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‘Big Boston’:
The Impact of Community Organizing
on Christian and Jewish Congregations in Boston

A dissertation presented
by
Ann Baird McClenahan

to
The Faculty of Harvard Divinity School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Theology
In the Subject of
Religion and Society

Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts
May 2010

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The undersigned, appointed by the

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have examined a dissertation entitled

'Big Boston': The Impact of Community Organizing
on Christian and Jewish Congregations in Boston

presented by Ann Baird McClenahan

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‘Big Boston’:
The Impact of Community Organizing on Christian and Jewish Congregations in Boston

Abstract

Recent scholarly work has shed light on various contributions made by community based community organizing (CBCO) to civic life in the United States. Through national organizations such as the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), local CBCO affiliates engage members in a variety of relationship- and leadership-building practices to effectively address and solve common community, regional, and statewide problems. This dissertation examines one IAF affiliate, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO). GBIO was founded in 1996 to organize across Boston’s religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines for the public good. Versus earlier studies, the lens is here reversed; the object of this study is to understand how congregations *qua* religious institutions are impacted by and interpret democratic practice.

Based on participant observation, in-depth ethnographic conversations, and an examination of written documents, this study examines Jewish and Christian congregations as they engage in the campaign to bring progressive healthcare reform to Massachusetts. Its interests are interdisciplinary, drawing on disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Its grounding discipline is Religious Studies, with a focus on lived religion, understood as an approach that locates religious creativity within culture. It engages current sociological scholarship in its sub-fields of religion, culture, and social movements. Finally, it examines political science scholarship interested in civic engagement and social capital in an increasingly diverse society.

This research finds that when religious practice engages CBCO democratic practice, the result can be productive of pluralism without being reductive of difference. Congregations, drawing on situated religious traditions, can foster pluralism, understood as self-conscious, active, and intentional engagement with diversity. Further, this case study demonstrates that congregations engaged in civic activity have religious resources to mediate conflict that might be intractable in the political sphere.

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The heart of this study focuses on Boston and the GBIO leaders who are working so hard, and so successfully, to make Boston a better place for all to live. To the clergy and lay leaders who hosted me in their homes and congregations – I will never forget your gracious gifts of time and insight. I hope I listened carefully, and hope that I have accurately related part of your experience. In particular, I would like to thank Rabbi Toba Spitzer and Emily Sper of Dorshei Tzedek; Rev. Dan Smith and Alice and Dave Kidder of First Church in Cambridge; Rev. Burns Stanfield and Peter Brook of Fourth Presbyterian Church; Rev. Tony Kebreau and Maymone Valentine of New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church; Rev. Hurmon Hamilton and Lisa Broderick of Roxbury Presbyterian Church; Sister Sally McLaughlin and Father John Doyle, now retired, of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church; and Rabbi Jonah Pesner and Fran Godine, of

Temple Israel. I also want to thank Rev. Dr. Ray Hammond and Rev. David Carl Olson for sharing their experiences from a challenging time in the life of GBIO. As a result of the dedication and commitment of these people -- and many hundreds more – GBIO has been able to make an ongoing contribution to Boston's common good. Given the city's history of fragmentation, this is a truly remarkable accomplishment.

Thanks are next due to my dissertation committee, chaired by Ron Thiemann, my advisor since I arrived at Harvard Divinity School as a second career M.T.S. student. Ron's scholarship has greatly influenced the course of my studies at HDS, and I cannot thank him enough for his guidance, encouragement, and patience. My horizons and thinking have been expanded by him as they have been by my other dissertation committee members: Nancy Tatom Ammerman, Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, and Theda Skocpol. Your seminars, classes, presentations, scholarship, and public commitments have inspired and challenged me greatly.

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My father, John McClenahan, died the year before I moved to Cambridge. He has been in my mind and heart throughout. My mother, Barbara McClenahan, is the best. Her love and pride have bolstered me from start to finish. Thank you, Mom. Sadly, my dearest friend and brother, David McClenahan, did not make it to see this moment. I am forever grateful for his life.

To Dave-o, with love.

Mizpah.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Religious organizations in the United States are “a kind of coral reef pulsating with democratic life.”[1] So writes the Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy of the American Political Science Association. This engaging metaphor about religious institutions is supported by a wealth of social science research that points to the fact that congregations across the American religious spectrum train their members in the skills necessary for democracy and, as organizations, participate in local, regional, and national forms of democratic practice.[2]

But in addition to providing safe habitats – nurturing homes for one-third of all marine fish species – coral reefs are simultaneously affected by that which surrounds and supports them: the wave action, temperature, light exposure, and interaction with other forms of sea life. If we pursue this metaphor beyond its obvious intent – to make the point that religious congregations are institutional loci of democratic skill-building and practice – we might ask if, and how, these religious institutions, like coral reefs, are sustained and shaped by their environments, by the larger culture in which they are located. That is the question this dissertation seeks to begin to address. It asks if, and how, democratic practice, in the form of congregationally based community organizing, engages the religious life of participating religious congregations. This study looks at how a specific form of democratic culture, when introduced to varied forms of religious culture, stimulates change in the narratives, practices, and commitments of participating individuals and congregations. More specifically, the study focuses how congregations *qua* religious institutions react to democratic practice.

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[1] Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy. 2004. “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality.” Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 19. http://www.apsanet.org (accessed 9/25/04).

[2] See, for example, Sydney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. *Voice and Equality: Civic Volunteerism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GBIO

The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) is an affiliate of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), founded by Saul Alinsky in Chicago in 1940, and currently associated with 47 organizations in the United States and 4 internationally.[3] Alinsky's organization and accomplishments have been well documented. Very briefly, the premise of the IAF, as stated by one of Alinsky's heirs, is that "the most important strategy for the alleviation of poverty is one that is embedded in the re-creation of cultural and civic institutions that identify and mentor people capable of exerting leadership to organize constituencies for the development of stronger, more active and cohesive communities."[4]

Alinsky was nothing if not astute; he perceived that developing an organization by drawing upon existing social institutions within a community would give the new meta-organization a ready connection with established financial and organizational resources. Although Alinsky was not personally much interested in the ideological proclivities of the institutions he recruited, over the ensuing decades the IAF organization has come to embrace what sociologist Mark Warren describes as a "theology of organizing," reflecting the significant numbers of religious congregations that are affiliated with the IAF.[5]

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[3] Canada, England, Germany, and Australia.

[4] Ernesto Cortés, Jr., "Reweaving the Fabric: The Iron Rule and the IAF Strategy for Power and Politics," in Henry G. Cisneros, ed., *Interwoven Destinies: Cities and the Nation* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1993), 294.

Religious symbols and stories only became "central organizing tools for the IAF" under the leadership of Edward T. Chambers, who succeeded Alinsky as Executive Director upon the latter's death in 1972, and Ernesto Cortés, the organization's best known contemporary political and theological theorist.[6] As summarized by Warren, the IAF theology of organizing is an unsystematic and fluid set of religious symbols, stories, values, and traditions drawn from faith traditions that "emphasize a commitment to community building and to social justice."[7] In terms of a full-blown systematic theology, this is a thin theological construct. However, in contrast to more instrumental views of religious congregations as resources for mobilization, the IAF respects the inherent value of shared religious commitments in the civic arena.

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[5] Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 12.

[6] Ibid. Chambers retired in January 2010 as Executive Director; his position is being filled in 2010 – 2011 by the four IAF National Co-Directors: Ernesto Cortés, Michael Gecan, Sister Stephanie Stevens, and Arnie Graf, who also supervises GBIO.

[7] Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling*, 59.

The Boston IAF affiliate, GBIO, was first conceived in January of 1996 when 45 clergy members met to discuss creating such an organization in metropolitan Boston. Three months later, they drafted its Statement of Purpose, which read as follows:

> Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO) will coalesce, train, and organize the communities of Greater Boston across all religious, racial, ethnic, class and neighborhood lines for the public good. Our primary goal is to develop local leadership. This will enable us to develop the power of organized numbers to hold other holders of power accountable to their public responsibilities, as well as initiate action and programs of our own to solve community and economic problems.[8]

They further stipulated the following:

> We are multi-issue. The issues we work on come from within our institutions, from the concerns of the people. We cross neighborhood, city, racial, religious, and class lines to find common ground and act on our faith and democratic values. We support each other's work in local neighborhoods and communities; we practice the Golden Rule. We also practice the Iron Rule of "never doing for people what they can do for themselves." We develop the combined power to solve larger problems that cannot be solved by one neighborhood or one racial or ethnic group alone.

This GBIO founding document reveals the foundational IAF political theories of organizing, echoing Ernesto Cortés' observation that the "work of the IAF is to create organized constituencies that are effective in teaching real politics."[9] Theological or religious principles, however, are clearly secondary in this statement. In fact, in the first paragraph, the reader learns only that "Interfaith" is part of the organization's name and that GBIO is interested in the public good (as opposed to more traditional liberal political language of and interest in individual rights). In the second, more methodological paragraph, religious allusions emerge to a greater extent. In this paragraph, the organization announces its interest in (unspecified) faith values. Further, the "Golden Rule" is invoked. This rule – do to others as you would have them do to you – is often narrowly associated with Christian scripture (Matt 7:12) but variants are articulated by a wide variety of faith traditions around the world.[10] Just as the IAF theology of organizing hangs on a few key symbols, so the GBIO Statement of Purpose formally incorporates only very general, interpretively open, religious language. Early members of GBIO proceeded – and continue to this day – to negotiate and construct a shared understanding of general conditions in need of change, articulate a broad plan/approach to effect such changes, and identify a subset of the populace to engage with them.

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[8] Introduction, Areas, History, Congregational/Organizational Leadership Development, 'One on One' Relational Meetings, (Greater Boston Interfaith Organization). http://www.gbio.org (accessed 1/19/03).

By the spring of 2000, GBIO was a thriving organization that enjoyed prominent and regular coverage in Boston's leading newspaper, *The Boston Globe.* And for good reason; during the sixteen month period leading up to its May 2000 "Co-Missioning Assembly," GBIO members held numerous area assemblies throughout the metropolitan area, announced an affordable housing initiative, met repeatedly with City Council candidates and members, collected 123,000 metropolitan-wide signatures in support of increased affordable housing funding, met with over fifty state Senators and Representatives, and gathered 3,200 citizens for a rally at Boston's Reggie Lewis Center at which then-State Senate President Thomas Birmingham announced a five-year, $100 million affordable housing trust fund.[11] Both then Roman Catholic Cardinal Bernard Law and Episcopal Bishop Thomas Shaw regularly leant their considerable prestige and presence to GBIO initiatives and events throughout this period.[12]

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[9] Cortés, "Reweaving the Fabric," 319.

[10] Jonathan Z. Smith, ed., *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 391.

GBIO was off to a remarkable start. By 2001, the organization was focusing its attention on supporting funding of the affordable housing trust, creating a $1 million increase in textbook funding for the Boston Public Schools, and the announcement that it had raised $5 million to sponsor 1,000 units of affordable housing, based on a New York model. Unfortunately, by the second half of that year, and for the next 18 months, the organization faced one setback after another, some self-inflicted and some created by circumstances extrinsic to the organization.[13] It was not until mid-2002, when GBIO identified the *Justice for Janitors* living wage campaign in partnership with the Service Employees

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[11] $20 million annually to be contributed in each of five years.

[12] Although a fraction of the size of the Roman Catholic community, the Episcopal diocese of Massachusetts, encompassing the eastern half of the state, is the third largest diocese in the Episcopal Church of the United States. Source: *Episcopal Church Annual* (Harrisburg: Morehouse Publishing, 1996).

[13] See Chapter Four, 152-155, for details.

International Union (SEIU), the 2003 Nursing Home Campaign to create a bill of rights for the largely immigrant workers in nursing homes throughout the state, and the 2004 campaign to secure advantaged benefits for GBIO members at Citizen's Bank, that the organization began to stabilize and once again flourish. This dissertation focuses on the subsequent GBIO campaign, the one that in 2005-2006 addressed the passage of greatly expanded healthcare coverage in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It also looks back to the time of stress within the organization, and forward to its 10th Anniversary Action, held in mid-2008.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE THEOLOGY OF GBIO

Neither the IAF nor the GBIO theology of organizing incorporates a full-blown examination of biblical studies, theological ethics, and pastoral concerns, to name some of the interests that are classically assigned to the discipline of theology. Formulated primarily by paid organizers and volunteer clergy-members – that is by political and religious *practitioners* – GBIO theology relies on Hebrew and Christian scriptures, the Talmud, the teachings of St. Francis, the constitution of a women's religious order, the speeches of Frederick Douglass and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Jewish and Christian liturgical calendars, to name just some of the sources. The result is neither systematic nor philosophical in nature. But it is in the tradition of faith seeking an understanding of the role of religious selves and community within the body politic.

To say that the GBIO theology of organizing is neither systematic nor philosophical, however, is not to say that it does not reflect the influence of sophisticated theological perspectives. Embedded in the stories that are told by GBIO organizers and leaders are commitments drawn from three of the latter half of the twentieth century's significant Christian theological initiatives: political, narrative, and moral theology, or Christian ethics as it is more commonly known among Protestants. In addition, given the early, significant, and ongoing participation by Jewish synagogues, the GBIO theology of organizing has also been significantly shaped by commitments central to the Reform and Reconstructionist branches of Judaism.

Christian Influences

The contemporary origins of Christian political theology can be traced to the writings of two German theologians, Johann Baptist Metz, a Roman Catholic, and Jürgen Moltmann, a Protestant. Writing in the 1960s, and in reaction against the lack of resistance that European churches raised in the face of Nazism, Metz and Moltmann introduced a renewed focus on the public impact of religion and its role in shaping just societies. While both have been critiqued for being committed to theory over practice – for failing to align theory with a specific political ethic – their work nevertheless served as a powerful influence on the liberation theologies that emerged in the 1970s.

There is no single liberation theology, and its different trajectories – including Latin American, Feminist, Womanist, and Black – that are linked under the rubric 'liberation theologies' are as varied as they are similar. That being said, liberation theologies share a commitment to understanding and addressing structural forms of social inequity and injustice as well as a commitment to those most in need. These interests – the public role of religion in bringing about just society, the structural nature of social disparity, and standing with neighbors in need – are clear commitments in the IAF theology of organizing.

Narrative theology is another twentieth century development that emphasizes biblical texts as a collection of narratives, stories of historical peoples received and interpreted by contemporary communities of faith.[14] Narrative theology instructs these faith communities to act and interpret their actions in light of their understanding of the biblical stories as they have been received through tradition and in light of present circumstances. Ancient stories, newly interpreted, become central to community formation and self-understanding. The world, and the human role within it, becomes comprehensible in light of the biblical narratives. Narrative theology does not presume a specific content or understanding. Rather, it instantiates a commitment to a living, communal hermeneutics of scripture.

GBIO centers its organizational formation and interpretation on individual and communal storytelling. When framing a public action, the stories that GBIO members tell are most often drawn from the Hebrew and Christian scriptures to diagnose an unjust situation and define a course of action. Thus the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt becomes more than a central foundational Jewish narrative; it also illustrates the contemporary imperative for communal action in the political arena on behalf of healthcare expansion. Just as Moses and the Israelites faced many obstacles in their efforts to escape Pharaoh's bondage, so GBIO faces many legislative obstacles in fighting for expanded healthcare. Just as Moses and the Israelites had to act together to make good their escape, so too GBIO members must act together to bring about healthcare reform.

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[14] As with liberation theology, I do not want to over-define interests that have appealed to a wide variety of theologians. Taking the importance of scriptural narrative and community interpretation as central, however, theologians who have engaged these interests include Karl Barth, H. Richard Niebuhr, Hans Frei, George Lindbeck, and, more recently, Ronald Thiemann and Stanley Hauerwas.

The third theological stream that has greatly influenced the IAF is that of moral theology or Christian ethics. Although not new to the 20th century – in the West, moral theological thought can be traced to the biblical scriptures themselves – moral theology as an ecumenical discipline was renewed in the 1960s in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. It is essentially a practical discipline, with interests in moral discernment, action, and norms. This ethical praxis, that is this practice of action inflected by reflection, introduces a strong ethic of public action and engagement to the GBIO theological make-up. Even the most cursory review of GBIO documents and statements reveals the organization's commitment to moral action guided by the theoretical framework of political theology and the textual/contextual framework of narrative theology.

Jewish Influences

GBIO's earliest synagogue members represented the Reform and Reconstuctionist movements within American Judaism. They hold complementary, but different, perspectives on the relationship of Judaism to social justice work in society.

Within Reform Judaism, the Pittsburgh Platform, promulgated in 1885, but with its roots reaching back in American Judaism for several centuries, enunciated eight points of common commitment. Its final point linked Judaism with "the great task of modern times, to solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society."[15] This strand in Judaism became known as Prophetic Judaism, and many of its foundational texts were drawn from the 8th century B.C.E. biblical prophets Amos, Isaiah, and Micah.[16]

Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, who died in 1983, was the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, the only movement within Judaism to have developed entirely in the United States.[17] There are several commitments central to Reconstructionist Judaism that are sympathetic to CBCO goals. First is the Reconstructionist dedication to community and respect for the core values of democratic process, pluralism, and accessibility. Second is its emphasis on social justice, alongside prayer and study, as a central aspect of Jewish practice.

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[15] Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 149-150, citing Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: Essay on Jewish History and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 387-388.

[16] Sarna, *American Judaism*, 195.

[17] Ibid., 243.

The overlap in these strands of twentieth and twenty first century Christian and Jewish thought are readily evident. Accepting public responsibility, furthering social justice, building community, and drawing on the power of narrative for communal formation are common elements within the participating traditions. Importantly, however, these elements are not employed generically within GBIO. GBIO asks its leaders to speak from their own traditions. Prayer, narrative, praise, thanksgiving, and study are always located in a specific historical tradition. The framework is shared but the specifics are not. GBIO members are thereby exposed to a wide variety of religious expression.

CONGREGATION BASED COMMUNITY ORGANIZING:
STATE OF THE FIELD

The Industrial Areas Foundation is one of four national networks, and many smaller regional networks, that operate with a congregation based community organizing (CBCO) model in over one hundred cities and towns across the country.[18] In the most recent national survey, sociologists Mark Warren and Richard Wood estimated that, in total, these networks had 133 affiliates and represented between one and three million people.[19]

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[18] The other national organizations include PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing), The Gamaliel Foundation, and ACORN (The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). The latter has been under attack for the past six months in the press and may be currently undergoing reorganization.

The IAF and its fellow organizing networks have increasingly become objects of study. Since 1990, the IAF generally, and its affiliates in Texas and New York in particular, have received regular attention from both scholars and practitioners.[20] GBIO, the IAF affiliate in metropolitan Boston, has also been addressed, but to a much more limited extent.[21] As will become apparent in subsequent chapters, GBIO is remarkable within the IAF for the extent of its

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[19] Mark R. Warren and Richard L. Wood, *Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field: A Report of the Findings of a National Survey Conducted by Interfaith Funders*, 2001, 6. Interfaith Funders is currently seeking funding to update this survey.

[20] A partial list includes: Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger: A Story of Faith and Power Politics* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1990); Jim Rooney, *Organizing the South Bronx* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling*; Dennis A. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Stephen Hart, *Cultural Dilemmas of Progressive Politics: Styles of Engagement Among Grassroots Activists* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Michael Gecan, *Going Public* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); and Edward T. Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2003).

[21] Mary Ann Ford Flaherty and Richard L. Wood, *Faith and Public Life: Faith-Based Community Organizing and the Development of Congregations* (Syosset, NY: Interfaith Funders, 2004); Ari Lipman, "From Woodrow Avenue to Woodrow Avenue: The Path of an Organizer and a Jewish Community," in *The Reconstructionist*, vol. 8, No. 1, Fall 2003, 24-32; Jonah Dov Pesner, "The Blood of Our Neighbors: American Healthcare Reform," in *Righteous Indignation: A Jewish Call for Justice,* Or N. Rose, Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, Margie Klein; forward by David Ellenson. (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2008); Ann McClenahan, "A Case Study of Jewish-Christian Social Activism in Boston," (Chicago: American Academy of Religion Annual Conference, 2008).

Jewish membership. When the research for this dissertation was conducted, synagogues represented 18% of GBIO congregational members. Today, synagogue membership has increased to 23% of GBIO congregational membership. This particular aspect of GBIO has become recognized within the IAF and within American Judaism, and it has spurred interest in Jewish CBCO participation across the country.

To date, however, GBIO has not been studied on an organization-wide basis. And no IAF organization has been observed from an interdisciplinary perspective based primarily in Religious Studies, with significant interests in sociological and political theory as they relate to religion, social movements, culture, and civic engagement. What distinguishes this study is its focus on participating congregations and the changes they experience as a result of public, political activity as CBCO members.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

Contributions to Scholarship

This is an interdisciplinary work, drawing on resources from both the humanities and social sciences. Its grounding discipline is Religious Studies, where the limited scholarship to date has focused on the construction of theological and biblical warrants in support of community organizing.[22] This dissertation is very much a study of lived religion, a theoretical approach that locates religious creativity within culture. Robert Orsi describes the approach taken here well when he writes, "the study of lived religion directs attention to institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas – all as media of making and unmaking worlds. The key questions concern what people *do* with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them."[23] Lived religion focuses its attention on practitioners as much or more than it does on experts; it is particularly attentive to meaning created and passed along at the congregational grassroots level.

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[22] See, for example, Jacobsen, *Doing Justice*.

The interest in lived religion is shared by some sociologists, especially those interested in ethnographic contributions to scholarship. The study presented here engages this literature and is attentive to current sociological scholarship in its sub-fields of religion, culture, and social movements. In framing this research, Robert Wuthnow's reflections on the institutional approach to the sociology of culture – an approach that focuses on structural and dramaturgic elements and the connections between matters of organization, leadership, and participation in producing cultural shifts – were also most helpful. Institutional constraints on action and change are important considerations.

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[23] Robert A. Orsi, "Is the Study of Lived Religion Irrelevant to the World We Live in? Special Presidential Plenary Address, Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Salt Lake City, November 2, 2002" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 42:2 (2003) 172.

There is a relatively small group of sociologists who are focusing on CBCOs. Their more significant studies have looked at the impact of CBCOs on congregational development, social capital, democratic renewal, and civic engagement.[24] This study has been informed by their work, and seeks to contribute by focusing primarily on the impact of democratic practice on religious practice. It seeks to closely examine the distinctive narratives, rituals, and practices of GBIO, where and how they intersect with existing congregational culture, and the extent to which they become adopted and adapted by participating congregations. It will be argued that religious culture is affected by the religio-political nature of CBCO activity, sometimes in quite surprising ways. While religious commitments in the U.S. can be a source of difference and conflict in public and political life, the experience of GBIO indicates that religious commitments can be the source of productive insights and behaviors in times of conflict. This is not meant to cast religion in an instrumental light or as a means to an end. Rather, this case study points to circumstances in which religious and democratic practice served to dialectically stimulate and challenge each other in ways participants find revelatory.

Finally, this dissertation is interested in the literature of civic engagement, in particular as it reflects on religious engagement in the realm of political and policy debate. Where the wall of separation between church and state has been, and continues to be, is a heated debate in the America. This dissertation traces the historical roots of this debate and engages theory through grounded experience. It argues that religious symbols and narratives can be remarkable resources for the moral considerations that lie at the heart of debates about the public good.

