative Theology	21	26	12	32	23	155
Actively Engaged in Politics	22	26	8	34	19	130
Provide Nonpartisan Information	21	29	10	25	21	108
Not Engaged	21	29	15	37	15	91

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.

<b>TABLE 5. Has your church ever applied for a grant from the Faith-Based Initiative?</b>			
	<b>Yes (%)</b>	<b>No (%)</b>	<b>(N)</b>
Total	11	99	750
One/Two Pastors	4	96	307
Three/Seven Pastors	13	87	291
Eight+ Pastors	19	81	148
Northeast	13	87	143
Midwest	11	89	135
South	11	89	405
West	3	97	67
Baptist	9	91	305
Methodist	9	91	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	13	87	187
Nondenominational	13	87	75
Progressive Theology	16	84	243
Moderate Theology	9	91	205
Conservative Theology	7	93	302
Urban	11	89	364
Suburban	14	86	226
Rural	5	95	160
Church Revenue < \$50,000	2	98	41
Church Revenue \$50-100,000	8	82	66
Church Revenue \$100-500,000	14	86	219
Church Revenue > \$1,000,000	28	72	47
Actively Engaged in Politics	14	86	298
Provide Nonpartisan Information	9	91	237
Not Engaged	7	93	173
<i>Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.</i>			

**TABLE 6. Has your church ever received money from the government to provide social services in your community?**

	Yes (%)	No (%)	(N)
Total	11	89	750
Male Head Pastor	11	89	696
Female Head Pastor	7	93	54
One/Four Pastors	8	92	456
Five+ Pastors	15	85	290
Northeast	15	85	143
Midwest	14	86	135
South	9	81	405
West	3	97	67
Baptist	11	89	305
Methodist	14	86	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	10	90	187
Nondenominational	7	93	75
Progressive Theology	13	87	243
Moderate Theology	14	86	205
Conservative Theology	7	93	302
Urban	13	87	364
Suburban	12	88	226
Rural	3	97	160
Church Revenue < \$100,000	5	92	107
Church Revenue \$100-250,000	12	88	92
Church Revenue > \$250,000	14	86	174
Actively Engaged in Politics	14	86	298
Provide Nonpartisan Information	9	91	237
Not Engaged	9	91	173
Applied for FBCI Grant	29	71	79
Had Not Applied for FBCI Grant	8	92	671

*Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.*

three-and-a-half times more likely to receive money from the government than those that did not (eight percent). This may reflect the reality that once a church receives a grant from the government, it is more likely to receive other contracts or have its contract renewed since it has a proven track record with the government and has a legitimate organizational structure and administrative capacity.

Of the 11 percent of all churches that reported receiving money from the government, 24 percent said that the funds were from the FBCI. Thus, 2.6 of all of the churches surveyed in the study had received money from the FBCI; in all, 19 ministers said that their churches had received FBCI funds. Since 11 percent of the ministers said that their churches had applied for FBCI grants, and 2.6 percent received funds from the government identified as FBCI grants, the apparent success rate was about one in four. Of the 80 black churches that received money from the government, 23 had applied for an FBCI grant, and 52 percent of those churches received an FBCI grant. Ministers who said that they had been contacted about applying for an FBCI grant were more successful in obtaining one (31 percent) than those who were not contacted (19 percent). Churches with progressive theology (38 percent) were more likely to receive FBCI grants than those with conservative theology (25 percent). There were no obvious state-level political biases in the churches that were selected for FBCI grants. Black churches from New Jersey (four FBCI grants), New York (three), and Illinois (two) received more FBCI grants than such political battleground states as Florida (one) and Ohio (one); churches in New Jersey and New York received more FBCI grants than black churches in all eleven southern states. Of those ministers reporting the dollar amount of the grants, 75 percent were for less than \$50,000.