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[24] In particular, I am thinking of the work of Steven Hart, Paul Lichterman, Mark R. Warren, and Richard L. Wood.

Methodology

Research for this dissertation took place primarily over a two year period beginning in March of 2005. The most recent GBIO activity I attended was its 10th Anniversary Action celebrated on the Boston University campus in May of 2008. My research methods included three sources of data: participant observation, in-depth ethnographic conversations, and an examination of written documents, including media coverage of the organization. I have drawn on these multiple sources to confirm and expand the perceptions and memories of individual actors.

I conducted participant observation of GBIO activities, attending over 50 internal organization meetings, leadership retreats, Strategy Team meetings, public actions, congregational house meetings, and congregational worship/services. In addition, I attended a week long IAF national training in San Antonio, TX in March of 2005 and a week long IAF east coast training in Braintree, MA in October of that year. See Appendix B for a full list of observations.

The second source of data was in-depth conversations with IAF and GBIO organizers and leaders. These conversations were conducted in compliance with

Harvard's Committee on the Use of Human Subjects requirements. I interviewed four IAF national organizers, six current and former GBIO organizers, seventy-seven GBIO leaders, and two community leaders for this study. See Appendix C for a full list of interviews.

The final source of data, written documents, includes three main sources: the GBIO website, updated throughout the course of this research; the websites, sermons, and announcements concerning GBIO activities at participating congregations; and articles published in *The Boston Globe*, *The Boston Herald*, and *The New York Times* between November 1998 and December 2006.

Seven congregations generously allowed me considerable access to clergy, lay members, worship, and meetings during the course of this research. It is their stories that form the heart of this study. Those congregations, introduced in greater detail in following chapters, include: Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, a Reconstructionist synagogue in West Newton; First Church of Cambridge, a United Church of Christ congregation in Cambridge; Fourth Presbyterian Church in South Boston; New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church in Mattapan; Roxbury Presbyterian Church; St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Dorchester; and Temple Israel, a Reform synagogue in the Longwood Medical neighborhood of Boston. My objective was to study a cross-section of GBIO membership, and the congregations were selected in consultation with GBIO organizing staff members. Participating congregations include five churches and two synagogues; five urban and two suburban congregations; two churches with substantial or exclusive immigrant membership; two churches with evangelical theological commitments; three churches with substantial or exclusive Black membership. The seven congregations also represent a cross-section of Boston's socio-economic diversity.

PLAN OF THE DISSERTATION

The case study that constitutes the body of this dissertation is contained in three chapters. Chapter Two focuses on the ambiguity of the doctrine of the separation of church and state in American discourse and focuses on ways in which religious congregations and individuals experience political participation as they negotiate and rethink the public role of religion.

Chapter Three examines the impact of GBIO on the development of reflective pluralism among its participating congregations. Reflective pluralism, as defined by sociologist Robert Wuthnow, is distinguished from mere diversity by requirements to be substantive and studious in nature, to foster respectful and committed perspectives that nevertheless remain open to compromise, and to actively seek the neutralization of anti-pluralist views.[25]

Chapter Four examines what transpired when GBIO faced significant internal conflict as the debate around legalization of equal marriage consumed the

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[25] Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 289.

Commonwealth in the fall of 2003 and spring of 2004. This chapter sheds light on the ability of congregations to incorporate and interpret democratic practices in revelatory ways within the context of their religious lives.

In the concluding chapter, I revisit these findings and discuss the applicability of the GBIO model for other metropolitan areas.

CHAPTER TWO

CONGREGATIONS AS PUBLIC ACTORS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine ways democratic practice, in the form of GBIO community organizing, impacts participating congregations and individuals in terms of their understanding of the public role of religion and their participation in the civic arena. This chapter will situate GBIO community organizing within the context of congregational outreach activity and attitudes about religious participation in public life in 21st century America. Next, it will examine the theoretical political commitments that underlie the IAF approach to democratic participation. Finally, and at its core, the chapter will examine the GBIO campaign for healthcare in Massachusetts during 2005 and 2006.

CONGREGATIONAL OUTREACH

In *Pillars of Faith*, sociologist Nancy Ammerman examines the various forms of collective activity undertaken by congregations in the United States.[1] By congregation, she means a site of "voluntary collective religious activity" which defines its mission "in terms of external impact as well as relationships…[between members] and their god." [2] This collective religious work includes a range of activities, including facilitating the experience of conversion, nurturing individuals' spiritual lives, convening corporate worship, and teaching the traditions and practices of the faith.[3] Further, most congregations are far from being active exclusively on behalf of current members. Another central congregational activity includes recognizing and fulfilling an obligation to serve the larger world, often in partnership with other organizations. To think of the religious work of congregations as private, meaning not public or unconnected with larger society, is to misunderstand their mission. In acknowledging religious commitments and teachings that call them to be active in the world, congregations and their members do so as public actors.

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[1] Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and Their Partners* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[2] Ibid., 2, 20.

Serving the world beyond congregational walls takes a variety of shapes. Among the congregations that Ammerman studied, half reported that their primary outreach goal focuses on spreading the faith through evangelism. Especially for Conservative and African American Protestant congregations, “winning souls for Christ” is of paramount importance.[4] The second leading outreach goal is to serve the community, mentioned by over a third of congregations. This approach is most important among Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox congregations, and is understood as serving those in need due to hunger, loneliness, or illness.

These first two goals were cited by 87% of congregations and represent the overwhelming focus of congregational outreach activity at the start of the twenty-first century. Less commonly practiced are three other activities cited by the remaining 13% of congregations. These include bridging ethnic and interfaith differences, defending morality, and changing the world. In this last category of outreach, cited by just 3% of US congregations, the goal is to create basic systemic and structural changes that address root causes of social issues. This goal, unlike the other five, is not only public, but explicitly political in nature as well. The 3% of congregations that name this goal are primarily Catholic and Orthodox, African American Protestant, and Mainline Protestant.[5]

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[3] Ibid., 25.

[4] Ibid., 121.

It is among this small percentage of congregations that one would expect to find those interested in GBIO membership. After all, the goal of IAF affiliates is to organize adults "in public places as sovereign citizens to deliberate and act for the common good."[6] The Massachusetts healthcare initiative is a perfect illustration of this goal; from May 2005 until the legislation was signed by Governor Romney in April 2006, GBIO rallied citizens and politicians in support of healthcare legislation that would dramatically expand coverage in the state and reshape the ways in which healthcare is funded and administered.

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[5] Similar findings are reported by Mark Chaves from the 1998 National Congregations Study. According to Chaves, it is especially Catholic and African American congregations that are likely to engage in the political sphere. He also concludes that "politics is not an arena in which most congregations actively participate. Politics remains, for most congregations, a peripheral activity." Mark Chaves, *Congregations in America*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 95.

[6] Edward T. Chambers with Michael A. Cowan, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice* (New York: Continuum, 2003), 17.

Surprisingly however, GBIO membership is actually comprised of many congregations that do not hold structural societal change as a primary or even secondary outreach objective. The seven congregations GBIO followed in this dissertation research, for example, profess a range of outreach goals, as detailed below:

Table 1

Outreach Goals by Congregation[7]

Mainline Protestant	
First Church in Cambridge (United Church of Christ)	Bridge differences, serve community
Fourth Presbyterian	Serve community
Conservative Protestant	
New Jerusalem Haitian (Baptist)	Spread faith
African American Protestant	
Roxbury Presbyterian	Spread faith, serve community, *change world*
Roman Catholic	
St. Peter's	*Change world*
Jewish	
Dorshei Tzedek (Reconstructionist)	Serve community, *change world*
Temple Israel (Reform)	Serve community, *change world*

The diversity of outreach goals articulated by these congregations fits within Ammerman's typologies.[8] Serving the community is the outreach goal of five of these GBIO congregations. Two focus on programs intended to spread the faith, and one focuses on bridging differences. Only four of the congregations – St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Roxbury Presbyterian Church, and the two Jewish synagogues – hold changing the world as one of their primary outreach goals.

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[7] The outreach/mission statements for all seven congregations are included in Appendix C.

St. Peter's is the only congregation with a mission statement solely focused on this goal. Its mission, as posted on a bulletin board outside of the pastor's office, reads as follows:

> The parish does not exist for itself; it only exists for the larger world. We are called to incarnate Christ in our lives so as to influence the society of which we are a part. The goal is the transformation of the structures that control our lives, so as to create a new society, one based on solidarity, justice, and dedication to the common good.

Even so, when members of St. Peter's speak about outreach, it becomes clear that they embrace many other kinds of initiatives. These range from supporting the parochial school attached to the church and pledging funds for the annual diocesan Catholic Appeal to processing through the surrounding Dorchester neighborhood on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul to witness the presence of the church in the community.

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[8] However, the goals they articulate do not match the incidence found by Ammerman whose research represents a national sample.

The vision statement at Roxbury Presbyterian reflects its evangelical Protestant roots, realized in the context of a predominantly African American membership:

> As Christians we are committed to bring as many people as possible to Jesus and into the membership of His Family. We will include them within the church family. We will disciple them into Christ-like maturity and equip them for ministry in ways that magnify Jesus Christ, and release the power of God to transform them, our community, and our world.

The language is different from that used by St. Peter's, and obviously does not reflect the imprint of Catholic social teaching. Roxbury Presbyterian instead links evangelism closely with socially transformative ministry. Both statements share, however, the belief in the power of God to transform individuals, and through them, society and the world.

Temple Israel and Dorshei Tzedek both identify changing the world and serving the community as outreach objectives. Drawing on Jewish tradition, these two congregations link *tzedek,* social justice, with *gemilut chasadim*, acts of loving kindness, as their foundational outreach commitments.

> *Temple Israel*: We believe that the wellbeing of the world depends on *G'milut Chasadim* (deeds of loving kindness). Through *G'milut Chasadim*, we work for the wellbeing of our community and the repair of the world through deeds of loving kindness and the pursuit of social justice.
>
> *Dorshei Tzedek*: We affirm the concept of mitzvah as obligation, acting on our Jewish values through deeds of *Tzedek* (social justice) and *gemilut chasadim* (loving kindness), both within our congregation and in the larger community.

Dorshei Tzedek's commitment to social justice is even incorporated in its name, which translates as "seekers of justice."

At the time of this research, the remaining three congregations did not identify changing the world as a part of their mission. Nevertheless, they are GBIO members.

ATTITUDES ABOUT THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC

The current low incidence of politically activist churches – 3% of the total in Ammerman's study – is at least in part a reflection of the deep ambivalence that Americans have about the role of religion in public – and especially political – life. In a 2006 national U.S. survey by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, roughly half the respondents (51%) said that congregations *should* express their view on social and political questions while 46% said that they *should not*.[9] This ambivalence about congregations expressing political views, much less taking action to effect actual change, is not new in the United States.

At the heart of this ambivalence is the secularization of public life that has evolved over the past six hundred years in the West and has manifested itself in America since the early decades of European settlement. The term secularization has had a long history and been subject to multiple meanings. This paper adopts sociologist José Casanova's use of the term 'secularization' to specify the differentiation and specialization of religion *vis a vis* other aspects of public life including politics, science, and economics. Casanova argues that while differentiation between religious and secular persons, functions, and meanings has taken place since the sixteenth century, two other aspects of modern secularization theory – that religion inevitably declines over time and that it comes to function, if at all, as a purely private concern – cannot be generally supported based on empirical evidence.[10] Casanova's argument has gained considerable traction in the academy among philosophers and sociologists of religion.[11] However, as the Pew research indicates, there continues to be widespread belief among the wider US population that religion is, or at least should be, a private, rather than a public or certainly a political, concern.[12]

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[9] Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "Many Americans Uneasy with mix of Religion and Politics." http://pewforum.org/docs/index.php?DocID=153 (accessed 8/24/06).

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[10] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994). Also, José Casanova, "Public Religions Revisited," in Hent de Vries, ed., *Religion Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008). Other recent scholarship that supports the empirical case for the contemporary vitality and public nature of religion includes Richard L. Woods' *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America*; Warren's *Dry Bones Rattling*; and Christian Smith's *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1996). More recently, Charles Taylor, in *A Secular Age*, has weighed in on the persuasiveness of Casanova's argument that religion has not, in the main, been marginalized or privatized.

[12] The 2006 Pew Research Center, in addition to charting Americans' ambivalence toward religious argumentation in public life, also reveals that a majority of Americans (59%) believe that religion's influence on everyday life is

This popular conception of religion in the United States – private and not public or political – has undoubtedly been influenced by the metaphor of the "wall of separation" between church and state first imagined in letters written by Roger Williams in 1644 and by Thomas Jefferson in 1802. Williams was decrying the deleterious effects of the world on the church in general, although he certainly had in mind attempts by Massachusetts' authorities to politically regulate matters of religious conscience. In his view:

> [W]hen they have opened a gap in the hedge or wall of separation between the garden of the church and the wilderness of the world, God hath ever broke down the wall itself, removed the Candlestick, etc., and made His Garden a wilderness as it is this day. And that therefore if He will ever please to restore His garden and Paradise again, it must of necessity be walled in peculiarly unto Himself from the world, and all that be saved out of the world are to be transplanted out of the wilderness of the World."[13]

Williams frames present history – humankind in the wilderness – between past and future visions of God's garden, when it was and will be again "walled

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waning and that a plurality (45%)believe that its influence on government is also on the decline.

[13] Roger Williams, "Mr. Cotton's Letter," *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition*, Perry Miller (New York: Atheneum, 1962), 98. Williams wrote this letter in response to a letter from John Cotton defending Williams' banishment from Massachusetts. Williams' banishment was in large part due to his theo-political argument that "an enforced uniformity of religion through a nation or civil state, confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." He was making strong arguments for religious toleration and freedom of conscience. Roger Williams, "The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution," July 15, 1644. http://www.reformedreader.org/rbb/williams/btp.htm

in…unto Himself." At its core, the issue Williams is addressing is not about publicity or politics; rather, the point he wants to make is that the 'garden' of the church is distinct from the 'wilderness' of the world. God's garden is apart, and pure. It is in need of protection from the world, not vice versa. Williams is making a theological argument.

When Thomas Jefferson borrowed Williams' metaphor, almost 160 years later, he was speaking more narrowly to a concern raised by the Danbury Baptist Association. Their issue was that the state of Connecticut, viewing religion as its "first object of legislation," might interfere with an individual's right to religious liberty. [14] In response, Jefferson pointed to the First Amendment, enacted thirteen years earlier, as having built "a wall of eternal separation between Church & State." [15] In establishing that "Congress will make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," the Constitution, according to Jefferson, upholds the conviction that religion "is a matter which lies solely between man & his god" and that the "legitimate powers of government reach actions only and not opinions."[16] Jefferson's main concern here is about religious freedom at a time when some states, including Connecticut, still had advantaged and potentially coercive established churches.[17] While civil and political society is no longer posited as a wilderness, as in Williams' argument, Jefferson was clearly interested in protecting religious belief from state incursion, and on theological grounds.

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[14] Thomas Jefferson, "Letter to the Danbury Baptist Association," January 1, 1802. http:loc.gov./loc/lcib/9806/danpost.html

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

The modern use of the wall metaphor in American life can be traced to the 1947 Supreme Court decision in Everson v. Board of Education, a case that challenged whether it was legal for a New Jersey township board of education to reimburse parents for the expenses they incurred sending their children to parochial schools on public buses. Writing for the majority, Justice Hugo Black concluded, "The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach."[18] The decision became seminal for interpreting the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment when it proscribed state and federal government involvement in six broad areas of religious belief and practice.[19]

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[17] Disestablishment in Connecticut was not enacted until 1818.

[18] Hugo Black, *Everson v. Board of Education of the Township of Ewing et al.*, U.S. 330. Interestingly, the Court found that, in order to keep the wall "high and impregnable," a township board of education was acting lawfully when it reimbursed parents of parochial school students for public bus transportation to school. Suggesting just how complicated the interpretation of this metaphor was then (and remains today), Justice Robert H. Jackson, in his dissent, observed that "the undertones of the opinion, advocating complete and uncompromising separation of Church from State, seem utterly discordant with its conclusion." As Ronald Thiemann has observed, U.S. courts at all levels have dealt with the religious clauses of the First Amendment with "questionable logic and contradictory opinions." Ronald F. Thiemann, *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 44.

As this brief overview suggests, the "wall of separation" metaphor has not been static. It developed from Williams' concern with the church's corruption when the world breached its walls, to Jefferson's concern for religious freedom *vis a vis* the state and an established church, to Black's arguments that the U.S. government must not engage in religious establishment, preference, and taxation, or in matters of attendance, participation, and belief.

Contemporary colloquial usage, however, suggests that the metaphor has taken on meaning well beyond its theological origins and the protections that Jefferson and Black argued were afforded religious individuals and organizations. For example, a number of people interviewed for this research take the metaphor as a prohibition against the incursion of religion into the public sphere of politics. For some, the metaphor serves as a bright line, directing religious organizations to stay entirely out of politics. Is there a connection between religion and politics? “Not for my sister who is Orthodox [Jewish]” responds Deborah Cohn of Temple Israel.[20] A fellow Temple Israel member, Sam Landis reflects on his own experience: “I was raised to think, very much, keep religion and politics separate. I was raised as a secularist where I thought, ‘religion is nice, but I’m a liberal.’”[21] A third member, Jerry Samuels, an attorney in his sixties, acknowledges that “there’s a point where [the relationship between religion and politics] gets uncomfortable for me personally…. And there are people generally even older than I in the congregation who find the whole spectrum of this offensive.”[22]

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[19] "The 'establishment of religion' clause of the First Amendment means at least this: [1] Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. [2] Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another. [3] Neither can force nor influence a person to go to or to remain away from church against his will or force him to profess a belief or disbelief in any religion. [4] No person can be punished for entertaining or professing religious beliefs or disbeliefs, for church attendance or non-attendance. [5] No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, of whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion. [6] Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups and vice versa." Hugo Black, *Everson v. Board of Education of the Township of Ewing et al.*, U.S. 330.

It is not only members of Temple Israel who voiced concern about the role of religion in politics. While not strictly opposed to this kind of interaction, Dave Morgan of Fourth Presbyterian worries that it “leads down the wrong path” when it polarizes public debate.[23] Carlota Silva, a native of Cape Verde and member of St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church, dislikes the conflict entailed in politics. She confides, “I am not a person who likes to be against anyone. [Being involved in politics] doesn’t fit comfortably” for her as a religious person.[24] Janet Goode, a twenty-year member of First Church of Cambridge (UCC) finds the relationship between religion and politics to be "counter-intuitive. I tend to be more comfortable in the chapel than at City Hall."[25] In her experience, "a lot of church people are made very uncomfortable by politics" because politics is public while she views religion as private, something properly experienced in a religious sanctuary. The overlap of spheres and interests is not intuitive for her. Dan Smith, a pastor at Janet's church, interprets her observation. In his experience, the idea of religion engaging in politics "challenges the more private and individual notions of what faith is, at least in many [liberal] Protestant communities."[26]

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[20] Interview with Deborah Cohn (alias), May 25, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[21] Interview with Sam Landis (alias), February 17, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

[22] Interview with Jerry Samuels (alias), June 26, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[23] Interview with Dave Morgan (alias), July 10, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

[24] Interview with Carlota Silva (alias), May 30, 2006, in Dorchester, MA.

This shift in attitudes about religion in public and in politics is fascinating, and it raises the question, "What work does the wall metaphor do?" In the seventeenth through early nineteenth centuries, the metaphor was employed in defense of congregations and religious individuals against the state. As indicated by this research, however, the metaphor is now often invoked to shield the political sphere from incursion by religious language and practice. For some, especially among the more liberal religious traditions, the secular domain of politics is not only *rightly differentiated* from the sacred, but should be *strictly separated and protected* from it as well. Some people, like Janet Goode, go so far as to conflate the terms political and public, seemingly uncomfortable with any public work by congregations. For the majority of people interviewed, however, the wall is porous; what it permits and prohibits is subject to considerable interpretation.[27] The wall metaphor, embraced by congregational members, is subject to a wide range of interpretations, often vaguely articulated, which function, by and large, to limit religious discourse and action in the political realm.

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[25] Interview with Janet Goode (alias), May 9, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[26] Interview with Rev. Dan Smith, April 6, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

The purpose of this chapter so far has been to provide some contextual background on the participation of religious congregations in public, political activity. Such activity is currently an extremely minor form of congregational outreach for historical, sociological, and theo-politico-legal reasons. Many Americans are ambiguous about it, and not many congregations embrace it. Paradoxically, however, it is organizing congregations to participate in public and political matters that forms the core of GBIO activities. The remainder of this chapter will examine the theory and practice of GBIO community organizing and then return to this paradox.

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[27] In contrast to Dave Morgan, for example, Rabbi Jonah Pesner of Temple Israel understands appropriate separation as follows: "It doesn't mean prayer in schools or a benediction at the State House. It doesn't mean forcing any religious choice on any individual and community. It means a free religious community where people can do what is good for them, but it means that each of those communities has a responsibility, not just a right, but a responsibility to act on those deeply held beliefs, and to bring their communal pressure to bear to in ways that don't cross lines that aren't appropriate. So, not endorsing political candidates, obviously, but obviously taking positions where there is communal consensus on things that we care about." Interview with author, May 15, 2006, in Boston, MA.

THE DEMOCRATIC THEORY OF IAF ORGANIZING

Edward T. Chambers became the second head of the Industrial Areas Foundation in 1972 upon the death of its founder and Chambers' mentor, Saul Alinsky. Thirty years later, reflecting on his long career, Chambers published his views on a lifetime of organizing in *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice.*[28] The IAF view of democracy is outlined within its covers. Before proceeding to take a look at the GBIO healthcare campaign in Massachusetts, it will be helpful to review how the IAF understands the following elements of democracy: government, civil society, politics, citizens, self-interest, pluralism, conflict, public discourse, and the role of religion within democratic society.

Government

Consistent with liberal, republican, and communicative/deliberative democratic theories, the IAF conceives of government as those institutions and activities that center around public administration. Its primary functions, as Chambers describes them, are "enforcing law and order within its boundaries, creating a social safety net for its citizens, and providing for the common defense against outside threats."[29] The IAF seeks to hold the holders of power accountable, not to overturn or change established government structures.

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[28] Chambers, *Roots*, 60.

[29] Ibid., 62.

Government represents one of three spheres of public life; the other two include the market and civil society.

Civil Society

The first and most critical sector of society for the IAF is the civil, that public domain in which the "meanings and virtues necessary for human, political life" are developed and transmitted.[30] Comprised of such institutions as religious institutions, families, schools, unions, athletic groups, and social organizations, civil society serves as the "political conscience" of democracy and as the glue that holds it together.[31] This view of the importance and centrality of civil society harkens back to the Jeffersonian republican ideal of a self-governing society of relative equals in which all citizens participate. The IAF also has in mind Tocqueville's observations about and admiration for American civic association in which "[s]entiments and ideas renew themselves, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed only by the reciprocal action of men upon one another."[32] It is "associational democracy" that emerges when a robust civil society in engaged in the political process.[33]

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[30] Ibid., 61.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, translated and edited by Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 491.

[33] Ernesto Cortés, presentation at National Training, San Antonio, TX, March 12, 2005. From author's notes.