The programs for which black churches received FBCI grants included youth programs—such as childcare and summer and after-school programs (30 percent)—food programs (16 percent), and seniors’ programs, including housing (14 percent); only four percent of the FBCI recipients reported receiving grants for abstinence programs.

Slightly more ministers reported receiving money from a foundation or similar source (15 percent) than from the government (11 percent). The types of churches receiving money from foundations were similar to those receiving money from the government. Urban churches (18 percent) were more likely to have received money from a foundation than rural churches (eight percent), churches with yearly

revenues above \$250,000 (25 percent) were more likely to have received money from a foundation than those with lesser yearly revenue (12 percent), and churches in the Northeast (22 percent) and Midwest (18 percent) were more likely to have received money from a foundation than churches in the South (12 percent) or West (10 percent).

### *Perceptions of Impact of Government Regulations*

About one-quarter of the ministers said that they believed that complying with FBCI guidelines against inherently religious activities, such as prayer and proselytizing, would cause them to have to change the content of the social services that they deliver; 74 percent said that the guidelines would not require them to make any changes. Of those ministers who said that the guidelines would force them to change their social service programs, 42 percent said that prayer, biblical obligations, and religion were an important part of their service programs; nonetheless, 11 percent of the ministers who said that they would have to change the content of their services applied for an FBCI grant.

About a third of the ministers reported discussing the FBCI when attending meetings with other ministers. The discussions focused on the regulations and what grants were available (30 percent), how money could be used (12 percent), separation of church and state (nine percent), whether the government could be trusted (six percent), and what assistance was available for grant writing (five percent).

A significant concern for a large number of the pastors (44 percent) was that involvement with the government would compromise their independence or prophetic voice. There were minimal subgroup differences on the question, with about two in five ministers in every subgroup believing that involvement with government would compromise their independence or prophetic voice. Among those who believed this, about 10 percent came from churches that had applied for FBCI grants.

Given political discourse in the press concerning President Bush, black ministers, and the Faith-Based and Community Initiative (including the former FBCI director John Dilulio's observation that the entire Bush operation was run by his political advisers acting at the behest of right wing groups), there was surprisingly little cynicism about who was receiving FBCI grants among our sample. One-third of the pastors thought that all churches that applied were receiving the grants, while 29 percent did not know who was receiving the grants. One-quarter of the pastors thought that the grants were going to mega-churches (both black and white). A relatively small percentage of the pastors thought that the grants were going to either conservative Evangelical churches (four percent) or Christian right churches (five percent). Subgroup differences were minimal except that ministers from churches with annual revenue of at least \$1 million (60 percent) were more likely to believe that the grants were going to all churches that applied.

### *Views on Capacity Building*

When asked about capacity building and technical assistance, five areas dominated [Table 7, next page]. Two-thirds of the pastors said that they needed grant application training, and 55 percent said that they needed help in forming collaborations with others. Half of the pastors said that they needed legal advice and assistance with program evaluation,<sup>16</sup> and 52 percent said that they needed better access to public policy information. While better access to legislators and other political leaders is not technical training strictly speaking, 44 percent said they would like to see improvements in this area. Ministers from some subgroups of churches were consistently more likely to say that their churches had capacity-building needs in all five areas; they were from larger churches (five or more pastors), churches in the South, Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, churches with liberal and moderate theologies, and churches actively engaged in politics. Ministers from other subgroups of churches were consistently less likely to say that their churches had capacity-building needs in all five areas; they were from smaller churches (one or two pastors), churches in the West, nondenominational churches, churches with a conservative theology, and churches not engaged in politics. If this second group of churches has lesser capacity-building needs, it is not because they have greater existing capabilities than the first group of churches. Rather, given earlier findings about which churches

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<sup>16</sup> This relatively high level of concern about program evaluation indicates that many black ministers are serious about the effective provision of social services. Researchers have begun to examine the issue of whether the quality of faith-based organizations' services is equal to that of other providers, and preliminary analyses of nursing homes, based on administrative data, suggest that the quality of care (as measured by complaints) is better at faith-affiliated providers than at for-profit centers. See Mark Ragan, "Using Administrative Data to Compare the Performance of Faith-Affiliated and Other Social Service Providers" (Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government, SUNY-Albany, 2004), 10-13. However, this is just one type of service, and one that may be closer to the churches' mission than others.