Politics

Politics is defined by the IAF as the "capacity to gather with others as fellow citizens to converse, plan, act, and reflect for the well-being of people as a whole."[34] In this respect, the IAF shares both republican commitments to the ethical mandate of political engagement and to deliberative commitments to a procedural process of discourse encompassing persuasion, bargaining, and compromise. Lest this sound overly orderly and conflict-free, Chambers acknowledges that politics, like public life in general, is also always about power, self-interest, and change.

Citizens

For the IAF, citizens are equal and sovereign individuals who, ideally, can and will publicly stand for the whole. Each citizen is unique and worthy of respect and inclusion in public collaboration and discourse. Chambers is again drawing from republican tradition in which citizens bear the positive rights to political participation and communication in order to create a community of free and equal people.[35] Citizenship is concerned with relationships and the common good. This focus distinguishes the IAF understanding from more private, rights-focused liberal conceptions of citizenship.

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[34] Chambers, *Roots*, 18. Drawing on Aristotle.

[35] Jürgen Habermas, "Three Normative Models of Democracy," in Seyla Benhabib, ed., *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 22.

Pluralism

In Chambers' view, pluralism is a social reality; whenever two or more people congregate, plurality exists, at the very least in terms of perspectives, experiences, interests, and values. He further argues that this reality is a social good because it "demands that people mix their energy, interests, and resources with others…[to] produce a base of organized people power, which no single issue or group can match."[36] Here, Chambers reflects a liberal view of political theory, describing as he does something akin to John Rawls' conception of 'reasonable pluralism,' formed by a diversity of "conflicting and irreconcilable – and what's more reasonable – comprehensive doctrines."[37] Chambers actually holds a more robust view of pluralism than does Rawls, who viewed it as a "not unfortunate condition of human life."[38] For Chambers, pluralism is actually a social good because it necessarily tests certainties and provokes transformative change. While the IAF is far from being a proponent of revolution, when it comes to pluralism, the organization espouses a position generally associated with radical political theorists. For example, Chambers' sense of the transformative potential of pluralism is similar to the argument made by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe that plurality is not "necessarily a negative moment of fragmentation" but rather one that creates the very possibility of the democratic moment.[39] Plurality, along with inclusiveness, is for Chambers the defining characteristic of IAF organizations.[40]

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[36] Chambers, *Roots*, 59.

[37] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 36.

[38] Ibid., 37.

Conflict

Conflict in public and political debate may not be comfortable, according to Chambers, but it is a reality and a necessity if change is to be effected. In public life, "politeness is not civility; it's the sin" of those who avoid conflict and change in pursuit of the common good.[41] Because public life is about power, self-interest, and change, conflict is one of its inevitable and necessary components. Drawing on IAF history, Chambers cites Saul Alinsky's *law of change*: "Change means movement; movement means friction; friction means heat; heat means controversy."[42] This perspective stands in contrast with traditional republican and communitarian views, which tend to regard conflict as a social negative.

Public Discourse

Public discourse is central to IAF organizations and occurs in many different forms and locations. Three forms that are of particular importance include the one-on-one meeting, internal actions, and external actions. One-on-

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[39] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, second edition (London: Verso, 2001), 166.

[40] Chambers, *Roots*, 15.

[41] Ibid. 34.

[42] Ibid. 31.

one meetings, 30 – 60 minute conversations between two adults, exist to explore the "development of a public relationship."[43] They focus on stories that "reveal people's deepest commitments and…experiences" in order to identify mutual interests and relational connections.[44] IAF internal actions, which in Boston have ranged in size from 25 to over 1,000 participants, aim to create internal momentum and commitment within the organization. They are the spaces in which IAF organizations find common ground. They are also the gatherings in which members commit to specific actions, assess progress, and hold themselves accountable for future activity. Finally, external actions, which in the GBIO healthcare campaign were largely focused on elected state officials, are intended to create reaction and change among public officials with the power to act. While this type of action often involves discourse that is contestational and even polarizing, its goal is never to "allow ideological differences to perpetuate social divisions."[45]

What all of these meeting forms have in common is a commitment to discursive diversity. The IAF does not aim to achieve objective rationality in its discourse; it does not insist on the public reason of Rawlsian political liberalism. It aims, as Iris Marion Young advocates, to enable public discourse that acknowledges and respects particularity of location and rhetorical forms.[46] It is guided, as she also advocates, by procedural conditions of "significant interdependence, formally equal respect, and agreed-on procedures."[47]

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[43] Ibid. 44.

[44] Ibid., 45.

[45] Ibid., 15.

Religion

The IAF works with "both people of faith and seculars," Chambers writes, and all are welcome.[48] However, the main focus of IAF organizing is among Christian, Jewish, and Muslim congregations.[49] As a result, biblical figures, images, and narratives serve as a critical resource for both internal and external argumentation. In his book, Chambers invokes Genesis, Moses, Isaiah, Job, Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul (along with the Buddha, Augustine, Mahatma Gandhi, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and theologians Henri de Lubac, J.B. Metz, and David Tracy). The biblical tradition makes plain that "churches, synagogues, and mosques are called to the public mission of changing the world,"

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[46] Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference*, Benhabib, ed., 120.

[47] Ibid., 126.

[48] Chambers, *Roots*, 14.

[49] On a national basis, Congregation Based Community Organizations (CBCOs), including the IAF, are overwhelmingly comprised of Christian congregations. In the latest national survey, Christian congregations accounted for 95% of congregational membership and 83% of total membership. Secular members accounted for 13% of total membership, and include unions, schools, neighborhood associations, and small businesses. Mark R. Warren and Richard L. Wood, *Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field* (Jericho, NY: Interfaith Funders, 2001), Table 4.

Chambers argues.[50] This perspective locates the IAF more comfortably within the republican tradition and generally at odds with liberal theorists who would limit religious language in public on the basis that it fails to meet reasonable conditions of publicity.[51]

In sum, the IAF teaches and practices a hybrid form of democratic engagement. The organization cannot be neatly pigeonholed. It respects and works within representative democratic structures. It draws widely on republican theory and tradition. It embraces communicative and deliberative commitments to a broad-based procedural process of discourse and compromise. In its formal embrace of plurality, it most closely aligns with more radical democratic theorists. Finally, given its focus on organizing religious congregations and use of stories and symbols drawn from scripture, it stands within that strand of American political life that has long linked biblical and republican commitments.[52] With this framework as background, I will now turn to a recent IAF campaign to explore how these commitments are enacted in a specific situation and how they interact with congregational life and structures.

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[50] Chambers, *Roots*, 77.

[51] Religious argumentation is viewed as non-accessible to public reason and thus at odds with principles of fair and open public discourse.

[52] Robert N. Bellah, et. al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 30–31.

GBIO HEALTHCARE CAMPAIGN

Early in 2004, GBIO drafted a vision statement establishing goals for the next two years as part of its overall objective to develop “local leadership and organized power to fight for social justice.”[53] One of these goals was to create statewide power by developing a statewide agenda, winning a statewide campaign, and developing relationships with state legislators. GBIO was almost immediately presented with an opportunity to advance this goal when it was approached in September of that year by an organization called Healthcare for All. Still in operation, Healthcare for All is a Boston-based non-profit that combines policy analysis, advocacy, and educational programs aimed at expanding the reach of healthcare in New England.

Healthcare for All’s Executive Director John McDonough, a former Massachusetts state representative with a doctorate in public health, had examined the opportunity of expanding healthcare coverage to the approximately 500,000 Massachusetts residents who lacked it – roughly 8% of the state’s population. His analysis revealed a convergence of three factors favorable for healthcare reform. First, the Massachusetts fiscal crisis was easing and tax revenues were on the rise, creating the possibility of increased healthcare spending. Second, the newly elected governor, Mitt Romney, was beginning to speak about healthcare reform, raising its profile in government and market circles. Third, and perhaps most practically, Massachusetts was obligated to submit a detailed program of healthcare reform to the Federal Government by July of 2006 in order to continue receiving $365 million in annual federal Medicaid funds. Targeting 2005 - 2006 as a window of opportunity, Healthcare for All set about building a large, broad-based, statewide coalition to create sustained pressure on the legislature for progressive healthcare reform and expansion.

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[53] “GBIO Mission Statement” http://www.gbio.org (accessed1/19/03).

McDonough met first with GBIO lead organizer Cheri Andes and then with the GBIO Strategy Team. Structurally, GBIO is a relatively flat organization, but it is not without any formal hierarchy. It is led by the twenty five person Strategy Team, which is comprised of clergy, laity, non-congregational representatives, and paid professional organizers. The Strategy Team, functioning as the organization's executive council, solicits input from all member organizations, each with its own core of leaders and participants. It generally recommends campaigns, but no initiative is undertaken until ratified by a GBIO-wide Delegate Assembly comprised of representatives of the 67 member institutions. During his initial meetings with Andes and the Strategy Team, McDonough presented the four policy commitments for which the coalition would stand: (1) expand Medicaid to more working people and families; (2) help small business and the self employed secure insurance; (3) provide relief, via subsidies, to moderate-income families; and (4) commit to sensible, fair, and efficient funding of healthcare.

Building Congregational Support

The internal deliberative process of considering whether to join the Healthcare for All coalition lasted from September 2004 until February 2005. After his preliminary sessions with Andes and the Strategy Team, McDonough attended a retreat with fifty GBIO congregational and noncongregational leaders to present the four campaign policy commitments and the strategies by which the coalition hoped to achieve them. Following this retreat, those GBIO leaders in attendance returned to their organizations, where they vetted the idea of joining the coalition with a wider group of congregational members in a series of internal meetings. To assess the level of interest in the topic, GBIO members began sharing their own personal stories about healthcare coverage, or lack thereof, and discussing their interest in working on the campaign. On the basis of these sessions and stories, a 150 person Delegate Assembly formally approved joining the Healthcare for All coalition in February 2005. Even after this vote, GBIO spent another three months expanding internal support for the campaign by conducting policy information sessions at twenty-five congregations.

One such session, billed as a "community teach-in," was held at Temple Israel. This session, larger than most at other congregations, is worth examining in some detail because it incorporated the diversity of communicative elements – scripture, personal testimony, policy detail, political tactics, stories, and religious song – that are central to GBIO's approach to building internal consensus and commitment to action. What is being created is the beginnings of an overlapping consensus, in which religious tradition and the common good find ways in which to come together.

On the chilly evening of March 21, 2005, approximately 250 Temple Israel members, along with a handful of guest participants from Healthcare for All and GBIO, filled every seat of the synagogue's lower level chapel. Teens mingled with retirees, but most people in attendance were arriving straight from work. The side walls were hung with specially-prepared banners recalling traditional Jewish social commitments: *Hatzalat Nefashot* – The Saving of Human Life; *Shemirat Habriyut* – Preventive Care; *Bikkur Cholim* – Visiting the Sick; *Tzedeka* – Communal Obligation to Meet Basic Human Needs. Two other banners displayed a Talmudic teaching (Why did G-d begin creation with one person? To teach that one who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved the world) and a prayerful appeal (May we be strengthened to use our hearts and hands, voices and vision, to help see that all people have the healthcare they need).[54]

After a welcome by the co-chairs, Senior Rabbi Ronne Friedman rose to frame the evening within the context of Hebrew scripture. He recalled the moment in the Book of Esther when Esther is challenged by her uncle, Mordecai, to intervene with her husband, King Ahasuerus, about his decree that all the Jews be killed: "Do not imagine that you, of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace. On the contrary, if you keep silent in this crisis, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another quarter, while you and your father's house will perish."[55] Rabbi Friedman cast Mordecai's warning as a metaphor for Temple Israel's participation in the healthcare campaign. Despite the fact that most of Temple Israel's membership can afford healthcare coverage, Jewish tradition makes clear that the community has obligations to those who do not, both inside and outside of the congregation, he argued.

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[54] "Whoever destroys a soul from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he destroyed an entire world. And whoever saves a life from Israel, the Scripture considers it as if he saved an entire world." (bSan 37a)

Several speakers, each one a congregation member, followed Rabbi Friedman on the bema to relate personal stories of their personal and professional experiences with healthcare. A high school senior told the story of the brain tumor she survived at age eleven and of her family's struggle to afford her treatment because they had only the most basic coverage at the time. Emergency Medicine physician Andrew McAfee described an array of issues with the current system in which emergency rooms serve as the main providers of primary care for the uninsured. A third speaker spoke of her experience with scoliosis, a condition not covered by her insurance. In Iris Marion Young's terms, these narratives began to reveal the speakers' situated experiences to others, to shed light on their values, culture, and practices, and to contribute to the collective knowledge of all those in attendance.[56] The interests and backgrounds of these speakers were not identical, although they shared membership in the synagogue. Nevertheless, it became evident to those in attendance that there were overlapping concerns and interests.

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[55] Esther 4:13-14 (JPS)

[56] Young, "Communication," in *Democracy and Difference*, Benhabib, ed., 131-132.

Observing that “the biblical healthcare system was overly reliant on miracles,” Rabbi Jeremy Morrison turned the microphone over to Healthcare For All’s McDonough, who noted that it was a new experience for him to see a congregation take an interest in healthcare reform. He welcomed Temple Israel’s entry into the political sphere, defining it as a conflictual space where “who gets what of society’s benefits and obligations” is determined.[57] McDonough’s role at the meeting was to outline the main components of the healthcare legislation supported by Healthcare For All. He spent approximately 30 minutes discussing the coalition’s membership and goals, the current legislative situation, and the strategy for the upcoming year. McDonough closed his PowerPoint presentation in a way that differed from his typical conclusion. At Temple Israel, his final slide, drawn from the Book of Proverbs, read: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.”[58]

Rabbi Jonah Pesner, the Temple Israel clergy member most involved with GBIO on an ongoing basis, closed the meeting. After answering questions from the floor, he concluded with three arguments: (1) Temple Israel stands under a moral injunction to act for expanded healthcare because “God works on this earth through us;” (2) expanded healthcare should be understood as a public good both for the synagogue and for the wider community; and (3) Temple Israel’s role in the campaign would be to inform Massachusetts state legislators, “You work for us. As citizens, we say that without common health, there is no Commonwealth.”[59] When he asked those assembled to demonstrate their commitment by signing up for future campaign activities, over 200 members agreed to attend future GBIO meetings, meet with legislators, attend hearings at the State house, and/or speak publicly about their personal healthcare experiences. The meeting adjourned with the singing of *Od yavo shalom aleinu* (peace be on us). In this closing communal song, *shalom* – peace – is identified as the outcome of a campaign that will carry the congregation into the conflictual, political realm. It is a remarkable conclusion for a meeting at this leading Reform congregation.

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[57] The audience was appreciative when McDonough also defined politics by way of its two roots: poli (many) and tics (blood sucking insects).

[58] This is a free translation/interpretation of Proverbs 11:14a: Where there is no guidance, a nation falls. (NRSV); Where there is no guidance the people fall. (NASB)

In joining what Rabbi Friedman described as the “central social justice effort during Temple Israel’s 150th year,” many participants were connecting their religious commitments, or more broadly, their Jewish identity, with a public, political initiative for the first time.[60] Temple Israel member Karen Peyser reflected on this connection as follows: “I think that for a lot of [politically] progressive Jewish people, Jewish identity has nothing to do with progressive activism. They would identify themselves as secular. I probably would have identified myself as secular a while ago. [But now I have started] to think that some of my work on justice issues comes out of my Judaism. I think that seeing that there is a place within a Jewish community where it's acceptable and encouraged to work on justice issues certainly makes me feel proud, happier about being Jewish."

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[59] Rabbi Jonah Pesner, presentation at Temple Israel Community Teach-In, Boston, MA, March 21, 2005.

[60] Rabbi Ronne Friedman, presentation at Temple Israel Community Teach-In, Boston, MA, March 21, 2005.

This connection is often made for GBIO participants in meetings like the one just described, stimulated by the mix of language, symbols, stories, and rituals employed. Secular language of policy and politics is interwoven with religious language of scripture, prayer, and song. 'Rational' and scientific argumentation favored by liberal and deliberative theorists alternates with rhetoric, storytelling, and greeting, forms that recognize differences of culture, social perspective, and particularist concern. Pluralism interior to the congregation is revealed. Conflict is framed as a means to *shalom.* Congregational life is firmly positioned within the realm of civil society. Intra-congregational participation going forward comes to rest on common political purpose, shared connection to a religious tradition, articulated moral reasoning, and diverse yet shared personal connections to the issue.

Publicly Announcing the Campaign

In May 2005, after eight months of internal consensus building, GBIO finally held a 1,200 person rally at Temple Israel, inviting the press and interested politicians to witness the formal announcement of its affiliation with the coalition built by Healthcare for All. By this date, several thousand people in GBIO congregations had been exposed to the healthcare initiative, had heard fellow members tell personal stories of healthcare need, and had committed to specific action steps and deadlines. Months later, this rally was recalled by many as one of the highlights of the campaign.

Many of the elements present at the Temple Israel “community teach-in” were again on display at the rally, but on a larger scale. The evening combined theological framing, testimony, legislative updates, deliberation, commitment, song, and prayer in what IAF Executive Team member Arnie Graf has described as a “three act play” or public drama.[61] The evening was actually a mélange of forms: public drama, public worship, and political rally. These forms, as will be detailed, have considerable overlap and affinity.

The rally was held in the synagogue’s former sanctuary, now used primarily for lectures and presentations, and the site where, in April 1965, Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the congregation on civil rights. Forty years later, representatives from 63 GBIO member organizations were in attendance, the vast majority from synagogues and churches. The rally was chaired by Elder Eddly Benoit of Temple Salem (Haitian Seventh Day Adventist) and Rabbi Jonah Pesner of Temple Israel. The first act – or the liturgical prelude or political rally warm-up – was introduced by the Temple Salem Praise Team singing *Down by the Riverside*, a first in this Temple Israel space.

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[61] Arnie Graf, presentation at IAF East Coast National Training, Braintree, MA, October 21, 2005. From author’s notes.

Temple Israel's Senior Rabbi Ronne Friedman welcomed the attendees – many more Christians than Jews – saying, "*Baruchim habayim*. Blessed are you who come." Reprising the role he had played at the internal Temple Israel session two months earlier, he framed the evening and the campaign in the language of religious narrative. Drawing on Rabbinic literature redacted in approximately 500 CE, Rabbi Friedman recounted the story of Abba the surgeon:

> "A wonderful Talmudic text tells the story of a surgeon by the name of Abba who is held up as a model of a certain Jewish tradition. The Talmud teaches that he placed a box in his office out of public view in which his patients could put their fees. People who could afford to pay placed their fees in the box. But those who could not afford to pay didn't have to and weren't ashamed. Whenever a poor young scholar came to him for medical advice, Abba would not only treat him without charging him, but he would give the young man some money and say, "Here, use this to regain your strength."[62]

With the example of Abba in mind, Rabbi Friedman asked everyone to join him in a prayer for the upcoming campaign:

> "Source of all life, Who delights in life, we are gathered here as a religious community to recommit ourselves to the pursuit of life and health for every child, woman, and man in this Commonwealth. Endow us with enough empathy to embrace all who are ill. Inspire us to imagine the families that live with those without the safety net of health

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[62] Rabbi Ronne Friedman, Healthcare Action, Temple Israel, Boston. MA, May 26, 2005. (bTa'anit 21b)

> insurance. Teach us to offer, to the political debate and the concerns of business, a transfusion of moral purpose. Help us to have the humility to hear those with whom we disagree. Supply us with the skill to create systemic solutions to our complex social issues. Provide us with prescriptions and policies for a polity in which we can be proud. Spread over us, over all of us, here and throughout our state, the shelter and security of Your Shalom, both spiritual and physical wellbeing, that is Your promise of peace. Amen."[63]

Again, the four elements of participation were present, this time in an inter-congregational and inter-organizational setting. Those in attendance were asked to participate based on a common political purpose (the pursuit of life and health for all), their connection to a "religious community," an invocation of moral purpose, and diverse yet shared connections to the issue.[64] In political terms, GBIO strives to create a "big" tent, while encouraging religious diversity.

Reflecting an agreement forged in GBIO's founding months, religious language is always used in tradition-specific ways at GBIO meetings. God is universal, but never generic; religious commitment is widespread in the organization, but never separate from specific historic practices and understandings. Accordingly, when the Reverend Pamela Foster, an Episcopal priest followed Rabbi Friedman at the microphone, she reinforced GBIO's commitment to theological diversity by sharing "a companion image" from the Gospel of Mark:

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[63] Ibid.

[64] While the majority of GBIO members are religious congregations, not all are. As a result, there were attendees that evening who would not describe themselves as members of a religious community, no matter how openly defined. Their support for the campaign rested on the other three elements of common political purpose, moral reasoning, and diverse yet overlapping connections to expanded healthcare coverage. When I asked John McDonough about how the secular members of the coalition reacted to his invitation to GBIO to join the campaign, he recalls that their response was, pragmatically, "Come on board."

> "This story takes place at a house in Capernaum where Jesus was staying. Three friends carry a paralyzed man to the house, seeking healing and wholeness for him from Jesus. The trouble is that the house is packed with people, and a huge crowd is surrounding it. And so these three friends, who are imaginative, and clever, and resourceful, and determined, carry their paralyzed companion to the roof of that house. They set about taking it apart until finally there is a big enough hole in it so that they can lower the man on his pallet right down to Jesus where he can be healed.[65]

Rev. Foster charged those assembled to imagine themselves in the role of the three friends: "We come here tonight, and in ever increasing numbers in the months to come, to make that hole in the roof so that the huge crowd of almost half a million [uninsured] people can get the health insurance that they – we – all need and have a right to. Working together, we'll go out and get it, because we are resourceful and clever. We are imaginative and determined. And, I'm going to add, we're prayerful."[66]

With the complementary theological reasoning established, the scope of the challenge outlined, and a call to joint action issued, the first act of the rally drew to a close. During these opening 30 minutes, the meeting was framed by stories that shared a commitment to the common good, but which emerged from different religious communities and texts. The stories connected those in attendance with tradition-specific imperatives for reformed healthcare access, created moments of interfaith learning, and combined to weave a GBIO narrative in support of shared moral vision and political action.

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[65] Rev. Pamela Foster, Healthcare Action, Temple Israel, Boston, MA, May 26, 2005. Mark 2:1-5

[66] Ibid.

During the second act, more voices were introduced representing many different social, economic, political, religious, and ethnic locations. It opened with the GBIO membership roll call, an IAF tradition during which representatives from each member organization march to the front of the room to announce their presence and interest. Four of the congregations in this research participated in the roll call, a fifteen-minute ritual that was interrupted regularly with applause and cheers:[67]

> " [I am] Esther Cohn from congregation Dorshei Tzedek with thirty-three members here. A lot of our members are self-employed and struggle to cover the high cost of health insurance premiums. Others are healthcare providers who desperately want to serve those who lack insurance."

> "I'm Phyllis Curtis, here with my friend Tim Allen. We're from the Fourth Presbyterian Church in South Boston where ten percent of our congregation needs health

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[67] At least one representative from St. Peter's was in attendance but did not participate in the roll call. First Church in Cambridge had not yet joined GBIO but sent representatives to sit in the visitors' gallery. New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church had not yet joined GBIO and was not in attendance.

> coverage. And forty-one of us are here tonight to do something about it."

> "I'm Jeanne Rudolph. I am representing Roxbury Presbyterian Church. Forty-five of our members are without health insurance and forty of us are here tonight."

> "I am Barbara Berke of Temple Israel of Boston. I am here with two hundred people who stand for our 1,700 households, hundreds of whom are doctors, nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, researchers, social workers, and allied health professionals. All of whom are concerned eyewitnesses to the unmet needs of our state's uninsured. We also stand for our members who are struggling to afford insurance for themselves, their families, and their businesses."[68]

The roll call was followed by personal stories – testimonies – told by representatives from six different organizations.[69] The purpose of these stories was to demonstrate a range of perspectives about the need for expanded healthcare coverage. Keith Rudolph from Roxbury Presbyterian Church spoke about making too much money at his job working for a small personnel firm to qualify for free MassHealth coverage but too little to afford private insurance. His "days are spent praying that nothing happens to me so that my family is left out in the cold." Emily Sper from Dorshei Tzedek talked about how the $500 monthly insurance premiums she has to pay as a freelance graphic designer might force her to close her business. Margarida DePina of St. Peter's spoke of her daughter with Downs Syndrome who is not covered by MassHealth: "We now pay almost $200 a month for my employee insurance. This is a huge burden for us. We own our own home and we still send $700 a month to support our [three older] children [in Cape Verde]. Our whole life has been organized around getting good healthcare for Angie, and it should not be such a struggle." Peter Brook, a member of Fourth Presbyterian, told of a similarly pressing situation:

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[68] Esther Cohn, Phyllis Curtis, Jeanne Rudolph, Barbara Berke, Health Care Action, Temple Israel, Boston, MA, May 26, 2005.

[69] Representatives from Fourth Presbyterian, St. Peter's, Roxbury Presbyterian, and Dorshei Tzedek participated in this part of the meeting. Their full testimonies are included in Appendix D.

> "I work construction. My employer doesn't offer health insurance, and I can't afford to buy it myself. I have been a diabetic for over 30 years, and I'm starting to suffer long-term complications from this disease. I use the same disposable insulin syringe for up to a month instead of the four new ones a day prescribed, just to save money. I've nearly depleted my retirement savings. I fell off scaffolding in April and broke my arm. The medical expenses cost more than $2,000. Right now I don't qualify for MassHealth because I'm a single adult. [The Healthcare for All] bill is the only bill that will change this for me. Now I'm a lifelong Republican, but all the parties need to get together and work together behind healthcare access, because I bet every one of you knows someone like me. Thank you."[70]

Following these and two other testimonies like them, the two meeting Chairs introduced other members of the coalition, including the President of SEIU Local 615 and the CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital. Ten members of the Massachusetts legislature were introduced and cheered loudly when they indicated their commitment to healthcare reform. With all the key players now introduced, the Reverend Ray Hammond, pastor of Bethel AME Church and a GBIO leader took the stage to formally ask for GBIO's commitment to this reform initiative. His ten-minute presentation, equal parts sermon and political rally, was the oratorical highlight of the meeting. Speaking from his own experience as a former emergency room physician, he touched on the disparities he had seen – based on the quality of healthcare insurance or lack thereof – in the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS, breast and cervical cancer, tuberculosis, hepatitis, and mental health concerns. He charged the members of the coalition with gathering 80,000 signatures to qualify the Healthcare for All-endorsed legislation for a statewide ballot initiative, and challenged GBIO members to collect 40,000 of those. Finally, he closed:

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[70] Peter Brook, Health Care Action, Temple Israel, Boston, MA, May 26, 2005.

> "Now, it wasn't easy for the caring surgeon to treat so many who could not pay. But he did. It wasn't easy for the friends of that paralyzed man to get him into the healing hands of Jesus. But they did. And it will not be easy for us to lower the barriers to access to healthcare and lift the hope and health of our uninsured brethren and sisters. But by God we're going to do it."[71]

The entire auditorium erupted into 30 seconds of sustained cheers and applause, an occurrence not typical of many religious services, but entirely in keeping with dramatics and politics.

With GBIO members, allies, and prospective members now briefed and energized, the final act of the evening's public drama unfolded. The climax of the evening – the reaction hoped for when the assembly was planned – was to get 200 GBIO members to commit to being precinct captains for the signature gathering campaign. Precinct captains would be responsible for putting together 5 – 10 person teams to collect 250 signatures per team in support of the GBIO goal of gathering 40,000 signatures for the healthcare ballot initiative. Each GBIO member congregation was asked to caucus for several minutes to determine how many precinct captains they would commit to the campaign. Numbers were written on cards, the cards were collected, and the totals were read. That night, 195 people volunteered to build and train teams to stand on street corners and go door-to-door to collect signatures for the ballot initiative. Just 2.5% short of its goal, GBIO Strategy Team members deemed the evening a success.

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[71] Rev. Dr. Ray Hammond, Health Care Action, Temple Israel, Boston, MA, May 26, 2005.

It is valuable to listen to the memories of participants in that night's events. A number of themes emerge, themes that stand in contrast with participants' experiences within their own congregations. Joan Quillman, of First Church in Cambridge, remembers that a "certain type of magic took place" that evening. The assembly represented a "merging of everything that matters. It's like communities coming together. I think we all feel very weak in our own little parts of the world. We want to make change, but we can't. So, it's bringing together people into community. It's bringing together all different kinds of people in a unified way and there's a spirit to it, a spirit that rises out of that that I think is bigger than the sum of its parts."[72] What is most remarkable for Quillman is the fact that "there doesn't seem to be an agenda other than the common good which is very unusual." First Church member Grace Andrews also recalled a sense of unity and common purpose; "It's as if I saw the world holding hands" that night.[73] Both Andrews and Quillman felt an excitement not often experienced by liberal Protestants in their worship experience, but an excitement that was nevertheless coherent with their sense of being religious people.

What is striking about the commonality of purpose, for many attendees, is the fact that it emerges from a diverse constituency – unusual within most American congregations – and from an inclusive approach to civic engagement.[74] Joan Quillman remembers "there were conservative people in there. And very liberal people. But people agreed to disagree [on some issues] in order to achieve something that is commonly desired. I think that is very unusual." What Susan Miller of Fourth Presbyterian noticed was the diversity of religious commitments: "You have every denomination of Protestant faith. You have Catholics. You have the Jewish denominations. You have Buddhists. You have Muslims. And individuals who aren't in a congregation, but everybody's working towards something that's very important in the Boston area. Really for everybody everywhere, but we are in greater Boston. I wasn't sure how these things worked, so I was kind of sitting there looking and looking, and [thinking], 'Wow.'"[75] The GBIO commitment to membership, theological, and language diversity is striking to people acclimated to the relative homogeneity of congregational life.

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[72] Interview with Joan Quillman (alias), May 16, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

[73] Interview with Grace Andrews (alias), May 18, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

[74] In 1953, Martin Luther King, Jr., while an associate pastor at his father's church, Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, GA, spoke out against segregation in churches by declaring, "I am [ashamed] and appalled that Eleven O' Clock on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in Christian America." <http://news-service.stanford.edu/pr/2007/pr-king-011007.html> Intra-congregational racial and class diversity has not advanced widely since King made this observation more than fifty years ago. See Nancy Tatom Ammerman with Arthur E. Farnsley II et. al. *Congregation & Community* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 389.

For John Sherman of First Church in Cambridge, it was the diversity of styles that he remembers. The assembly at Temple Israel was a "revival meeting and political caucus rolled into one." It was "religious, but…[also] intensely practical and political. It recognized, unlike the Democratic Party, that you have to make a coalition among people who don't necessarily agree on everything."[76] Bob Barton, who was attending his first GBIO meeting that night, observes that the meeting broadened his perspective on how to approach social justice issues. Barton confesses "there is a sense at First Church in Cambridge, and at other institutions in Cambridge, that it probably isn't worth much if it's not invented here. And so [at the Temple Israel assembly] there was a sense of, wait a minute, we didn't invent this and it's working. There was a sense of maybe it's possible, surely it's possible for us to become part of something that is a good thing that already has a certain momentum behind it. So that was good."[77] This experience of diversity – diversity of religious traditions, political commitments, meeting styles, and sources of authority – is one of the primary memories that people take away from a GBIO assembly.

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[75] Interview with Susan Miller (alias), May 11, 2006, in South Boston, MA.

[76] Interview with John Sherman (alias), June 7, 2006, in Watertown, MA.

Many attendees also find such assemblies to be engaging and energizing in ways that sometimes transcend their congregational experiences. Liza Johnson of First Church in Cambridge remembers that she was "blown away by the [Temple Israel] event. The sheer numbers of people was amazing. The energy in the room. The anticipatory feel of being ready to connect with each other and ready to have a common mission was amazing."[78] For Susan Miller of Fourth Presbyterian, it was the speakers; the clergy who spoke and who moved her to have "tears in my eyes. They are just such incredible orators. So inspiring. It's been such a treat being exposed to that – something that I never would have experienced [elsewhere]." For Bob Barton of First Church in Cambridge, the experience started before he even arrived at Temple Israel: "It really began in the carpool [taking First Church members from Cambridge into Boston]. When you get involved with a carpool, it takes you back to going to some away football game, or something. I don't know what it is. Anyway, it was fun."

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[77] Interview with Bob Barton (alias), June 27, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

[78] Interview with Liza Johnson (alias), June 26, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

Attendants were also struck by the planning and professionalism of the GBIO assembly. First Church's Barton was impressed by the "discipline of the program planning. There were enough really good statements that this was worth my while. This is an organization that's really doing something." What stands out for Temple Israel member Karen Peyser is the fact that "people [presented] really sharp testimonies, testimonials where they are having this opportunity to tell their stories. I love how [the assembly] is constructed to be really clear. I just love the clarity of the message that it's always been figured out. I think that for me, it's the intentionality [of the evening that is impressive]. I wish life could be so well constructed and staged."[79] For Tina Jones of Roxbury Presbyterian, the evening at Temple Israel "was huge. There were newspaper articles about it. It was one of the biggest things I've ever been to. And [it was] very well organized."[80]

While most participants experienced the evening as an energizing entrée for people of faith into the political realm, some voiced concern. Karen Peyser of Temple Israel appreciated the evening for herself, but thinks that the "first-time experience is a little bit jarring for people. [Some] feel like it's been staged. At least that was a lot of what I had to counter in experiences where people felt like it was a play that was being acted out, that is wasn't a genuine experience for some people."[81] Becky Smith of Fourth Presbyterian comments that she is "not comfortable with the manipulative emotional [aspect of the evening]."[82] For her, "I think you reach a point where you need to acknowledge the intelligence of the community. I'm not comfortable with the [emotionalism]. It would not be my first choice, but I respect it. However, I have mixed feeling about GBIO for that reason."

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[79] Interview with Karen Peyser (alias), June 20, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[80] Interview with Tina Jones (alias), July 12, 2006, in Roxbury, MA.

John Sherman of First Church in Cambridge also sees both the pluses and minuses of the GBIO approach. While he remembers feeling "a little uncomfortable" because of the "revival aspects" of the evening, he acknowledges, "Everybody came away energized and pumped up, ready to do this hard work, out in the field." Despite concerns like these, by far the majority of attendants interviewed for this research mentioned the sense of common purpose achieved, the diversity of membership and argumentation, and the professionalism of the meeting as their lasting memories of that meeting.

Putting Pressure on the Legislature I: Signature Collection

Between September and November of 2005, GBIO members collected signatures from more than 42,000 registered voters in the state. The cornerstone of the Healthcare for All coalition campaign was the creation of a ballot initiative advocating the main points of its vision of healthcare reform.

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[81] Peyser reacts negatively here to Arnie Graf's description of assemblies as three-act plays that move audiences to action.

[82] Interview with Becky Smith (alias), June 13, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

The ballot initiative is a child of the early twentieth century Progressive political reform era, designed to give citizens a direct voice when elected officials fail, or are reluctant, to act. This direct form of democratic participation tends to be, not surprisingly, unpopular with elected officials, who can often be encouraged to act rather than be circumvented by a populist vehicle. In fact, the very purpose of the Healthcare for All ballot initiative was to apply pressure on elected Massachusetts officials to incorporate the coalition's goals in the final legislation rather than risk a popular mandate. To a large extent, this strategy worked, with Healthcare for All and GBIO seeing most of their objectives incorporated in the final bill. To qualify its healthcare legislation for inclusion on a ballot initiative, GBIO and the other Healthcare for All coalition members collected over 112,000 signatures of registered voters. GBIO members collected almost forty percent of the needed signatures by going door to door and signing up voters at subway stations, outside of supermarkets, churches, banks, and at outdoor cultural and sports events during a particularly cold and wet New England fall.

Signature collecting is grassroots political involvement at its most basic. Some GBIO members loved it; others hated it. But hundreds of them did it. James Weston recalls in some detail the experience at Roxbury Presbyterian Church, a story echoed by many: "[Members of Roxbury Presbyterian Church] went out to collect signatures, and they thought it was going to be a beautiful process. For some it was. There were folks that came up to them and thanked them for the work they were doing, because they hadn't had healthcare for so long, and they were concerned about what was going to happen. I think signature gathering, in a small way, forces you to step outside of your comfort zone and to interact with folks that you might not normally. I know some folks who have done signature gathering and who have had a difficult time. People told then, 'No,' 'Get away from me,' and stuff like that. But I think a lot of folks have a story in terms of how they were able to communicate with other folks in the process of signature gathering, and I think as a wider community. I think RPC has a pretty poignant story in terms of really playing a role in this effort. We are pretty proud of having been a part of this large political effort. And we really had a stake in collecting. I think we were only supposed to collect a couple hundred signatures, and we collected a couple thousand. And having a stake [in the political campaign], I think that's pretty important."[83] As did others, Weston found the successful campaign to be both a source of civic and congregational pride.

Putting Pressure on the Legislature II: State House Calls and Rallies

GBIO, focusing on the existing structures of representative government, identified and launched a campaign that targeted state legislators representing neighborhoods where GBIO members live. In hundreds of in-person, phone, and mail contacts coordinated with key developments over the course of the campaign, GBIO members were a constant reality for nine senators and over thirty representatives in the greater Boston metropolitan area. This was not necessarily easy for GBIO members. As Fran Godine, a member of Temple Israel, Vice-Chair of GBIO beginning in 2006, and a newcomer to political activity remarked at one Assembly, "It's really tough staying inside one of those phone calls. And here's a secret of mine. As soon as I finish one of those calls, I give myself an M&M. And then I make the next one." Over time, Godine realized that the M&M's and phone calls gave her "lot of courage. When I've gone to meet with the attorney general, or to meet with power people, I find myself excited. I'm like, 'Oh my gosh, I'm at the attorney general's office, again!' I feel relaxed. [I don't think] 'What am I doing here? How did this happen? I'm almost sixty.' In fact, now as Vice-Chair of GBIO, I feel the responsibility of that, and the leadership of that, and I don't find intimidating. I welcome it. I like the authority, or the moniker of having that position. It feels good."

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[83] Interview with James Weston (alias), July 3, 2006, in Boston, MA.

As the Massachusetts House and Senate began considering specific bills, GBIO provided the coalition and key legislators with ongoing feedback on elements considered most important – and therefore least negotiable to its members – gathered from representatives of its constituent congregations. GBIO was able, on the basis of a few days turnaround, to let legislators know what its members were willing to compromise on and what they were not. This was an important feedback mechanism, particularly at times when it looked like the legislative hearings would logjam and produce a very limited bill.

Putting Pressure on the Legislature III: Media Publicity

GBIO executed a strategy designed to maximize awareness of the campaign – and GBIO's alignment with it – in various metropolitan Boston media outlets. Through relationships carefully cultivated with selected journalists and op/ed columnists, boisterous press conferences headlined by clergy in full clerical garb, and an ongoing campaign of letters to the editors of *The Boston Globe*, business journals, and neighborhood weeklies, GBIO leaders added to the steady dissemination of the coalition's goals. Between May of 2005, when GBIO joined the Healthcare for All coalition, and April of 2006 when the legislation was signed into law, *The Boston Globe*, the largest circulation daily in Massachusetts, published 38 articles – an average of three per month –mentioning the contributions of GBIO and/or Healthcare for All. Thirteen GBIO members were quoted in, or cited as authors of, these articles.[84]

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[84] Clergy: Rev. Patrick Gray (Episcopal Church of the Advent), Rev. Hurmon Hamilton (Roxbury Presbyterian Church), Rev. Ray Hammond (Bethel A.M.E. Church), Rabbi Jonah Pesner (Temple Israel), Brother Jack Rathschmidt (Capuchin Franciscan Friars, ordained priest), Rt. Rev. M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE (Episcopal Bishop of Massachusetts); Laity: Cheri Andes (GBIO Lead Organizer), Barbara Berke (Temple Israel), Peter Brook (Fourth Presbyterian Church), Phil Edmondson (CEO, William Gallagher Associates), Nancy Kaufman (Executive Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston), Myron Miller (Temple Israel), Felix Unogwu (GBIO organizer).

CONCLUSIONS

It is well established that religious congregations provide their members with critical resources for participation in public life.[85] This chapter has explored some of the ways in which religious congregations and individuals experience such participation in order to shed light on the ways in which they negotiate and rethink the public role of religion.

Congregations are public religious institutions. Sociologists and political theorists have until quite recently argued the inevitability of the differentiation, decline, and privatization of religion. Americans, including Supreme Court jurists and recent immigrants, are conversant with, if not in agreement about, the metaphorical wall that separates church from state. On the basis of this GBIO campaign, however, the reality on the ground appears much more complex.

Deepening Connections

Participation in the political arena has led many GBIO participants to reflect on their denominational connections with social activism, and it offers some a deeper connection with that part of their religious traditions. For David Berg of Temple Israel, GBIO participation reminds him that there is a "strong connection between social justice and [the Jewish concept of] 'repair of the world.' It does not just mean do good deeds. It's a history of being involved in all these movements. The union movement, the civil rights movement. It's part of the history of Jews in America."[86] Fellow Temple Israel member Jan Schwartz, who initially worried about getting involved in politics through her synagogue, was reminded through her participation in GBIO that "four thousand years of Jewish history support this; Abraham Joshua Heschel did this. It helps modeling democracy for my own children, so that the world gets to a better place, to feel right."[87] Judy Long also finds that Jewish tradition helps her to locate herself in the healthcare campaign: "I'm really reflecting on a tradition that is many thousand years old when I'm campaigning for healthcare. I have found it very helpful to be able to ground what I do in a background that I already had but never really brought to the forefront."[88] What is true for an individual is also true for the congregation. Karen Peyser observes that Temple Israel "has a lot of history and commitment [to social justice]. It has been saying it's doing justice work for a long time. [Now as a member of GBIO], it's recommitting to this in some new ways, reclaiming its identity."

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[85] Verba*, Voice and Equality*, 1995; Christian Smith, ed., *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

Jeanne McCarthy of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Dorchester remembers being exposed in the 1970s to the teachings of liberation theology: "The whole thing was about standing on the side of the poor and taking action on behalf of justice. [These were] the constitutive dimensions of explaining the gospel. We talked about systemic change, and we talked about the fact that a Band Aid wasn't enough, but I didn't know how to do that."[89] It was only as a member of GBIO that she "had first hand experience with concrete ways to put faith in action for justice, to work for systemic change." José Rosario, also of St. Peter's agrees: "Our Catholic faith says if you don't fight for justice, you're not Catholic. GBIO puts our faith in action." [90]

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[86] Interview with David Berg (alias), June 16, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[87] Interview with Jan Schwartz (alias), May 26, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[88] Interview with Judy Long (alias), June 19, 2006, in Boston, MA.

The connection made with tradition among some members of First Church in Cambridge is with the social gospel movement of the early twentieth century. For example, GBIO reminds Liza Johnson, "the social gospel was what Jesus was all about." For her and her friends, too young to have experienced the Civil Rights movement, participation in "GBIO opens your eyes and takes you out of your normal everyday experience."

These GBIO members are giving voice to a greater sense of connection with their religious traditions and theologies. The neat lines between past and present, inwardly- and outwardly-directed religious roles, and theology and lived practice start to look less neat and helpful. In this case, the practice of faith-based community organizing effects changes in the way that members understand themselves as religious people. For those having this experience, it is both energizing and revitalizing. Political engagement and argumentation, framed by religious narratives and symbols, is experienced as revelatory and as a way to reflect and act in new ways. It enables practitioners to make connections and begin to rethink the nature of public and private, congregation and tradition, and religion and politics. This experience is not necessarily without cause for concern.

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[89] Interview with Jeanne McCarthy (alias), June 7, 2006, in Dorchester, MA.

[90] Interview with José Rosario (alias), June 10, 2006, in Dorchester, MA.

Exploring the Religion/Politics Divide

The ambiguity that many Americans feel about the engagement of religious congregations in politics was earlier noted along with the paradox that faith-based community organizations have been successful despite this ambiguity and despite the reported low-incidence of congregational involvement in political undertakings. This paradox at least suggests that the constructions public/religious, public/political, and inwardly-directed/outwardly-directed congregational roles are less analytically and empirically useful than is commonly thought. The exploration of the boundaries is clearly something that engages faith-based community organizations.

Participation in GBIO provides its members with new ways of thinking about the relationship between religious organizations and the public sphere. Rabbi Jonah Pesner of Temple Israel finds that "there is now an understanding [at Temple Israel] about the way that we can appropriately make a claim on the public space [that respects] the very understandable and important balance [between their primary functions]. Temple Israel, and our church partners and our synagogue partners, have a claim in the public arena, have a claim on government, have a claim on the polity. And we're going to make that claim out of our membership. That doesn't mean prayer in schools, that doesn't mean endorsing political candidates, [and] that doesn't mean forcing any religious choice on any individual or community. But we're in the public sphere! We're public people. Just because we are religious doesn't mean we aren't citizens. If it turns out that at the grassroots level people in the pews share a common value, why wouldn't we act out of that in ways that are appropriate, that are legal, and that are ethical as well?"

Dan Smith, a pastor at First Church in Cambridge (UCC), also senses a shift in his congregation. The members there have started to see GBIO "as an effective model for change. They see the relationships building within the congregation; people hear stories that they would not have heard otherwise, so [GBIO membership] is a tool for the congregation's development, not just for our plugging into the wider" organization. With the GBIO connection, however, members of First Church "started to really learn how to be public. There's an amazing learning experience that first time you walk into the State House. You have a sense of, 'I have a voice here, and it needs to be heard.' It's putting people into the role of citizen." As a result, "this learning to be public challenges that more private and individual notion of what faith is at least in the [mainline] Protestant communities. That it's not just about your relationship with God, or your love for your neighbor, but that there's a way in which, in order to bring the kingdom, you have to be public and play on the terms of the kingdom that's in place already."

Jonah Friedman of Dorshei Tzedek believes that the GBIO mode of public engagement provides balance to the prominence of the Religious Right over the past several decades. He believes that "it really ought to be everybody involved, and not just one side of the equation. And I think GBIO is a good harbinger of that. I don't know that it's going to achieve some sort of tremendous program over the years, but it's possible. Why not? Why not try it?"[91] Friedman acknowledges that it is "always difficult to get a congregation of any size involved in making a political statement, because people are different, and they have different ideas. To have a congregation make a statement or become involved in something that is making systemic change is potentially, well, either divisive or impossible. But we managed to do it with GBIO, because we said, 'We're really committed to social justice.' And that translates to domestic social action programs that we can feel comfortable about being involved with as a congregation."