TABLE 7. What technical assistance do you need to enhance your current social service programs or introduce new social service programs?							
	Proposal/Grant Application Training (%)	Help Forming Collaborations with Other Organizations (%)	Access to Public Policy Information (%)	Access to Legislators and Other Leaders (%)	Program Evaluation (%)	Legal Advice (%)	(N)
Total	67	55	52	44	50	50	750
Male Head Pastor	67	55	53	44	50	50	696
Female Head Pastor	67	54	46	44	44	44	54
One /Two Pastors	62	46	46	40	42	40	309
Three/Four Pastors	65	59	48	46	48	54	149
Five+ Pastors	74	62	60	47	58	58	290
Northeast	68	47	50	44	47	48	143
Midwest	62	47	46	41	45	47	135
South	71	64	58	48	54	55	405
West	55	36	33	25	39	31	67
Baptist	64	52	52	48	50	48	305
Methodist	70	60	53	48	51	48	188
Evangelical/Pentecostal	71	57	55	57	52	57	187
Nondenominational	63	45	44	44	39	44	75
Progressive Theology	74	56	52	45	52	51	243
Moderate Theology	71	60	62	49	57	56	205
Conservative Theology	59	51	45	40	43	45	302
Actively Engaged in Politics	77	61	62	52	60	58	298
Provide Nonpartisan Information	69	52	50	41	45	49	237
Not Engaged	52	53	42	40	43	43	173

Source: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, National Survey of Black Churches on the Faith-Based and Community Initiative, 2006.

are the most interested in participating in the FBCI, it seems that this second group of churches is less inclined to expand their social service offering, compete for funding, or become involved with the government, and hence, they have lesser needs for capacity building.

The ministers were asked how the government, foundations, intermediary organizations, and their denominational organizations could enhance their social service activities. They believed that the government could enhance their activities by training church personnel to understand the rules for government grants (12 percent) and by making the rules less restrictive (13 percent); they also said that the funds should be available when they were most needed (16 percent). The ministers thought that their denominational organizations should foster better communication between government and churches (11 percent). Similar to their responses about government, the ministers believed that foundations should provide training to understand rules (16 percent) and provide funds when they were most needed (21 percent). Seven percent of the ministers wanted both their denominational and intermediary organizations to facilitate partnerships with other churches and organizations in seeking funding for social services.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey was designed and the questionnaire was developed at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. The questionnaire development was informed by the findings from two focus groups of black ministers; the first was held at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 23, 2005, and the second was held at Howard University School of Divinity on October 27, 2005. The questionnaire development was also informed by input from the Joint Center's Faith-Based Advisory Committee. This report is based upon a national survey of 750 black churches conducted between November 11, 2005 and January 24, 2006. The churches were randomly selected from a national sampling frame of 18,000 black churches. Mosques were not included in the sampling frame; thus, analysis refers only to churches. The selection process was stratified by region, size of church, and denomination.

The survey results are based upon telephone interviews with head pastors or other ordained personnel at the randomly selected churches. After the initial call, there were at least eight "call-backs" if no interview was completed.

Since this survey was based upon sampling from a list of 18,000 black churches, the generality of the results depends on how broadly that list captures the estimated 50,000 black congregations in the U.S.<sup>17</sup> The sampling frame represents about 35 percent of all black churches. If the sampling frame approximates this larger population—and given that statistics from large surveys are robust with respect to their assumptions—the results of this survey can be interpreted with a statistical margin of error of 3.6 percentage points.

During the field work phase of the survey, an effort was made to maximize the use of same-race interviewers, and a majority of the interviews were conducted with same-race interviewers (i.e., black interviewers for black respondents and white interviewers for white respondents).