Friedman is only one of a number of GBIO members I spoke with who mentioned concern with the model of public and political engagement presented by the Religious Right and the value of GBIO as a counter-model. The Rev. Hurmon Hamilton of Roxbury Presbyterian was not one of those people, however. From his perspective, “inasmuch as the Religious Right has argued that the church be engaged in public life, and seeks to reshape the discussion at the public table, GBIO and the Religious Right are in many ways cut from the same fabric, although we would disagree on some clear issues.” The key distinction Rev. Hamilton sees is that “GBIO, because of its diversity, now has a capacity to do what the Religious Right has been unable to do. Unlike the Religious Right, [GBIO] is theologically diverse, and in some areas, politically diverse. That’s why I am very cautious about language inside of GBIO that seemingly paints Republicans one certain way. My man Peter Brook from Fourth Presbyterian is a Republican. He’s been working tirelessly on healthcare reform, and his story has helped to drive it and to open the door. So you start talking [negatively about] Republicans, and you have to be very cautious. GBIO is politically diverse, it’s racially diverse, it’s theologically diverse. That’s where the narrative is [being] reshaped.”[92]

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[91] Interview with Jonah Friedman (alias), June 19, 2006, in Boston, MA.

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[92] Interview with Rev. Hurmon Hamilton, July 12, 2006, in Roxbury, MA.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM DIVERSITY TOWARDS PLURALISM

Diversity in the United States is currently a topic of much academic and popular focus. Demographic trends, spurred by the growth of immigration over the past forty years, provide a major explanation for this attention. In 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau announced that almost one of every ten counties has a majority-minority population that is, a population in which over 50% of the people indicate that they are either Hispanic or a race other than white alone.[1] Religious diversity has also significantly increased in the United States, particularly among adherents of Islam and Buddhism.[2]

This growing diversity has raised many questions. Is diversity a social good or a social negative? Can a common good still be discerned and articulated among so much difference? To what degree should particularistic languages and commitments be allowed in public forums? Underlying these questions is the concern, even the fear, that diversity – of race, ethnicity, and religion – might undermine the ability of the country to cohere in a well-ordered society, to borrow a phrase from the political philosopher John Rawls.

Religious congregations participate in American diversity. This is especially true when looking across the spectrum of congregations but much less so when looking at the composition of individual congregations. Congregational membership *in toto* is less stratified by income, race, and ethnicity than other forms of voluntary association in this country. [3] Nevertheless, *within* individual congregations, there remains considerable homogeneity along racial, ethnic, class, educational, and theological lines.[4]

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[1] U.S. Census Bureau, "More Than 300 Counties Now 'Majority-Minority.'" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, September 9, 2007). http://www.census.gov/PressRelease/www/releases/archives/population/010482.html (accessed 11/13/07).

[2] Americans who define themselves as atheists and agnostics have also increased significantly in number over the past ten years.

Given that congregations tend toward homogeneous membership, it makes them unlikely places for social scientists to study how diversity challenges or reinforces central tenets of American society. Further, the general pressure toward "structural inertia in all organizations" is especially pronounced in religious congregations whose missions include preserving sacred tradition, texts, and forms of worship.[5] If congregations tend to be change averse and not diverse in any strong sense, why indeed would one look to them to discern signs of pluralism, understood not just as tolerance for, but an active appreciation of, diversity? This chapter will argue that the intersection of democratic practice and religious community among GBIO congregations introduces certain new normative practices and attitudes about diversity into congregational life.

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[3] Verba, *Voice and Equality,* 243-244.

[4] Ammerman, *Congregation and Community*, 56.

[5] Ibid., 63.

DIVERSITY VERSUS PLURALISM

Virtually no one interviewed during the course of the research for this project mentioned the word diversity, although difference was often cited. Only one person used the word pluralism, although many spoke of heterogeneous communities and relationships. Nevertheless, diversity and pluralism remain useful analytical categories by which to understand what can take place when congregations engage in faith-based community organizing.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines diversity as, among other things, difference, variety, or multiformity. It defines pluralism as a condition in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups are present and tolerated within a society, and/or as the belief that such a condition is desirable or socially beneficial.[6]

Religious Studies scholar Diana Eck further differentiates between the two when she writes, "[d]iversity does not…have to affect me. I can observe it. I can even celebrate diversity, as the cliché goes. But I have to *participate in pluralism.* I can't just stand by and watch."[7] For Eck, pluralism entails active engagement with difference, understanding beyond mere toleration, commitment to one's viewpoint versus acceptance of all viewpoints, a respect for robust difference rather than syncretism, and ongoing dialogue.[8]

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[6] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000.

[7] Eck, Diana L. *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras.* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 191.

Sociologist Robert Wuthnow has also written about pluralism, under the rubric of "reflective pluralism," and specifically as it pertains to religious communities.[9] He shares many of Eck's ideas and argues that the United States needs to move beyond shallow tolerance of diversity if it is to thrive as a nation. Reflective pluralism involves "acknowledging how and why people are different (and the same), and it requires having good reasons for engaging with people and groups whose religious practices are fundamentally different from one's own."[10] For Wuthnow, reflective pluralism is distinguished from mere diversity by requirements to be substantive and studious in nature, to foster respectful and committed perspectives that nevertheless remain open to compromise, and to actively seek the neutralization of anti-pluralist views.[11]

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[8] Ibid., 191-197.

[9] Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, 289.

[10] Ibid., 289.

[11] Ibid., 289-292.

THE CHALLENGES OF INCREASED DIVERSITY FOR PLURALISM AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Two studies conducted within the past five years suggest that the move from a diverse society to one in which difference is embraced as a social and political virtue, or one in which robust levels of social capital are sustained, is not easily achieved. Robert Wuthnow focuses on religious diversity as a cultural challenge to solidarity in the United States while Robert D. Putnam focuses on immigration and ethnic diversity as short-term impediments to strong communal ties. Before examining the findings from the GBIO case study, it will be useful to briefly outline these two arguments.

In *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity*, Robert Wuthnow examines the impact of increasing religious diversity and concludes that religious difference – even more than racial or ethnic diversity – poses significant cultural challenges in the United States.[12] Most fundamentally, growing numbers of non-Christian communities in the United States are pressing Americans to rethink what Wuthnow argues is this country's dominant Christian self-conception.

To understand how a country with a narrative that incorporates a foundational Christian heritage might move towards one that is reshaped by evolving religious pluralism, Wuthnow investigates three narratives by which American Christians theologically interpret religious diversity. The first narrative, told by ‘Christian shoppers,’ embraces diversity by valuing the adoption of elements from other religious traditions. This view is theologically justified by a belief in a creator God who made all things as gifts to be embraced by humanity. The second narrative, shared by ‘inclusivist Christians,’ frames acceptance of diversity through a focus on being fair, tolerant of, and respectful toward other religious traditions. Diversity, on this basis, reflects a loving God who embraces and accepts all, even those who do not follow the example of Jesus Christ. The third, told by ‘exclusivist Christians,’ is a narrative that combines civic tolerance with a conviction that non-Christians face eternal damnation. Diversity, in this context according to Wuthnow, reflects a literalist biblical God and a sinful world in which the devil acts to prevent some from accepting God’s truth of Christianity.

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[12] Ibid., 93-94.

While one might conclude that Christian shoppers and inclusivists would embrace the kind of reflective pluralism for which he argues, Wuthnow finds only limited progress among any of the three types. When he examines sites that offer the potential for the development of religious pluralism -- congregational interactions with diversity, religiously mixed marriages, and inter-religious initiatives -- he finds that engagement with pluralism is likely to remain ceremonial and superficial at best among all kinds of religious adherents. In fact, Wuthnow suggests that advances toward religious pluralism trail advances towards the achievement of racial and ethnic pluralism in the United States.[13] What he finds is inter-religious coexistence rather than self-conscious, active and intentional engagement.

Wuthnow concludes that there continue to be two primary discourses in the United States: one is the language of civic pluralism, a language of rights and tolerance, while the other is the language of religious commitment, a language that remains largely Christian and often exclusivist.[14] Such a situation results in a "kind of schizophrenia...[that] allows the most open-minded among us to get by without taking religion very seriously at all …[and] holds little to prevent outbreaks of religious conflict and bigotry. It is little wonder that many Americans retreat into their private worlds whenever spirituality is mentioned. It is just easier to do that than to confront the hard questions about religious truth and our national identity."[15]

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[13] Ibid., 73. Wuthnow argues race has been conditioned by norms favoring equality for all and that ethnicity has been "tamed or domesticated" in the United States. (93-94) In this, his conclusions are at odds with Putnam's (see following pages).

[14] Ibid., 190. Based on the Religion and Diversity Survey among 2,910 adults, Wuthnow estimates that 34% of the American public is comprised of Christian exclusivists, 23% is comprised of Christian inclusivists, and 31% is comprised of spiritual shoppers.

[15] Ibid., 7.

Robert Putnam's recent work on community focuses on immigration and ethnic diversity.[16] Religious diversity is a secondary consideration in this work; Putnam views it as much less problematic than does Wuthnow, arguing that religion has faded as a "salient line of social division over the last half century."[17] I will not debate their differences here, but I will return to them later in this chapter.[18]

In contrast to Wuthnow, Putnam is not interested in pluralism as much as he is in social solidarity and social capital, understood as social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness, in the face of growing diversity. Pluralism and social capital are indeed different concepts. For example, social capital, particularly in its bonding form, does not necessarily demand an understanding of or appreciation for diversity (i.e., of pluralism). One can easily imagine cohesive, high social capital organizations that are homogenous and reluctant to engage diversity (religious congregations, for example). In fact, Putnam argues that society will more easily "reap the benefits" of ethnic diversity if and when the “social salience” of difference declines.[19] The growth of “permeable, syncretic, ‘hyphenated identities’” will enable separate groups to “see themselves, in part, as members of a shared group with a shared identity.”[20] By this definition, social capital rests more on the suppression of public difference than does reflective pluralism, which values an increased level of understanding and respect for such difference. Nevertheless, social capital and pluralism share an interest in effective and adaptive democratic practice, and theorists of both share a concern for the impact of increasing diversity on democratic societies.

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[16] Putnam, Robert D. "*E Pluribus Unum:* Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century, The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture" in Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30 – No. 2, No. 2, 2007, 137 – 174.

[17] Ibid., 160.

[18] This research at least suggests that both scholars overestimate the extent to which individuals and communities struggle more with some aspects of diversity than others. To isolate religious diversity as more or less problematic than economic or ethnic diversity, for example, is to make critical aspects of personhood overly distinct.

Putnam’s research leads him to conclude that ethnic diversity in modern societies, including the United States, will increase over the coming decades, in large part due to immigration. This trend will challenge social solidarity and limit the growth of social capital, although in the long term, it will “create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities.”[21] In the short term, Putnam’s research also leads him to be as pessimistic about the development of social capital as Wuthnow’s does about the development of reflective pluralism. They share a concern about how social solidarity can be achieved in the face of difference.

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[19] Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum,”* 161.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 139.

Putnam direly concludes that “inhabitants of diverse communities tend to withdraw from collective life, to distrust their neighbors, regardless of the colour of their skin, to withdraw even from close friends, to expect the worst from their community and its leaders, to volunteer less, give less to charity and work on community projects less often, to register to vote less, to agitate for social reform *more*, but have less faith that they can actually make a difference, and to huddle unhappily in front of the television.”[22] Echoing Wuthnow, Putnam argues that diversity, “at least in the short run, seems to bring out the turtle in all of us.”[23]

One of the cities on which Putnam bases his findings is Boston, a metropolitan area in which he finds both relatively high levels of ethnic heterogeneity at the census tract level and low levels of trust for those of other races, even if those people live in their neighborhoods.[24] So it is to Boston and GBIO that this chapter now turns.

DIVERSITY IN BOSTON

In the almost three hundred years since its founding by English Puritans in 1630, Boston has become one of the most diverse cities in the United States, and one that continues to have a significant proportion of immigrants. By 2000,

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[22] Ibid., 150-151.

[23] Ibid., 151.

[24] Ibid., 147-148.

Boston's racial and ethnic minority groups constituted 51% of the population, and residents born in foreign countries accounted for 26% of the city's total population.[25] While perhaps best known for its high concentrations of people of Irish and Italian ancestry, Boston's population by the turn of the this century was over 24% African American and included significant populations which trace their roots to Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cape Verde, Vietnam, and China.

Census data from 2006 confirm the diversity of Boston, home to 73% (49) of GBIO's member organizations that year. The city itself is considerably more diverse than the neighboring communities that account for the remaining 27% (18) of GBIO member organizations. Still, the entire geography within which GBIO operates is more racially diverse than is the United States as a whole.

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[25] Boston Redevelopment Authority/ Research Division,"New Bostonians 2005." October 2005. www.cityofboston.gov/newbostonians/pdfs/demo_report_2005.pdf (accessed 2/7/07).

Table 2

Race Statistics: GBIO versus U.S.

Geography	**% White**	**% Black/ African American**	**% Other**	**% Hispanic/ Latino**
City of Boston	56.6	24.5	18.9	14.9
Other GBIO Communities (1)	80.2	5.1	14.7	4.1
Total GBIO Communities	**66.6**	**16.2**	**17.1**	**10.3**
Total U.S.	73.9	12.4	12.8	14.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; American FactFinder, 2006; Other includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some other Race, and Two or More Races.

(1) Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Newton, Somerville, Quincy, Winchester; data for Auburndale not available.

Religiously, due to immigration patterns during the nineteenth century as well as those that have continued to the present day, Suffolk, Middlesex, and Norfolk counties, which include Boston and the neighboring communities from which GBIO draws its membership, have a significant Catholic (primarily Roman Catholic) majority population among those who religiously affiliate. These counties also have a larger Jewish population as a percent of total than the country as a whole, in keeping with the above-average concentration of Jewish households in the Northeastern part of the United States.[26]

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[26] National Jewish Population Survey, “Jewish Population in the United States, 2002,” 161 *American Jewish Year Book, 2003* (Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee).

Table 3

Religious Statistics: GBIO versus U.S.

Geography	**% Roman/Orthodox Catholic**	**% Christian/ Non Catholic**	**% Jewish**	**% Other**
GBIO Counties (1)	77.4	11.3	8.9	2.4
Total U.S.	44.5	49.5	4.3	1.3

Source: Religious Congregations & Membership in the United States 2000; Other includes Baha'ism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Islam, and Unitarian Universalism. U.S. figures do not equal 100% due to rounding.

(1) Suffolk, Middlesex, Norfolk

Thus, while not a microcosm of the United States, the geography in which GBIO operates is nonetheless in keeping with – and in some instances leads – demographic trends that point to an increasingly diverse American populace in terms of race, ethnicity, and religious commitments in the twenty-first century.

DIVERSITY WITHIN GBIO

Organizations affiliated with the IAF have been comprised of significant immigrant and minority populations since the 1940s. IAF founder Saul Alinsky first gained experience and recognition while organizing in the meatpacking district of Chicago, working primarily with Polish immigrants. Sociologist Mark Warren's important study focused on the impact of Hispanic communities working with the IAF in Texas. IAF organizer Michael Gecan and others have written about the IAF's Nehemiah affordable housing campaigns that emerged from primarily African American communities in the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and the Bronx.

GBIO's racial and ethnic diversity also roughly reflects the demographics of the geography in which it operates, with a membership that is racially diverse and is comprised of a significant immigrant population. Of its 67 member institutions in 2006, 40% were majority white in composition, 27% were majority Black/African American, 10% were of mixed race and ethnicity, and the remaining 3% were majority Hispanic. Of this total, 16% were majority immigrant in membership.

Where GBIO stands out versus both the national and regional field of congregation based community organizations (CBCOs) is in its religious make-up. Among its congregational membership, GBIO has substantially more Jewish and Black Protestant members, and substantially fewer Catholic members, than do similar organizations, both nationally and in the Northeast.

Table 4

Congregational Affiliation: GBIO versus Northeast and Total U.S.

Religion	**% GBIO**	**% CBCOs (U.S.)**	**% CBCOs (N.E.)**
Catholic	14	33	32
White Protestant	38	55	60
Black Protestant	20	8	4
Total Christian	**72**	**96**	**96**
Jewish	18	2	2
UU	6	2	2
Other Non Christian	4	*	*
Total Non Christian	**28**	**4**	**4**

Sources: GBIO Congregational Membership, 2006; U.S. and Northeast: Warren, Mark R. and Richard L. Wood. 2001. *Faith-Based Community Organizing: The State of the Field.* Jericho, NY: Interfaith Funders.

The evolution of GBIO's racial, ethnic, and religious diversity has been both intentional and subject to external circumstances. According to one of its founding members and current GBIO Co-Chair, the Reverend Hurmon Hamilton of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, the goal of the organization "always was to bring people together from diverse parts of the city, bound by the common thread of faith in general, though not exclusively. And to create an organization where a kind of unity would be developed that would subvert the spirit of divisiveness and territorial-ness that eleven years ago defined this city, theologically, culturally, and politically."[27] Even with this explicit goal, the development of diversity within GBIO was not without its challenges.

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[27] Interview with Rev. Ray Hammond, July 26, 2006, Jamaica Plain, MA.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GBIO'S BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC, AND JEWISH MEMBERSHIP

Black and African American Protestant Membership

From the beginning, there was a concerted effort by GBIO's founders to develop membership among the leading Black immigrant and African American Protestant congregations of the city. In fact, the foundational meeting for GBIO was held in the basement of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, a Black evangelical congregation on Warren Street, in the heart of Boston's African American community. Nevertheless, this was not an easy task.

The Reverend Ray Hammond, pastor of GBIO member-congregation Bethel AME Church, outlines four reasons why GBIO has had to work hard to cultivate membership among the Black Church community. First, he recalls that he and other Black pastors initially "had questions about the IAF. Generally, in the sense of how successful it had been across the country in really building diverse coalitions." Indeed, faith-based organizations across the country have a black Protestant membership well below the incidence of Blacks and African Americans in the country at large (8% CBBO membership versus 12 % U.S. population).

Second, Rev. Hammond recalls that in GBIO's initial years, "there was intentionally, or unintentionally, a little bit of a sense of, "My way or the highway. We've got the answer." By way of example, he cites GBIO's ill-fated attempt in 2002 - 2003 to develop affordable housing in one of Boston's largely

African American and Black (Haitian) immigrant neighborhoods: “I remember the housing they wanted to build in Mattapan. Reading the story in the paper, I said, ‘Oh man, they’ve brought in problems.’ Because there was this whole thing of bringing in people from New York [where IAF organizations have had considerable success in creating affordable housing] and announcing that they were going to build the best housing ever. Now, in a city [Boston] that has 26 Community Development Corporations [CDC’s], a city that is the father of the CDC, the mother of the CDC movement, you don’t want to say that.” Hammond cites this as an example of an early hubris that alienated local immigrant Black and African American communities.

Third, Hammond cites concern with the traditional IAF language about power that is employed by GBIO. As he puts it, “I knew, at least from what I heard at the couple of early meetings I went to that the way power was being talked about was going to be off-putting. I didn’t think it was theologically or even ethically wrong. I just thought the language was going to be grating for people who often found themselves on the wrong end of power. People are all right when you say something about Holy Ghost power, but if you start talking about the dynamics of political power and economic power, unless you really couch that in terms that make it clear that ‘I’m not power-hungry,’ the impression you leave people with is, ‘Here’s another power-intoxicated organization. I’m going to run in the other direction as fast as I can, because every time I run across something like that, it has been a bad experience.'"[28]

Finally, at the time of GBIO's founding, Boston was already home to two prominent African American organizations with interests in and programs directed toward community action. Still in operation today, these are the Ten Point Coalition and the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Inc. (BMA). The Ten Point Coalition was founded in 1992 by three prominent African American pastors to "mobilize the Christian community around issues affecting Black and Latino youth" and to "build partnerships with community-based, governmental, and private sector institutions that are also committed to the revitalization of the families and communities in which our youth must be raised," according to its mission statement.[29] The BMA was founded in the early 1960s, and its goal is to "provide spiritual nurture for clergy, and advocacy and program services for the larger Black community…[by] creating positive change in the Boston area."[30] The creation of a new organization, GBIO, with at least some overlapping objectives, was not well received initially by members of the two existing organizations.

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[28] The IAF language of power and confrontation was not just troublesome for African Americans in Boston. It is an aspect of community organizing that has been uncomfortable for some members of urban and suburban White congregations as well.

[29] Ten Point Coalition. http://www.bostontenpoint.org (accessed 1/21/10). Rev. Hammond is Chairman and Co-Founder of the Ten Point Coalition.

[30] Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Inc. http://www.bmaboston.org/CC_Content_Page/1,,PTID328806|CHID773098|CIID,00.html (accessed 1/22/10). Rev. Hammond is on the Board of the BMA.

Nevertheless, by 2006 GBIO was able to add ten Black and African American Protestant congregations to its membership roster. Rev. Hammond points to two main reasons for this relative success. First, he cites the regional orientation of GBIO and its goal of effecting change across the metropolitan area and state at large. It was clear to Hammond and others that “the issues we’re facing, by and large, are regional issues. And GBIO has a regional model.” Second, he points to the impact of one of the IAF’s core organizing practices, the one-to-one meeting, which will be discussed at length later in this chapter. A turning point for Hammond in his relationship with GBIO was when he “sat down and started building relationships [with GBIO organizers.] We spent a lot of one-to-one time, and I got to know [the organizers] and they got to know me and my family, and what we’re doing here at [Bethel AME Church], and what the Ten Point Coalition was all about. I learned about what GBIO was hoping to do here. And that went on for about a year” before he and his congregation became comfortable with the new organization and decided to pursue membership.

GBIO remains interested in bringing other Black Protestant congregations into the organization. Nevertheless it has already been relatively successful in recognizing some of its early missteps and in coming to understand the overlapping interests of existing organizations such that it has been able to create a relatively representative Black and African American Protestant constituency.[31]

Jewish Membership

Although IAF founder Saul Alinsky was raised in an Orthodox Jewish household, his organizing work and that of most contemporary faith-based community organizations has been centered in Christian congregations. As was detailed above, only 2% of congregations affiliated with faith-based community organizations in 2001 were Jewish.[32] IAF Executive Committee member Ernesto Cortés, Jr. recalls Jewish leaders in Texas telling him, "You'll never get the synagogues involved in organizing," given a social action model that has focused on synagogue-based charitable initiatives over the last several decades.[33]

This model shows signs of changing, and the GBIO experience sheds light on synagogues' increasing role in faith-based community organizing. As was the case with the Black and African American communities, GBIO was intentional from its earliest sponsoring committee days in 1996 – 1997 to develop a Jewish base of membership. Rabbi Barbara Penzner of Hillel B’nai Torah in West Roxbury agreed to join GBIO’s sponsoring committee, the organizing structure that pledged to raise a three-year start-up budget from denominational grants. As part of this effort, the sponsoring committee approached the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC) for support and membership. With its interest in “advocacy, organizing, service, and partnerships” on behalf of social justice, JCRC became an early supporter and conduit to the larger Jewish community in Boston.[34] Between 2002 and 2004, JCRC, in conjunction with three area synagogues, helped found the Greater Boston Synagogue Organizing Project to encourage and develop community organizing within the greater Boston Jewish community.

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[31] As noted above, African American and Black congregations account for 20% of GBIO congregations while Black and African Americans represent 24.5% of Boston's population and 16.2% of the population in the overall GBIO area.

[32] This is the most recent year for which data are available. Interfaith Funders is currently developing funding to replicate the study in 2010 – 2011.

[33] Peter Dreier and Daniel May, "Progressive Jews Organize" in *The Nation*, 1 October 2007. http://www.thenation.com/doc/20071001/dreier_may (accessed 10/19/08).

Another early contact was with Temple Israel, New England’s largest Reform synagogue located in Boston’s Longwood Medical neighborhood. Temple Israel has had a long history of supporting social action, including involvement in the civil rights movement in the 1960s; it became preliminarily involved with GBIO in 1998. It was not until 2000, however, on the basis of its exposure to GBIO, the arrival of a new Assistant Rabbi, Jonah Pesner, and the support of key lay leaders, that Temple Israel’s commitment to community organizing gained critical internal momentum. According to Rabbi Pesner, “in those early years, GBIO was largely a committee within Temple Israel, with three or five people who participated."[35] In 2000, as Temple Israel began to contemplate its future in advance of its 150th anniversary in 2004, the synagogue reevaluated its social justice work, which was then focused on relatively discrete direct service programs. According to Rabbi Pesner, internal conversations revealed that "there was a real desire, a yearning for our social justice work to engage many more people, address the root causes of injustice, and come out of our faith tradition of Jewish learning and Jewish worship."

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[34] “About JCRC” http://www.jcrcboston.org/about/ (accessed 4/21/07).

At that point, Temple Israel, with the encouragement of GBIO, hired an internal organizer and proceeded to conduct an internal campaign of 800 one-to-one relational meetings. Based on the connections made during this campaign, Rabbi Pesner recalls that "we moved from a congregation that could turn out three people to a GBIO delegate's assembly to a congregation that could turn out a hundred people to an action because we had created a relational network within the congregation and we really knew what people cared about and what they would turn out for." This experience was shared by Temple Israel under the rubric of 'best social activism practices' with other local synagogues and contributed to the growing interest in GBIO participation among Jewish congregations in and around Boston.

Just as GBIO had to listen and respond to its Black and African American constituency, and is now in partnership with the Boston Ministerial Alliance in efforts to reduce youth violence in the city of Boston, so it has had to adjust to its Jewish membership. Fran Godine, a member of Temple Israel, early GBIO leader and current GBIO Co-Chair, remembers that, "in the beginning, GBIO meetings were often scheduled for Friday nights and Saturdays," in conflict with the Jewish Sabbath.[36] Godine felt that some significant part of her early participation in GBIO focused on "raising awareness" and respect for her religious tradition.

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[35] Interview with Rabbi Jonah Pesner, May 15, 2006, Boston, MA.

Roman Catholic Membership

One might surmise that GBIO would follow the national pattern of significant Catholic membership. On a national basis, 33% of CBCO congregations are Catholic. The percentage in the Northeast is almost identical at 32%. However, only 14% of GBIO congregations are Catholic, in a city and metropolitan area that is overwhelmingly Catholic. How did this happen?

When it was first forming, GBIO garnered considerable support from the Archdiocese of Boston, created in 1875 and still one of the largest Roman Catholic archdioceses in the United States. At a 4,000 person GBIO founding rally at Boston College High School in November of 1998, then Cardinal Bernard Law stood at the podium and called the meeting "one of the most exciting things to have happened here since I became archbishop [of Boston] in 1984."[37]

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[36] Interview with Fran Godine, May 26, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[37] "Church Launches Broad-Based Coalition" *The Boston Globe,* Metro B1 November 23, 1998.

This early support was not to be sustained. In January of 2002, fourteen months after the GBIO founding rally, *The Boston Globe* launched a series of articles detailing alleged sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. Over the next sixteen months, *The Boston Globe* wrote a series of 382 articles under the title, “Crisis in the Church,” which chronicled clerical sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston. In December 2002, Cardinal Law submitted his resignation; three months later, *The Globe* reported that the archdiocese had suffered a $100 million capital campaign shortfall, a 10% decline in priests, and a 14% decline in Mass attendance versus the prior year.[38]

Father John Doyle, the priest at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church who initiated that parish’s engagement with GBIO in late 1996 and early 1997, recalls that the sexual abuse scandal had a “devastating” impact on diocesan clergy.[39] Prior to the story breaking, priests “were so looked up to, on a pedestal, models to society and to Catholics. All of a sudden all this was punctured. It left the priests devastated. Their identity was destroyed. And they had to recover from that, but it just got worse and worse” as more abuse came to light.

The Catholic laity also experienced devastation and anger. As St. Peter’s lay member Sean Murphy notes, “It’s hard to be totally trusting anymore to

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[38] Walter V. Robinson, Thomas Farragher. “Crisis in the Church: Deep Cuts Loom in Spending by Church Scandal, Economy Cited in Fund-Raising Shortfall, Archdiocese Warns of Deep Cuts in Spending,” in *The Boston Globe,* Metro, A1.

[39] Interview with Father John Doyle, April 5, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[ordained] people who turned out to be not nice people. It’s hard to reconcile that.”[40]

A new archbishop, Franciscan Sean O’Malley, was installed in Boston in July 2003. Despite this new leadership, and an $85 million resolution of many of the lawsuits brought by victims against the archdiocese later that year, Boston metropolitan parishes have continued to struggle with budgetary shortfalls and related parish and parochial school closings. In large part due to this extended internal crisis, the Roman Catholic Church has not yet approached participation in GBIO in numbers anywhere approximating its continuing numerical prominence in Eastern Massachusetts.

DIVERSITY WITHIN GBIO MEMBER CONGREGATIONS

Having observed that congregations tend toward homogeneity of membership, it is important to note that they are not devoid of internal diversity. All of the congregations in this study, for example, have memberships that are diverse in terms of age and gender. St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church in Dorchester is highly racially and ethnically diverse, with a congregation comprised of Irish Americans, African Americans, and Cape Verdean Americans, the adults among whom still primarily speak Creole. Temple Israel, Dorshei Tzedek, and First Church in Cambridge are openly diverse in terms of sexual orientation. Fourth Presbyterian Church and Roxbury Presbyterian Church are congregations with significant numbers of members who had previously attended other churches (including Catholic, Methodist, and Baptist).[41]

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[40] Interview with Sean Murphy (alias), June 12, 2005, in Boston, MA.

Where the congregations reveal the greatest homogeneity is in terms of class. Temple Israel, Dorshei Tzedek, and First Church in Cambridge draw their memberships largely from the middle and professional classes. St. Peter's, Fourth Presbyterian in South Boston, and New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church in Mattapan are primarily working class congregations, while Roxbury Presbyterian Church has a mix of working and middle class members.

None of these congregations –or any of the other GBIO congregations – is reflective of the Boston metropolitan area as a whole. Upon joining GBIO, each became exposed to a degree of difference that it did not contain within its walls. This chapter is interested in whether – and, if so, how – this exposure to the public, political sphere via GBIO membership had an impact on the development of pluralism and social solidarity among participating congregations.

GBIO DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES AND CONGREGATIONAL CHANGE

One-to-One Meetings and St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church

GBIO, drawing on IAF techniques, incorporates many rituals – "group-specific norms of behavior that foster solidarity" -- to engage and coalesce its participants.[42] No doubt *the* foundational ritual is the one-to-one relational meeting, described on an early GBIO website page as follows:

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[41] New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church is the most homogeneous of the congregations in this study. All members are immigrants to this country, and the vast majority were raised as Protestant evangelicals.

> It is a face to face meeting for the purpose of establishing or deepening a public relationship…. It's about developing a relationship, [and it should be] a two-way conversation, not one-way; if you expect to find out what makes someone tick, you have to reveal something about yourself. It's finding out what's really important to that person; not chitchat.[43]

One-to-one meetings generally last for thirty to sixty minutes, during which time the two participants share stories about the community issues about which they feel most passionate. One-to-ones create an exchange of charged personal narratives between individuals *qua* community members and citizens. At the individual level, self-interest is articulated in relationship to congregational, community, and government structures; collectively, the accumulation of narratives often leads to the identification of specific GBIO campaign goals.

One-to-one meetings are both a means to an end and an end in themselves. The 2003 GBIO website page reminded one-to-one initiators to be "especially looking for potential leaders, for people you want to go back to and ask to act with you on the community and congregational concerns you and they have."[44] But beyond that, one-to-one meetings are where the seeds of new relationships are sown. They are social spaces where participants are able to learn about and identify with the situations and concerns of others. They are the sites where relationship building begins.

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[42] Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans, "The Cultural Analysis of Social Movements," in Johnston and Klandermans, ed., *Social Movements and Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 15.

[43] Introduction, Areas, History, Congregational/Organizational Leadership Development, 'One on One' Relational Meetings, (Greater Boston Interfaith Organization). http://www.gbio.org (accessed 1/19/03).

Because the incidence of one-to-one meetings tends not to be tabulated at the congregational or GBIO level, it is impossible to know how many have been conducted over the lifetime of GBIO. At the very least, however, they have numbered in some multiple of thousands.

The cornerstone of the imposing Gothic structure that is St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church in Dorchester was laid in 1873, within sight of the First Parish Church on Meeting House Hill, the oldest religious organization in Boston and now a Unitarian Universalist congregation. In its early decades, St. Peter's was Dorchester's largest parish when Dorchester was a popular country retreat and later a streetcar suburb of Boston. Today, Dorchester is Boston's largest and most populous neighborhood, with a diverse and predominantly working class community. However, for several years, St. Peter's has faced the possibility that its sanctuary might be closed as part of the reconfiguration of Roman Catholic parishes in Boston. The church has experienced a significant decline in Mass attendance and its five building campus, including the sanctuary itself, is in need of substantial repair.

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[44] Ibid.

In the summer of 1996, Father John Doyle was appointed priest at St. Peter's. He had grown up in the neighborhood, been ordained in Boston in 1942, but had spent most of his ministry – twenty-five years – in Bolivia. Nearing retirement, Father Doyle wanted to return to his roots in Dorchester, and after a year of negotiation, he won diocesan approval for a final parish appointment at St. Peter's. He recalls that five languages were used there in the occasional community-wide liturgies at the time: English, for the Irish and African American congregants, Portuguese for the Cape Verdeans, French for the Haitians, Spanish for congregants from the Caribbean, and Vietnamese. At his installation, Father Doyle held up a globe of the world and asked, "Will you help me to make this a church for the world?"

Prior to his arrival at St. Peter's, Father Doyle had been introduced to community organizing, and to several future GBIO organizers, in Brockton, MA, where he was assigned at the time. His parish in Brockton was in a neighborhood full of "blight, and crime, and violence. The parishioners were afraid." By engaging in faith-based community organizing, and particularly in one-to-one relational meetings, Father Doyle observed that his Spanish and English speaking parishioners began "rubbing shoulders with each other. This created a whole new dynamic inside the congregation, and we began to work together. It was just incredible. It was just beautiful."

Upon his arrival at St. Peter’s, Father Doyle immediately involved the parish in the earliest organizational meetings for what would eventually become GBIO. He invited parishioners to join him in weekly meetings and to engage in multiple one-to-one relational meetings. For Father Doyle, the one-to-one meeting can be best understood within the context of the story of two disciples who met, but did not initially recognize, the post-resurrection Jesus on the road to Emmaus.[45] In that story, the disciples were talking about Jesus’ crucifixion when he, unrecognized by them, approached and engaged them in conversation. It was only after Jesus spent time and broke bread with them that they recognized him. Father Doyle interprets the story to mean that the disciples had “their whole viewpoint and understanding of what’s going on changed” by this intimate, interpersonal experience. For him, a similar dynamic occurs in one-to-one meetings, “when two people come together in a meaningful relationship, when they begin to share with each other their dreams, and their disappointments, and their grief, and their sorrow, and their fear and running away. This is over and over something that people experienced [as a result of one-to-one relational meetings], and it’s what I saw all the time I was at St. Peter’s.” The one-to-one meeting, in Father Doyle’s view, is revelatory; this basic organizing meeting models the road to Emmaus story, where a stranger becomes known.

Father Doyle began to see the impact of one-to-one relational meetings in concrete ways. One story stands out in his mind. On a Sunday morning after the

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[45] Luke 24:13 - 35

English language Mass, attended primarily by Irish and African Americans, a woman came up to him. “She was a White woman, I’d say middle-aged, maybe in her fifties. She was sobbing; she was really weeping, and she came up to me and said, ‘Father Doyle, I want to apologize. I’m very sorry. I was opposed to what you were doing [with the one-to-one meetings], and I now realize how wrong I was. I ask you to forgive me.’ A couple of weeks later, when she was more composed, I talked with her [as she left the sanctuary] and asked her why she wanted forgiveness. And she said, ‘I didn’t think that what you were doing was right for our parish.’ Then she turned around and looked at the crowd that was coming out of the church. She said, ‘Look at these people. Look at how they are talking to each other, smiling at each other. We never had that before. I’m so thankful that this has happened here.’” That, for Father Doyle, was a “moment of light.” The community had been strengthened.

Father Doyle was not the only person at St. Peter’s who discerned a difference in the making, a difference that has had lasting results. Father Doyle retired in 2002, but the impact of the one-to-one relational meetings remained top of mind in the interviews for this research conducted in 2005 and 2006. Irish American Martin McCoy describes his first one-to-one meeting as an “epiphany,” a term used in the bible to refer to a revelatory manifestation of the divine.[46]

For him, “the guts of the whole thing is to make an appointment to meet with a person one-on-one for half an hour. You spend the first few minutes exchanging your history. In the second part of the meeting, you explain how things are now. In the third part of the meeting you share what you'd like to see in the future, in the community, in the congregation. And that was really an enlightenment to me. Because it gave me a chance to meet people [both at St. Peter's and in other congregations] I never would have met. Like I met [GBIO organizer] Fran Early. We come from different social and economic neighborhoods. You know, she's from Trinity Church," the largest and most affluent Episcopal church in the city. For Martin, "the biggest thing about this GBIO [one-to-one] training was getting to know different people. This has been a great opening."

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[46] Interview with Martin McCoy (alias), July 17, 2005, in Boston, MA.

Parishioner Sean Murphy initially had concerns about participating in one-to-one meetings. "When people were first sharing their stories, I had to try to block them. You know when you're talking and you're like, 'what are they going to tell me? How is this going to go? Am I gonna screw this up?'" One relational meeting changed his mind; "After listening to this person from Cape Verde, who had a very tough time with English, I understood the courage that he had to sit there and tell me this stuff. I couldn't get over what he was telling me. About his family, growing up, his kids, and how it was in his country. It was supposed to last for half an hour, but I think it was about three hours that we were talking. From that point on, one-to-ones have only gotten better, because you learn that when people open themselves up to each other, it's real, it's an honor, it's a time when you are both being honest with each other. There's no crap. There's no outside political baloney. It's just two people talking. It's a tremendous, tremendous experience that I find very uplifting. There's a trust. Once we get to know each other, there is a trust that stays there. If we could help each other, we would. I think that's the biggest reward of GBIO." In this experience, Sean describes nascent social capital and at least the beginning of reflective pluralism, understood as self-conscious, active, and intentional engagement.

Trust between former strangers – across race and ethnicity – gradually began to develop according to Sean. He tells a story, recounted frequently by GBIO members at St. Peter's, of the time when Father Doyle called a meeting of the parishioners he had been trying to engage in community organizing. With everyone assembled, Father Doyle asked, "What really ticks you off?" After a moment of silence, Mary Weaver, an African American woman who had attended St. Peter's at that point for ten years, stood up, pointed at Sean Murphy, and said "Him." Murphy was startled; "What did I do?" Weaver responded, "I walk by your house everyday. We go to the same church. And you have never said hello to me."[47] Admitting that she was right, Sean arranged to have a one-to-one meeting with Weaver, and they began working together on GBIO projects.

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[47] This incident became so well known within St. Peter's parish that it eventually came to the attention of Peter Mehegan, an on-air personality at television station WCVB in Boston. Mehegan, a Dorchester native, focused an episode of the TV newsmagazine, "Chronicle," on this encounter between Weaver and Murphy. According to Father Doyle, the station told him "it was one of the most popular shows that they'd ever done. They put in on over and over again."

Almost ten years later, Millie Weaver remembers that encounter as a new beginning for the parish, a time when it "began to become close. [Now] we care about each other."[48] It is rather surprising that a church member, someone who considers herself to be a part of the body of Christ, points to an organizing practice as the vehicle that bonds and binds the congregation. And she is not alone in this sentiment. Sean agrees: "As a community, we're stronger. People talk to one another. They ask, 'Where were you last week? You weren't here.' Stuff like that gets noticed. You hear about family successes. You hear people talk about their kids. During the one-to-ones, I met such incredible people. The stories were unbelievable. You think you're the only one involved in certain things, when you're actually just one in a thousand. To me, a lot of it [the one-to-one meeting] is about trust. If you have trust with somebody, you can share your innermost feelings with them without worrying about being laughed at or ridiculed. This goes a long way toward trust and faith. Because we're all working for the same goal of making life better for everybody in the community and to become a community."

One of the important elements that contributed to the development of trust and common goals was the kind of language employed in one-to-one meetings. According to Sean, "When you're talking to somebody, the conversation is – I'm not saying people aren't educated – but it's just normal, everyday conversation that everybody understands. When you deal with people from a newspaper or from some of the civic organizations, conversations seem to be a little more contrived. People are more careful and more formal in what they say, and how they say it. Whereas if you're dealing with us, this is me, this is what I'm telling you. The only way that I can explain it is that it's us, putting ourselves out, being ourselves. I think people respond to that much more than they are going to respond to somebody up on the stage, like a politician. [When we talk among ourselves], there is a bond with each other that is more solid than anything the archdiocese can do. The archdiocese is not going to break that bond; the church [hierarchy] isn't going to break that. The only way that bond is going to break is if those two people break it for whatever reason. It's oblivious to outside sources. It's two people, or three people, or four people, or six people coming together to decide, 'We're going to stick together and be one.'" Sean's words suggest Jesus' description of Christian community found in Matt 18:20: For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

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[48] Interview with Millie Weaver (alias), July 16, 2005, in Boston, MA.

This kind of everyday language of shared concerns, contextualized by explicit and implicit religious allusions and images, created a bond at St. Peter's that more formal language could not. The practice of one-to one meetings fostered an internal sense of social solidarity that supported the long time members of St. Peter's during a period in which faith in the hierarchy was severely challenged.

St. Peter's has changed since Father Doyle's retirement. The Vietnamese community has been transferred to another parish, and the priest assigned in 2005, Father Christopher Gomes, a Portuguese native, has been less involved in GBIO as he works to raise funds for repair of the sanctuary. The ultimate status of the Gothic building remains undecided as the archdiocese continues to review the viability of maintaining such a large and costly campus. Nevertheless, St. Peter’s was in attendance at GBIO’s 10th Anniversary Action in May 2008, and Sister Sally McLaughlin, first introduced to community organizing by Father Doyle, continues the work he started in conjunction with other lay leaders.

While GBIO membership did not wholly transform the parish, it nevertheless contributed in several important ways to the people who were drawn into participation.[49] Elements of community were created amongst considerable diversity of race, ethnicity, and language. Moving beyond coexistence and toleration, members started to get to know one another through their stories, concerns, and different life experiences. St. Peter’s experienced an increase both in bonding social capital, among like people inside the congregation, and in bridging social capital, across participants of the different worship services and with members of other congregations. In religious terms, the body of Christ is strengthened by virtue of the one-to-one organizing practice. The dialogue that took place was simultaneously personal, public in that it concerned the parish community, and political when it focused on common needs in the wider community. It was experienced and interpreted by the members of St. Peter’s in terms of the religious themes of revelation, epiphany, and the gathered church.

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[49] Based on estimates drawn from my interviews, approximately 100 members of St. Peter’s have been active in GBIO to a greater or lesser extent over the years.

The GBIO practice of one-to-one relational meetings served the IAF goal of identifying leaders within the congregation and bringing overlapping concerns into focus. Importantly, and within the context of a religious narrative that spoke to transformation-in-relationship, one-to-one relational meetings also enabled a congregation splintered along many lines to begin to coalesce relationally in ways that that extended beyond the personal. Out of these meetings, St. Peter's came to identify itself with and participate in city-wide GBIO programs as well as to undertake local initiatives, the most significant of which was the development and funding of an after school program at the parochial school attached to St. Peter's. As Carlota Silva, a nineteen-year member of the church and native of Cape Verde, says, the arrival of GBIO and one-to-one meetings was "like opening the door and letting the fresh air come in."[50]

GBIO ACTIONS AND THREE CONGREGATIONS

The elements of a GBIO action were detailed in the previous chapter. Actions tend to be two hour events in which GBIO gathers, in numbers ranging from forty to many hundreds, to frame issues, hear personal testimony and action updates, to deliberate, commit to, sing about, and pray over the initiatives in which the organization is currently engaged. While the specific content varies, all GBIO actions are intentionally diverse in make-up, include stories from individuals specifically affected by current initiatives, and incorporate prayer language from a variety of Christian and Jewish denominational perspectives.[51] Actions, both large and small, are conducted by GBIO approximately three times a year.

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[50] Interview with Carlota Silva (alias), May 30, 2005, in Boston, MA.

As sociologist Richard Wood has observed, such actions create a forum for organizational identity work by rooting political activity in the faith commitments of participants and by ritually affirming the organization as a structure with autonomous and politically valid authority.[52] Actions are also a site where people are exposed to diversity, although not in the same intimate ways affected by one-to-one relational meetings. It is not just bonding that occurs in GBIO actions; it is also exposure to some measure of 'the other' that attracts participants in these events. These connections are not merely confined to the ceremonial and superficial, as Wuthnow suggests when he writes about interfaith initiatives. Rather, for many, GBIO actions reveal meaningful insights to other ways of engaging and interpreting the world.

Fourth Presbyterian Church

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[51] During the span of this research, the vast majority of religiously affiliated GBIO organizations were Christian or Jewish. Thus it was uncommon to hear speakers from other faith traditions. This has since changed. At GBIO's Tenth Anniversary Action, held on May 27, 2008, a number of the speakers were Muslim, and the opening prayer was delivered by Imam Basyouny Nehala from the Muslim American Society.

[52] Wood, *Faith in Action*), 167 – 168.

Fourth Presbyterian Church is housed in a modest, white frame structure on Dorchester Street, a main thoroughfare in South Boston that dead ends not far from the Boston harbor. Founded in 1870, Fourth Pres, as it is known, has approximately 140 members, but serves over 650 people a month through its worship services, food pantry, rummage sales, senior citizen groups, and youth ministries. It is situated within blocks of two housing projects, and is attended primarily by locals who live within walking distance of the church. Fourth Presbyterian is one of the earliest members of GBIO, due initially to the interest of its pastor, Reverend Burns Stansfield.

For Rev. Stansfield, key concerns at Fourth Pres are creating community and relationship. GBIO strikes him as a logical way to develop these two elements, both within and beyond the church. In this, he is supported by the members of his congregation who have participated in GBIO. Beth Johnson joined Fourth Presbyterian after graduating from college and moving to the East Coast. Growing up in the Midwest, she "wanted to see diversity, hear more languages, interact with people that are different from me."[53] Attending her first GBIO meeting at a church in Dorchester, Beth was struck by the fact that "everyone was there, not segregated, not separate. The idea that everyone who was there was a spiritual person, and that they had gathered for the common good of God's people, really struck me."

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[53] Interview with Beth Johnson (alias), April 3, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Beyond the racial diversity of the action, Beth was exposed for the first time to religious diversity. As she recalls, “There were no Jewish people where I grew up. [Through attendance at GBIO actions], I learned about the Jewish faith, and I have now been inside synagogues, which is something I had never done before.”