## **THE SAMPLE OF BLACK CHURCHES**

The sample was stratified by region; thus, the distribution of churches reflects the distribution of the black population in the country. The South (54 percent) was the region with the most churches, and the West (nine percent) was that with the least. The churches ranged in size from less than 50 registered congregants to 15,000. The median-sized church had 400 registered congregants. Among the 750 churches, 41 percent represented Baptist denominations, 25 percent Methodist denominations, 25 percent Pentecostal or Evangelical denominations, and 10 percent non-denominational. The churches' theological inclinations varied, with 40 percent described as having a conservative theology, 32 percent as having a progressive theology, and 27 percent as having a moderate theology.

About half the respondents described the location of their church as urban, another 30 percent described their location as suburban, and 21 percent described their location as rural. A majority of the churches (57 percent) had moved to their present location from another, and 47 percent of the respondents described their previous neighborhood as being poor or inner-city. The churches represent a mix of commuter and neighborhood types, with 15 percent reporting that most church members live in the neighborhood and 39 percent reporting that most church members commute from somewhere else; 46 percent of the respondents said their churches were a mix of neighbors and commuters.

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<sup>17</sup> According to American Church Lists, Inc.

The median-sized church had three ordained personnel, and 28 percent of the churches had a single pastor; 20 percent of the churches had eight or more ordained personnel. Most of the head pastors were men (93 percent), and most pastors served only a single church (85 percent). More than a quarter (29 percent) of the churches have other congregations using their church. The median church holds three services per week; 15 percent of the churches hold five or more services per week and eight percent of the churches hold only a single service per week.

The median church's congregation was described as being between 51 and 60 percent poor and working class; 22 percent of the churches' congregations were described as 80 percent or more poor and working class. The median church's congregation was described as being between 31 and 40 percent middle class or affluent; 10 percent of the churches' congregations were described as 80 percent or more middle class or affluent. Women made up between 51 and 60 percent of those at Sunday service at one-third of the churches, and at 41 percent of the churches, women comprised 60 percent or more of the Sunday churchgoers.

A slight majority of the churches were described as independent (54 percent). Of the 46 percent of the churches that were not independent, 41 percent of the pastors said that they had to consult with a bishop or other church leader before making major decisions.

A plurality (41 percent) of the pastors interviewed described their congregation as socially conservative and 37 percent described socially moderate congregations; only 15 percent of the pastors said that their congregation was socially liberal.

A plurality of respondents (40 percent) described their church's involvement with the political process as active engagement on matters of social justice, while 32 percent said that they only provide nonpartisan information on issues; 23 percent said that their church was not involved with the political process. The largest churches (55 percent) were more actively involved than the smallest churches (31 percent). Churches with more progressive theologies and liberal congregations were more actively involved (57 percent), while those with conservative theologies and conservative congregations were the least so (31 percent).

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Since 1992, David Bositis has conducted the Joint Center's National Opinion Poll, the only national survey that routinely polls equal numbers of African Americans and the general population on a wide variety of issues. He has also conducted specialized national surveys of black elected officials, young adults, black churches, minority-owned businesses, and black professionals. A voting rights and redistricting expert, Dr. Bositis has authored the Joint Center's election analyses each year since 1992. He is the author or co-author of five books, nine monographs, and numerous scholarly articles, analyses, and reports. Published works include *2002 National Opinion Poll: Education* (2003), *2002 National Opinion Poll: Politics* (2002), *Changing of the Guard: Generational Differences Among Black Elected Officials* (2001), *Diverging Generations: The Transformation of African American Policy Views* (2001), and *The Black Vote in 2000* (2000). Dr. Bositis previously served in faculty positions at the State University College of New York at Potsdam and at George Washington University. He holds a Ph.D. and an M.A. in political science from Southern Illinois University and a B.A. from Northwestern University.

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