When asked what she learned about Judaism, Beth was ready with an answer. She tells the story of attending the GBIO healthcare action at Temple Salem, a Haitian evangelical Protestant church in October of 2006, just following Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. At that action, “Rabbi [Jonah] Pesner [of Temple Israel] talked about how this was a time of reflection among Jewish people about their lives. That they are living their lives through God, and that there might be some hesitation among some in the Jewish community to participate in the blitz weekend of signature gathering [for the healthcare ballot initiative]. He presented this as an introspective time in which Jews reflect on themselves and their spirituality. But he also said that they should use it as a time to think about social justice, to be out in public and gathering signatures. It is really moving for me that there is a time that [Jews] name Rosh Hashanah to think about their own faith and think about their lives and their religion. And for it to be linked to this crazy blitz weekend of signature collection is even more amazing to me. Thinking about it makes me kind of tear up. I was also amazed to realize that if I had questions about the Jewish faith, I now felt comfortable [in knowing] a couple of people [from Temple Israel] that I could call up and talk to.”

Seminarian Charlie Morgan had never been in a synagogue or a Black Protestant church before prior to attending GBIO healthcare actions at Temple Israel and Roxbury Presbyterian Church. Growing up in Ohio, and attending a relatively small church with an all-White congregation, Charlie "just hadn't had any notions whatsoever what [other congregations] did" or even looked like.[54] Charlie thinks of GBIO as a "reflection of the reality of Boston. We aren't all of the same mind. We aren't all of the same creed. We aren't all of the same race. We don't all have the same education level. And we recognize that we're not all the same. So what we do here is to take these differences and try to make something good. We try to make difference work for us instead of against us, to take it and make it into a treasure instead of making it into a thorn in our side." Instead of diversity as a social dilemma, Charlie here casts it as a social good. Based on his experience at actions, he believes that GBIO is "accomplishing this fairly well. It takes the fact that we come from different walks of life and makes that into an advantage. It makes our vision clearer than it would be if we had fewer perspectives present. If you only have middle class people talking about the problems of the poor, you're only going to get one part of the perspective."

Fourth Presbyterian member Susan Miller works in Marlborough, MA, approximately thirty miles west of her home in South Boston. She works for a high tech firm there that employs 300 people, all but a fraction of whom are "White, college educated, and suburban. There's really no diversity in my professional life at all in terms of the types of people that I meet."[55] Joining GBIO has made Susan "more conscious of my membership in a broader society. I actually used to live out in the country, and had several acres of land, and could literally isolate myself if I wanted to. When I moved to South Boston and joined Fourth Pres and GBIO, my world got bigger. There were people all around me, and they didn't look the same. GBIO has pushed my envelope to realize that even beyond South Boston there is what I call 'Big Boston.' I've been to Hispanic churches and African American churches and Jewish synagogues." Susan doesn't claim deep knowledge of these other congregations. She has been inside their buildings, heard their clergy speak, and met some members on her way in and out. Nevertheless, she finds the experience to be provocative and informative. Most importantly, "GBIO has really expanded my sense of how big my world is. My world keeps getting bigger."

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[54] Interview with Charlie Morgan (alias), July 10, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Dorshei Tzedek

Reconstructionist synagogue Dorshei Tzedek of West Newton was founded in 1991 and had its initial contact with GBIO in 2000, although it did not become particularly active for several more years. Originally lay-led, Dorshei Tzedek hired Rabbi Toba Spitzer on a part time basis in its sixth year, and she has since become its fulltime rabbi. The synagogue meets in space it leases from the Second Congregational Church in Newton, and its membership numbers approximately 170 families. Translated, Dorshei Tzedek means "seekers of justice."

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[55] Interview with Susan Miller (alias), May 11, 2006, in Boston, MA.

In 2006, the synagogue fielded an internal survey to better understand what was important to members. The top two categories related to being engaged in social justice, while the next two categories included being in a "caring and inclusive community" and "being a diverse congregation."[56] Rabbi Spitzer sees this as a logical fit with Reconstructionism, a denomination in which Jews seek to "embrace certain positive aspects of American culture," including democracy and pluralism, while exploring the practices and cultural legacies of Judaism.[57]

Theologically, the idea of covenant and being part of a covenantal community is central for Rabbi Spitzer. Covenant is central to Judaism although understood variously by different Jewish traditions. Within Reconstructionism, covenant does not refer to God's choosing the Jews for a special relationship with God-self, but instead to Jews choosing to live in covenant with others to build a world founded on love, justice, and compassion. Rabbi Spitzer told the Dorshei Tzedek congregation, "When we join GBIO, we're going to be coming in covenant with a lot more people. And our main covenant with people is that we are in a relationship even when we do things that are different." The differences turned out to be manifold: Jewish and Christian, liberal and conservative in terms of theology and politics, White and Black racially, professional and working class economically, suburban and urban geographically. Rabbi Spitzer views GBIO as primarily based on a “Christian model” with its use of prayer to open and close meetings and actions. For her, “this is not authentically Jewish. That’s not what Jews do. We study together. But, [as a member of GBIO], I think there is learning, back and forth [about different ways of interacting].” Joining GBIO is about exposure to difference, cast within the core Jewish framework of covenantal relationship. GBIO becomes the vehicle through which Dorshei Tzedek lives its commitment to covenant.

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[56] Interview with Rabbi Toba Spitzer, May 9, 2006, in West Newton, MA.

[57] Rabbi Spitzer is the only person interviewed who used the term 'pluralism'.

Looking forward, Rabbi Spitzer hopes that participation in GBIO will increasingly serve Dorshei Tzedek as a “built-in way for people to become active and to do so in a really integrated way. What I love about it is that it’s set up to be integral to the life of the community. A place for people to tell stories, a place that’s about building the civil sector of society. The goal, the messianic goal, is the ability to have conversations and build real alliances so that in any given election cycle, or on any given issue, we won’t just get torn apart. We live in a very economically and socially divided world, and we’re almost never challenged across those boundaries. So to the extent to which GBIO is a place to challenge that, a way to engage in dialogue,” it represents an important connection for the congregation.

Early in its exposure to GBIO, Dorshei Tzedek was trained in one-to-one relational meetings and used them to focus on building internal relationships, rather than specifically to identify leaders and shared concerns relating to the practice of social justice. At the time of this research, Dorshei Tzedek was just beginning to conduct an intensive round of one-to-ones within the congregation to raise issues for GBIO consideration, and its experience with one-to-one meetings with members of other congregations remained fairly limited. To understand what, if any impact, GBIO has had on Dorshei Tzedek in terms of diversity, it is therefore necessary to examine the impact of actions on congregational members.

Doris Rattner has been a member of Dorshei Tzedek for over seven years; she and her husband were attracted by its “sense of community and desire for social justice.”[58] Doris began to get more involved with GBIO at the beginning of the healthcare campaign, and has attended several GBIO actions. She has not yet done any one-to-one meetings. But she has been drawn to GBIO because it represents an organization in which “I can be Jewish but not be exclusive. Yes, I am identified as a Jew, but [GBIO is not an organization where] only Jews can do this type of work. We’re here to work together [with people of other religions], and it’s that commonality that’s really important.” Affiliation with a religious tradition is shared by many members of GBIO (though not all); it facilitates the development of bonding social capital. From that base, bridging social capital begins to emerge through exposure to religious, social, and ethnic others. It is also from that base that reflective pluralism is explored.

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[58] Interview with Doris Rattner (alias), April 12, 2006, Boston, MA.

The GBIO actions Doris has attended have fascinated her. She believes that “you can’t respect people completely if you haven’t spent time with them and heard their stories,” to learn what is meaningful in their lives. Nevertheless, hearing Christian prayer at GBIO actions initially caused her some discomfort. Her first reaction, a “gut reaction,” was “‘Oh, I’m not supposed to be here! This is the wrong religion.’ Usually [when I hear Christian prayer], I tune it out. But in this meeting I thought, ‘you know, I don’t have to tune it out because I’m here as myself, and I’m being respected.’ [GBIO actions] feel different than when I’ve gone to a church service. But at first there was a pause, and I had to consciously think, ‘This is okay.’ But that’s what I’m hoping GBIO is going to do.” The point of joining GBIO for Doris is to “make connections,” even if they are at first uncomfortable, and to challenge her sense of being a member of “an isolated group” in suburban Boston. These connections have to do with race, class, and religion.

Many other members of Dorshei Tzedek agree with Doris. When Deborah Meyer attends GBIO actions, she sees “multiracial communities being brought together in a religious context and in an organizing context. This is very exciting. The needs and interests of the people in Dorshei Tzedek, who are White and predominantly middle class, and the people in Roxbury and Dorchester and other communities of color, are very different. The fact that GBIO brings these groups together to understand each other is significant."[59] Her use of the term 'understanding' reflects the Dorshei Tzedek commitment to living in covenantal relationship with communities beyond its walls. It is a commitment that extends beyond mere acquaintance. In Deborah's experience, "Jews haven't been as active in recent years in issues that are outside of the immediate Jewish community." GBIO begins to open the door to a "sense of a bigger community" through the stories that are told at actions.

In addition to hearing stories from people of different races and classes, Deborah has experienced new insights about Christianity. Listening to Reverend Ray Hammond, the pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Jamaica Plain, Deborah heard stories about Jesus and his ministry of care for, and healing of, others. Previously, "I had never heard any of these stories. I never read the New Testament. I never read the gospels. I've seen a lot of art, the scenes of John the Baptist with his head on the plate. But now I heard a lot of interesting and good messages, and they weren't all gruesome. It's not all about resurrection and stuff like that. I've learned about how really deeply believing these other people are. When they say something like, 'Thank you, Jesus!' this is not TV. These are real people, people I've been involved with." Through attending GBIO actions, Deborah's sense of Christianity, both its narratives and practices, has expanded and become less stereotypical. Expressed through individual stories and expressions of faith, Christianity has become more multi-dimensional for her.

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[59] Interview with Deborah Meyer (alias), April 5, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Larry Goodman is one of the most involved Dorshei Tzedek congregants in GBIO. GBIO strikes him as a venue where one can "get beyond tolerance, learn about other faith traditions, and see how different faiths do things, [whether this is] ways of incorporating ritual or intellectual things, or behavioral ways of operating, or ways of organizing and greeting each other."[60]

Larry first became involved with GBIO during the nursing home workers' rights campaign of 2003 - 2004. On a personal and political level, he found it "marvelous to sit and actually plan strategies with front-line Haitian women nursing home workers." As he recalls, "trying to communicate, to understand the challenges and dilemmas in their work and their fears of stepping out [to speak publicly], and our acknowledgement that they were at greatest risk, [was revelatory]. I'm not going to lose my job by standing up against a nursing home, but they might. It was the human face-to-face interaction, discussing strategy with someone, figuring out what we should do, how we could be supportive, making those assurances" that GBIO would stand with them that made this a powerful experience for him. The meetings he attended with other GBIO members to craft strategy for the nursing home campaign represented, to him, "an ideal. It had me step out into a broader context. I don't necessarily interact day-to-day with socially and politically oppressed people. This really gave me an opportunity to do that. It was much more than what I used to call 'checkbook Judaism.'"

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[60] Interview with Larry Goodman (alias), February 28, 2006, in Boston, MA.

New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church

One of the congregations that came into GBIO membership through the nursing home campaign is New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church in the Mattapan neighborhood of Boston. Mattapan was originally a part of Dorchester and shared its heritage as a streetcar suburb of the city. During the early part of the twentieth century, Mattapan gathered a largely Jewish citizenry, which gave way to African Americans in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Mattapan is also now home to a growing Haitian population.

It is here that New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church was founded in 1979. New Jerusalem today is a growing congregation with over 300 members. Housed in a converted light industrial building on Norfolk Street, the church is currently looking for a larger space in the neighborhood. Worship at New Jerusalem is conducted primarily in Haitian Creole and French, and secondarily, in English. Its membership is wholly comprised of Haitian immigrants, and spans an age range from newborns to senior citizens.

Member Pierre Perroneau remembers that New Jerusalem was drawn to GBIO by the fact that the organization was not involved in "selfish work. It was looking out for the well being of different ethnic groups. I would say that a number of [new] people in this country do not know about their rights. And

GBIO was there, advocating for them."[61] However, joining GBIO was not an easy decision for the leadership of New Jerusalem. As Perroneau recalls, "we had to be on our guard. We are a spiritual organization and the leaders have to be on the lookout for any secular organization, because if you make a wrong move, the church will follow what you do. At first, you can say that we were reluctant [about joining GBIO] and that we wanted to know more."

Interfaith dialogue is not an obvious good for members of New Jerusalem, which in Wuthnow's typology would be an exclusivist Christian congregation. Perroneau puts it this way: "We had to be very cautious because we have a belief system. And we don't want to be part of anything that is going against our belief system. With GBIO, however, we felt that we were safe, in that we're not there discussing doctrine. They are not imposing their belief system on a certain group or on all the members." Rather, "GBIO is unique in a sense that it is about working together. Your needs may not be my needs, or they might be, but being under an umbrella that covers every aspect of the social needs of individuals is good. As long as we're not imposing our belief systems upon each other, I do not see any obstacle in such a thing." GBIO, quite pragmatically represents a vehicle for entrée into the American political system. It is a civic training ground, a place where new citizens learn how to engage government. GBIO is not just viewed as a secular organization, however. It is also understood and interpreted in religious terms by the members of New Jerusalem. Perroneau concludes that, even with considerable religious diversity, “GBIO is doing God’s work by trying to help people” throughout greater Boston.

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[61] Interview with Pierre Perroneau (alias), July 6, 2006, in Mattapan, MA.

No one interviewed at New Jerusalem viewed religious diversity as central to their interest in GBIO. In contrast to Dorshei Tzedek, learning about other religions at New Jerusalem is clearly not a goal. In fact GBIO is structurally located at New Jerusalem within its public relations program, which means that it is considered a form of external mission to the wider community. New Jerusalem participants in GBIO are not actively proselytizing people they meet at actions, but as church member Chanté Marten puts it, “the way you act with another, your comportment can act on that person.”[62] Adds Rene Pascal, “When I talk with [someone who is not Christian], my job is to pray, ‘God, I met with this person; help her with her faith. If you know her faith will not bring her to heaven, please change her before she dies.’ But I’m not going to be hassling her and telling her, ‘My religion is better than yours.’ No. I don’t believe that this is the way people should act or live. We should respect each other, respect each other’s opinions.”[63]

This approach to mission, focused on comportment and prayer, does not preclude New Jerusalem members from being present among the other faith traditions that comprise GBIO. Rene Marten conceives of this exposure as taking place within a social context, or on "the horizontal level in which my heavenly Father says 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" This contrasts for him with the vertical level, focused on his relationship with God. Engaging in horizontal relationship building through GBIO addresses some of the social and political needs of the New Jerusalem community, and it is where people of different backgrounds, including religious backgrounds, "learn to respect each other."

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[62] Interview with Chanté Marten (alias), July 25, 2006, in Boston, MA.

[63] Interview with Rene Pascal (alias), July 29, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Nonetheless, congregation members recognize that they are being exposed to and learning about religious difference when they attend GBIO actions, even though they have no inclination to revise their views. Rene Pascal has been exposed to the fact that "Jewish people pray in Jewish in the way they worship God. And Catholics, when they come and pray, they mention Mary and different saints." He has been exposed to these different forms of prayer, but Rene is not converted by them; "I don't believe in that way." His understanding of GBIO is that it does not "tell you what religion to choose," but rather it asks members to be present for different forms of prayer in order to show respect for people of different traditions.

New Jerusalem member Andre Jean-Phillipe has come to appreciate GBIO in part because "you can learn from, you can interact with [people of different faith traditions]. If you're different than I am, you can learn from me, and I can learn from you. There are things that you have experienced that I can learn. I have to communicate with you and find out what's going on."[64] Andre observes that GBIO members have "different understandings of the Bible." While his main focus is to "help other Christians get more involved in communities like this," he has "no problem meeting different people" and learning how they worship if it helps him to "accomplish getting everybody the health insurance that we want." On a social and political level – on what Rene Martin terms the horizontal level – Andre has come to believe that seeking the common good is an important goal that does not have to conflict with the vertical level of proper God worship.

Pierre Vernio understands New Jerusalem's involvement with GBIO in part as a way for the church to grow. Just as "GBIO extends their hands to us, we want to do that" for others.[65] Learning from one another is central, in Pierre's view, to the "way God wants things to be done. We cannot gather together and serve God if we just sit here while a lot of people out there need help, need assistance. God wants us to be together and to share whatever we can share together. Words, money, food, medication, whatever we can do."

Pierre was born in Haiti, but his children were born in the United States. He reflects that, "They are different from me. I'm more Haitian than they are. But we need to get the American culture in us to help them, to teach them how to do things." This need to reach out and understand American culture has brought

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[64] Interview with Andre Jean-Phillipe, July 30, 2006, in Mattapan, MA.

[65] Interview with Pierre Vernio (alias), July 30, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Pierre to at least a partial acceptance of religious pluralism and working across religious lines. “We’re getting old,” says Pierre, laughing. “Sooner or later our kids are going to take over. If we don’t do the right thing here, what are they going to say? ‘You’ve been here for twenty-five years. What did you do?’ They are going to ask that. GBIO is an important part of the future.” Exposure to others, even exposure to those of different religions, is central to this learning – learning that for members of New Jerusalem has nothing to do with religious syncretism and everything to do with successfully mastering the social, political, and economic realities of the United States.

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Dorshei Tzedek, and New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church came to GBIO membership for different reasons and with different theological understandings. Aspirations around community, covenantal relationship, social justice, public relations, mission, growth, and social and political skill building were all part of the mix. Despite different goals, participation in GBIO actions provided each congregation with a similar set of baseline experiences. All were exposed to racial, class, and religious difference. All heard stories from people experiencing certain needs, including basic healthcare coverage or workplace rights. All attended actions in religious spaces with which they were unfamiliar and heard religious languages and concepts that were not their own. All were challenged to follow-up with some response to the action, whether that was to collect signatures, call legislators, write op-ed articles for local papers, or develop additional leaders and engagement at the congregational level. By attending actions, GBIO members began to participate in pluralism, not to give up their theological convictions, but to enact them.

CONCLUSION: 'BIG BOSTON'

Susan Miller's term for the city she encountered through GBIO membership, 'Big Boston,' is an appropriate description for what is transpiring in GBIO. The story told in this chapter is not a perfect one, but it is encouraging in the face of steadily increasing diversity in the United States. St. Peter's future as a viable parish in the Boston Archdiocese remains an open question. How long and how involved Fourth Presbyterian Church, Dorshei Tzedek, and New Jerusalem Evangelical Haitian Baptist Church will remain in GBIO is unknown. Nevertheless, during the time that they have been active, exposure to diversity has been significant and meaningful on both institutional and individual levels.

Robert Wuthnow's research on religious pluralism focuses primarily on individuals and individual congregations as opposed to congregations involved in community organizing. His investigation overlooks CBCOs as sites for the self-conscious, active, and intentional kind of work that he believes is central to the development of pluralism. While Jewish members of GBIO would agree with him that the organization embraces practices that are largely shaped by the Christian tradition, their presence has influenced these practices to be respectful of Jewish traditions. GBIO deploys highly stylized forms of interaction in one-to-one relational meetings and actions, interactions that have been specifically designed to highlight difference of personal commitment while simultaneously pointing toward a common social and political good. The impact of GBIO actions is not superficial. The mix of locales, prayer language, and religious symbols tends to be informative and highly memorable for those who have not previously been exposed to other religions.

The GBIO experience also suggests that Wuthnow may be optimistic when he argues that racial and ethnic diversity are, respectively, more "conditioned by powerful norms favoring equality for all," or "more tamed," than is religious diversity in the U.S.[66] Many of the people interviewed for this study felt that they had little exposure to individuals and communities that were of different races and cultural practices, in keeping with Putnam's findings about neighborhood homogeneity and low levels of trust in Boston. Racial diversity may be protected by Constitutional protections, and ethnicity may be somewhat familiarized through cuisine, as Wuthnow argues, but that does not mean that there is much meaningful exposure at the interpersonal level. Just as GBIO exposes members to theological languages that are new to them, so it exposes them to other life situations and conditions that are new and revelatory. Expressions of learning around race, ethnicity, class, and religion were fairly equally balanced in the interviews for this study. In fact, these interviews suggest that people are not likely to focus exclusively on any one kind of difference, religious or other, in confronting multiple kinds of diversity. There are many kinds of differences that come into view within GBIO.

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[66] Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity,* 93-94.

Robert Putnam's research into the impact of immigration and ethnicity on social capital and social solidarity also overlooks CBCOs and the contribution that GBIO is making toward the development of plural democratic life. Where Putnam sees diversity leading to withdrawal and mistrust, GBIO congregations demonstrate just the opposite, that is, the beginnings of engagement and trust. GBIO members are not responding to the "turtle in all of us," but are instead looking for ways to connect, both within their congregations and across them.

Examining some of the congregations within GBIO also suggests that religion has not faded as a distinguishing line among Americans to the extent that Putnam posits. Members of Dorshei Tzedek, even though they are dedicated to being in covenant with communities outside of Judaism, are still confronted by Christian prayer. Members of New Jerusalem, even though they seek to develop social capital with organizations that do not hold evangelical Christian commitments, remain prayerful for their brothers and sisters who they believe are not on the path to salvation. Certainly none of the people I spoke with at these four congregations would consider themselves to have syncretic identities in terms of their religious commitments.

Putnam and Wuthnow share a view that religion can be, at least to some significant degree, separated out from other life factors such as ethnicity, race, and class. This research suggests the opposite – that religion is an embedded commitment that both influences and is influenced by location and experience.

Where both Wuthnow and Putnam are undoubtedly correct, however, is in their prescriptive recommendations for the development of American pluralism and social capital. Both advocate personal relationships and task-specific engagements for creating meaningful interaction. The GBIO practices of one-to-one relational meetings and periodic actions begin to provide these kinds of engagements. They are sites where difference, intentionality, involvement, and learning meet to develop both pluralism and social capital. In fact, the members of GBIO interviewed here suggest a refinement to the definition of pluralism. Pluralism, even though GBIO members do not use the word, is about more than engagement with difference. It is about difference engaging with, and thereby identifying, a common good.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLURALISM AND CONFLICT:

GBIO’S ENCOUNTER WITH EQUAL MARRIAGE

The pluralism GBIO was fostering since its conception was severely tested in 2003 and 2004, as the debate around, and legalization of, equal marriage unfolded in Massachusetts. Equal marriage was not a GBIO campaign. At the time, a majority of GBIO's congregational members were denominationally or individually opposed to equal marriage. However, given the extremely public and heated nature of this debate – in the media, at legislative hearings, and at State House rallies – it became inevitable that the subject would eventually manifest itself within the GBIO membership.

The IAF teaches the value of external conflict; however, it generally does not seek or welcome internal conflict. In this case, however, GBIO's internal confrontation with differing views on equal marriage revealed an organizational capacity for conflict that transcended most IAF experiences and expectations. This experience provides an apt illustration of Martha Minow's argument about the "paradoxical possibility of forging commitment to others without relinquishing commitment to oneself." [1]

Concomitantly, this GBIO experience challenges political discourse that privileges a deliberative model of democratic practice in which certain rhetorical forms, including story telling, are resisted in favor of a more formal public language founded on rationality.[2] This chapter points to an instantiation of what

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[1] Martha Minow, *Not Only for Myself: Identity, Politics & the Law* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 19.

[2] Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference*, 86-87.

Iris Marion Young has called communicative democracy, in which difference – in perspective and language – becomes a resource.[3] While elements of communicative democracy are espoused by the IAF, as detailed in Chapter 2, it was not the GBIO staff organizers who took the lead on this in Boston, but rather the clergy and lay volunteer members who worked through the historical, social, theological, and political issues around equal marriage.

THE PRACTICE OF ISSUE SELECTION WITHIN GBIO

The identification of issues for public action is the focus of much time and attention within GBIO and other CBCOs. A well-chosen issue will ideally energize current membership, serve as a recruiting device for new congregations and for new participants within existing congregations, and build recognition of the organization's power as a public actor. To create these outcomes, GBIO and the IAF teach that issues must have broad interest and support among member institutions and be timely, actionable, and winnable.

Storytelling and Public Action

To identify issues with potentially broad interest, GBIO trains its members to construct and tell stories that connect deeply personal experience with wider, and potentially actionable, public issues. During one

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[3] Young, "Communication," in Benhabib, *Democracy*, 120-135.

Delegate Assembly, a teenaged boy who is a member of Roxbury Presbyterian Church told such a story:

> One Friday [when I was] in ninth grade [while I was on] my way to the skate park after school, my friend and I were jumped by six kids. Imagine being beat up by more than one person at one time. It's a pretty horrible experience. But we went up to the skate park anyway. As soon as I put my skateboard down, it just broke in half. Since I couldn't skate anymore, I packed up my stuff to go home. When I arrived at Mattapan Square, there was a parked car and yellow tape everywhere. My conclusion was that someone had been shot. And that feeling kind of bugged me until I went to [Roxbury Presbyterian Church] for youth group that night. I found out that my friend Lance, a member of the church, was the one killed that night. He was shot two minutes before I arrived in Mattapan Square. The poster that [depicted] the shooters [showed the kids] who jumped my friend and I earlier that afternoon. If I was in Mattapan just two minutes earlier, it could have been me that was shot.[4]

There were gasps, followed by silence, from the audience of 120 attendees. The young man then finished; he said that he supported Roxbury Presbyterian's membership in GBIO and hoped that the organization would focus on youth violence in the city as one of its next issues. He stepped down from the microphone to sustained applause.

According to the IAF, and as adopted by GBIO, this was a public story and it was told in a public place, the sanctuary of a Presbyterian church. With the exception of relationships that involve families and close friends, the IAF considers all relationships to be public, and understands congregational life as existing within the civic realm of public association.

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[4] Franki Rhodes, Roxbury Presbyterian Church Delegate Assembly, June 8, 2006.

As has been addressed, this contrasts with the idea that religion is a private matter, a perspective that remains current in the United States, particularly among those individuals with more liberal leaning theological and political commitments. It remains easier for some Americans to accept non-profit advocacy organizations such as the World Wildlife Federation as public than to view their religious congregations and denominations as similarly public entities. The IAF and GBIO confront and expand the concept of what is public when they introduce members to public storytelling, that is, a particular form of narrative formation that links the political with the personal and that motivates member congregations to civic action.

As part of the public-private distinction that it teaches, GBIO characterizes public relationships as formal, open, and motivated by a desire to be respected. In contrast, private relationships are characterized as spontaneous, confidential, and driven by a desire to be liked/loved. The way these two roles are framed is designed to help members envision types of public motivation and behavior that are different from what they are used to in private relationships. This prepares them to model new public behavior and, importantly, to cope with public conflict when it inevitably arises. In the face of contention, the goal of being respected is hardier and more likely to transcend pressure than is the desire to be liked.

Broad-based Issues

GBIO issues are also selected on the basis of whether they have broad interest and support among member institutions.[5] If one congregation is interested in developing an after-school program, it can employ GBIO techniques to develop such an initiative. It does not, however, expect other congregations to join with it in creating this program, although they may. Further, if several member congregations decided to press the Massachusetts legislature to pass laws supportive of stem cell research, for example, they would be unlikely to look to GBIO for organizational support, because the controversial nature of the issue might fragment rather than unite member congregations. The GBIO Statement of Purpose, approved in March 1996, makes clear that broadly coalescing for action is one of the organization's key goals: "We are multi-issue. The issues we work on come from within our institutions, from the concerns of the people. We cross neighborhood, city, racial, religious, and class lines to find *common ground* and act on our faith and democratic values."[6]

This commitment to common purpose is made known in virtually all GBIO meetings. In one session designed to begin identifying issues for future action, Rev. Hurmon Hamilton adapted a story from Hebrew scripture to create a distinctive GBIO story of common history and future purpose.

> There's a wonderful story of faith that's in the shared tradition of both the Jewish community and the Christian community in the

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[6] Italics added.

> Book of Joshua. The children of Israel, under Joshua's leadership, are moving through the Jordan River to position themselves to attack so that the Jericho wall might came tumbling down. They step in the water and the water parts. The children of Israel begin to make their way down to this path with the walls of water high above them, tumbling, holding in place. When they come out on the other side, here come the instructions: “Go back into that space, and get stones from the center, and bring them back, at least twelve of them. Put them down together, and build a memorial out of these stones. Do this so that later, when your children ask, ‘What was the meaning behind these stones?’ you will be able to help them to interpret them, and connect them back to the story of how you got through the Jordan, positioned for battle.”
>
> Tonight we gather, sharing the same kind of tradition. We've just reached into our own individual institutions, and there we asked the question, "What is the crisis?" And we all found some sense of crisis, something that bothered us, something that ached us at the bottom of our souls, something that made us angry, something that made us frustrated, something that called for action. And some of us may have felt powerless, alone. But also, tonight, there is a sense of triumph, because we actually did it, we heard the stories within our institutions, we gathered those stories, and we come here tonight. Unlike those of old, we will not have been told to go back and get the stones. We bring our stones; we bring our stories here tonight. We bring them, and we will pile them in the center, and the question will go forth, "What is the meaning of these stones? What's the meaning of the stones from Temple Israel and the stones from Rox[bury] Pres[byterian] and the stones from Arlington [Calvary Church]? What's the meaning of these stones?" And this, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the work of interpretation. Discerning the meaning of the shared story. Why? Because from these shared stories, we will begin to discern what power Jericho has, and we will prepare to march around it to see the walls fall. Amen.[7]

The biblical story of God’s miraculous action on behalf of Israel is introduced to theologically reinforce a practical necessity: the need to identify common purpose prior to effective political action.[8]

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[7] Rev. Hurmon Hamilton, GBIO Interpretive Session at Roxbury Presbyterian Church, July 25, 2006. Joshua 3:7 - 6:20

CONFLICT: WHEN PUBLIC COMMITMENTS COLLIDE

As has been mentioned, the goal of GBIO from its founding has been to "coalesce, train, and organize the communities of Greater Boston across all religious, racial, ethnic, class and neighborhood lines for the public good." Having achieved a remarkable degree of internal diversity, however, GBIO faced the heightened possibility that issue selection might lead to the identification of theologically, culturally, and/or politically divisive issues. This possibility became a reality when the issue of equal marriage was debated in the Commonwealth.[9]

Background

Concurrent with the lifespan of GBIO, the issue of equal marriage in the United States became particularly heated, joining abortion rights and stem cell research as some of the country's most divisive social issues.[10] Equal marriage in Massachusetts became national front-page news in November of 2003, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court found the state's marriage law discriminatory in denying the "protections, benefits, and obligations conferred by civil marriage to two individuals of the same sex who wish to marry."[11] In response, the legislature heatedly debated and then ultimately passed a law legalizing equal marriage. In May of 2004, Massachusetts became the first state to issue marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples.

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[9] As in other socially heated debates, the terminology that frames the issue has become freighted. *The Boston Globe* uses three terms to discuss marriage between two people of the same sex: 'gay marriage,' 'same-sex marriage,' and 'equal marriage.' 1/11/07 site search: gay (2530), same-sex (1413), equal (177). I have chosen to use the third term, 'equal marriage' because it is the term most in keeping with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision that focuses on equal rights as standing at the center of this issue.

GBIO did not take a stand on equal marriage because it was clearly not a common ground issue. *The Boston Globe* reported in February 2004 – just prior to the issuance of the first marriage licenses – that only 47% of Massachusetts' residents were in favor of equal marriage.[12] While there was no comparable survey of individual GBIO members, that same year just under one third of GBIO congregations officially sanctioned equal marriage, as detailed below:

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[10] It was in 2002 that Marilyn Musgrove, a Republican U.S. Representative from Colorado, proposed the Federal Marriage Amendment, stipulating that marriage in the United States of America shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.

[11] Decision citation: SJC-08860 HILLARY GOODRIDGE & others vs. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & another. Suffolk. March 4, 2003 - November 18, 2003 (3)

[12] Phillips, Frank. "Majority in Mass. Poll Oppose Gay Marriage; Survey Also Finds Civil Union Support" *The Boston Globe*, 2/22/04, A1.

Table 5

GBIO Congregational Membership

Denominationally/Congregationally Supportive of Equal Marriage in 2004

	#	%
Reform/Reconstructionist/ Unaffiliated Judaism	7	17
Unitarian Universalist	4	10
United Church of Christ	2	5
Total	13	32%

While the Supreme Judicial Court and legislature were addressing equal marriage, GBIO was pursuing two campaigns, one focused on the rights of nursing home workers and the other on negotiating a preferred customer arrangement for GBIO members with a local bank. The research for this dissertation was conducted after these campaigns, and between one to two years after the legalization of equal marriage in the state. GBIO had shifted its focus to the healthcare campaign, a campaign that was filled with dramatic public moments. It was surprising, therefore, that so many study participants spoke about equal marriage when asked to recount a memorable GBIO story. In fact, the trans-organizational story shared most frequently for this dissertation research between May 2005 and September 2006 dealt with that subject. Thirteen GBIO members interviewed and one non-GBIO member spontaneously raised the subject of equal marriage. Five of these GBIO members attend worship at the First Church of Cambridge, a congregation that was not even a member of GBIO at the height of the equal marriage debate, suggesting the breadth to which this story has reached within the organization.[13]

Internal Conflict

On numerous occasions over its eleven-year history, GBIO has engaged in public conflict in order to reach its political ends. According to IAF National Team member Ernesto Cortés, tension and conflict are necessary conditions for creativity and change. In public, it is always the interaction of a "mix of interests" that leads to transformation.[14] When conflict unintentionally arises within an IAF affiliate, however, this willingness to enter into conflict on behalf of change can come into tension with the overarching goal of building common ground. When conflict arises internally – when issues collide among members – the professional IAF organizing staff moves to resolve or table such issues to refocus the organization on commonly shared interests. Such was the case when tensions around equal marriage surfaced internally in GBIO. Organizer Cheri Andes' instinct was to resist discussion and debate on equal marriage because she rightly perceived that it was potentially divisive; in her opinion, it would be counter productive for the organization to broach such a difficult subject.[15]

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[13] In addition to members who spoke spontaneously about equal marriage, I subsequently asked another eight GBIO members to speak about their recollections. Versus the total sample of interviews, the people who spoke about gay marriage were somewhat more likely to be white, Jewish, and/or members of denominations that officially supported gay marriage. Still, of the twenty-two who spoke to me, four were African American, twelve were Christian, and seven were members of denominations that do not support gay marriage. It was not a wholly homogeneous group.

[14] Ernesto Cortés, San Antonio National Training, March 10, 2005.

Ironically, however, the very skills of public relationship building and conflict engagement taught by GBIO contributed to what was ultimately a relatively open airing of different perspectives on equal marriage among GBIO clergy leaders, despite Andes' concern, but with her ultimate acceptance. Practices and teachings intended to train members against commonly identified external targets were now deployed in the examination of internal difference, which in the case of equal marriage, was strongly felt.

As soon as equal marriage began to be debated in Massachusetts, it became obvious that GBIO members held a range of views. This was so largely because of the public activity of five prominent GBIO clergy members. Included in this group were Jennifer Mills-Knutsen, then Co-Chair of GBIO and Assistant Pastor of Old South Church, a liberal and primarily white United Church of Christ congregation; Hurmon Hamilton, Co-Chair of GBIO, and Pastor of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, a primarily African American evangelical congregation; Rabbi Jonah Pesner of Temple Israel, the largest Reform Judaism synagogue in New England; Ray Hammond, Pastor of Bethel AME Church, a prominent African American congregation in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston; and David Carl Olson, former President of GBIO and pastor of the Community

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[15] Cheri Andes phone conversation, December 15, 2006.

Church of Boston, an active peace and justice Unitarian Universalist congregation in Copley Square.[16]

All five participated in various public events, including testifying in favor of the Defense of Marriage Act at a Senate hearing in Washington, D.C. (Hammond), marching in a Boston Gay Pride Parade (Mills-Knutsen and Olson), accepting a leadership award from the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry (Pesner), and attending rallies at the Massachusetts State House. The Black Ministerial Alliance, of which both Hammond and Hamilton are board members, joined with two other organizations in issuing a statement calling for a Constitutional Amendment to define marriage as a "covenant between a man and a woman." [17] All but Rabbi Pesner and Rev. Olson were quoted in The Boston Globe on the subject of equal marriage.

The divided stance of GBIO clergy was never more apparent than on March 8, 2004 when *The Boston Globe* ran an article headlined, "Church Groups Rally on Equal Marriage." The article reported on meetings held across metropolitan Boston designed to influence the State legislature before it met to take its final vote on the legality of equal marriage. Of the four clergy quoted, two were the GBIO Co-Chairs at the time, Mills-Knutsen and Hamilton, both of whom had participated in rallies for and against equal marriage, respectively, the previous day. According to the article, Rev. Mills-Knutsen "said the state should apply marriage rights equally to gay and straight couples and let religious groups decide on their own whether to perform same-sex weddings. 'This is not a religious issue. This is a civil rights issue,' Mills-Knutsen said yesterday, as 30 members of the church's Lesbians, Gays, and Friends Fellowship sang 'We Shall Overcome' nearby."[18] The article closed by detailing another rally held at New Covenant Christian Church, "where an estimated 1,200 people sang and recited prayers in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, and Haitian Creole. The Rev. Hurmon Hamilton said he recognized that his and other ministers' call for an amendment to ban equal marriage caused a great deal of angst within the gay and lesbian community. But Hamilton said that wouldn't change his belief in what's right. 'Same-sex marriage is not a solution for this real pain and woundedness,' he said."[19]

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[16] Rev. Olson served as the third President of GBIO. When his term was completed, the position was reconceived as a two-person leadership team sharing the title of Co-Chair. His successors in this re-titled position were Rev. Mills-Knutsen and Rev. Hamilton.

[17] Black Clergy Statement on Marriage, February 6, 2004. Organizations represented included the Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, the Boston Ten Point Coalition, and the Cambridge Black Pastors Conference.

This public airing of difference was so internally stressful to, and memorable for, GBIO that *The New York Times* reported on it almost four years later. According to a story published in the *Times* on December 2008, GBIO Organizer Cheri Andes awoke on the morning of *The Boston Globe* article "to disconcerting news. In [*The Boston Globe*] article, Ms. Andes found two familiar names on irreconcilable sides of the issue [of equal marriage]."[20] The *Times* went on to report that, "at the same moment that Ms. Mills-Knutsen and Mr. Harmon (sic) were becoming public antagonists on same-sex marriage, they were supposed to be allies in the interfaith group's campaign to improve working conditions for nursing-home employees in the Boston area."[21]

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[18] John McElhenny and Jenn Abelson, "Church Groups Rally on Gay Marriage," *The Boston Globe*, March 3, 2004.

[19] Ibid.

A Critical Time in GBIO History

There were in fact many tensions within GBIO during the fall and winter of 2003-2004. Former GBIO President Rev. David Carl Olson recalls that "there were a large number of stressors on the organization" that were affecting almost every constituent group.[22] Lead organizer Cheri Andes remembers it as a time of "malaise," the culmination of two years of internal setbacks and external events that disrupted significant portions of the membership.[23]

Internally, GBIO had just experienced considerable turnover in its professional IAF staff. Jim Drake, one of the two founding lead organizers, died suddenly in September 2001. Lew Finfer, the second founding lead organizer, left the organization under pressure ten months later in the summer of 2002. Upon

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[20] Samuel G. Freedman, "Faith-Based Views Veer Off a Straight Political Line," *The New York Times,* December 12, 2008.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Interview with Rev. David Carl Olson, April 8, 2010, in Washington, D.C.

[23] Interview with Cheri Andes, July 14, 2005, in Boston, MA.

Drake’s death, Michael Gecan, an IAF national director based in New York, took over supervision of GBIO. Unfortunately, Gecan and key members of the GBIO leadership team had difficulty building a strong working relationship; as a result, approximately one year later, Gecan was replaced by another IAF national director, Baltimore-based Arnie Graf. The only constant member of the IAF staff throughout this period was Cheri Andes, who had arrived at GBIO as an organizer in 1999 and became the Boston-based lead organizer in January 2005. The disruption to the volunteer base of the organization – clergy and lay members with finite time to devote to GBIO – was significant.

Compounding and compounded by this turnover in staff leadership was GBIO’s first significant experience of failure in its pursuit of the Nehemiah campaign. Initially championed by Jim Drake and the Rev. John Heinemeier, who had worked together earlier on a similar and successful housing campaign with the South Bronx IAF affiliate, GBIO had begun working to transplant the Nehemiah strategy of building affordable housing to the Boston area.[24] The goal of the Nehemiah strategy was to build 1,00 units of housing in Boston over the course of five years. Beginning early in 2001, this campaign arguably was GBIO’s most ambitious initiative to date. However, for numerous reasons – Jim Drake’s death early in the project, lack of a productive working relationship with

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[24] Rev. John Heinemeier, formerly pastor of St. John’s Lutheran Church in the South Bronx, had relocated to Boston in the late 1990s to pastor Resurrection Lutheran Church in Roxbury. He was one of the founding clergy members of GBIO.

Boston's 'Mayor-for-Life' Thomas Menino, lack of support in the targeted community (Mattapan), and a widespread sense among African American clergy and community leaders that interlopers from New York were attempting to usurp local power – the project ultimately collapsed in the summer of 2003 before ground had been broken.[25]

At approximately the same time, there were two major upheavals that affected a number of GBIO congregations, effectively diminishing their ability to focus on the organization. The first was the revelation of multiple cases of sexual abuse by priests in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. *The Boston Globe* first broke this story in January 2002; Cardinal Bernard Law submitted his resignation in December of that year, and Bishop Sean O'Malley was named as his replacement in June 2003. The archdiocese subsequently announced an $85 million settlement with hundreds of abuse victims in Boston a few months later. The disruption and pain for Roman Catholic congregations in Boston, including the eight GBIO member parishes, was considerable throughout this time. Rev. Olson recalls another GBIO founding clergy member, a retired Roman Catholic priest, telling him during those months he had a difficult time walking down the street in public, wondering who was looking at him suspiciously because he was wearing a clerical collar.

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[25] The failure of the Nehemiah Strategy, and GBIO's central role, is documented in a 2004 Harvard Business School case. Diana Barrett and Arthur Segel, "The Nehemiah Strategy: Bringing It to Boston" (Cambridge: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2004) Case # 9-303-130

Finally, as the equal marriage debate moved to the State legislature, Jean-Bertand Aristide, President of Haiti, was ousted in February 2004. The laity and pastors of the three GBIO Haitian congregations were not of one mind as to how to respond to the crisis, and their attention was diverted from the organization.

In light of all of these factors, it is not at all surprising that the GBIO professional staff was more than a little reluctant to have equal marriage become a subject of discussion within the organization just as it was seeking to rebuild for the future.

How GBIO Addressed Equal Marriage

Within several GBIO congregations, pressure quickly mounted during the fall of 2003 to discuss the issue of equal marriage trans-organizationally. Temple Israel in particular has a long history of support for the gay community, working to become a “warm and welcoming” congregation since the early 1980s. It hosted an active *Ohel Tzedek* Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Action Team and, as a congregation, vigorously supported equal marriage in the Commonwealth. During a 2003 – 2004 internal house meeting campaign to prepare for its upcoming 150th anniversary, Temple Israel identified equal marriage as a primary focus of congregational concern and commitment.

As recalled by David Berg, who was active both on Temple Israel’s GLBT Action Team and on its GBIO Team, equal marriage was “coming up in the [Temple Israel] house meetings [as something] that people are caring deeply about. So the question is, what do we do about that?"[26] While recognizing GBIO's general commitment to finding common ground, Berg began to question it in this instance: "I got involved with GBIO partly because once you get involved in any social justice organizing you are doing it as part of the whole. On the other hand, GBIO obviously had some leaders who were not only disagreeing about equal marriage, but they were making public statements about it. So, there's this tension, and people gave the simplistic answer, which is, 'We work together on what we can agree on.' And that's where I began to have problems." He and GBIO members from other congregations began pressing to have this "tension" discussed openly in various GBIO settings. Berg began to question his ability to remain an active member of an organization that was experiencing internal dissent about an issue so central to his being.

Ultimately, the GBIO clergy leadership addressed equal marriage in four discrete moments over a six-month period. In January 2004, equal marriage was raised at the annual GBIO leadership retreat, attended by approximately fifty people including members of the Strategy Team and other key clergy and lay leaders. The retreat was held at Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Boston's Roslindale neighborhood. Toward the end of the meeting, Rev. Olson, an out gay man, introduced the topic. He reminded everyone that GBIO had been founded to engage shared issues, and noted that no one had anticipated the organization would find itself in the midst of such a heated debate. Since that was now the case, however, he asked participants to go around the room and share their personal stories about where they were feeling vulnerable and hurt as members of GBIO. The purpose in his view was not to "make common cause, but to be honest and to monitor how equal marriage and all the other issues that were affecting leaders within the organization during a time of grieving and wondering" about the future. Although not initially supportive of this turn of conversation, GBIO rganizer Cheri Andes remembers this time, in hindsight, as "powerful."[27]

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[26] Interview with David Berg (alias), July 26, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Rev. Hamilton remembers this round of sharing clearly. According to him, "some of us started by dealing with our own personal connection to the issue [of equal marriage] and backed into how our personal connection with the gay and lesbian community informed our feelings, our theology, and our politics. That whole round was incredibly enlightening."

Subsequent to the leadership retreat, Rabbis Friedman and Pesner of Temple Israel invited Rev. Hamilton of Roxbury Presbyterian and Rev. Hammond of Bethel AME to the home of two Temple Israel members, a gay couple. A lesbian couple was also there to participate in what turned out to be a several hour conversation. Reflecting on that night, Rev. Hamilton remembers it in this way:

> When we talked about what it was that divided us, it was theology and it was the cultural implications on both sides. We had an amazingly respectful, relational, and candid discussion. The parameters were set ahead of time. We agreed to do this provided that everybody knew that nobody was going to try to

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[27] Phone interview with Cheri Andes, December 15, 2006.

> change anybody's mind on this issue, and that this was really about understanding one another, hearing one another, listening to one another, being informed by each other's story. And at the end of the day, while sexuality and its implications is a very important issue, it is only one issue. There are so many other issues that also hold us in relationship. So it was probably one of the most rewarding experiences.[28]

While he makes clear that change of perspective was not the goal of the evening, Rev. Hamilton embraces the GBIO communicative perspective that understanding, hearing, and listening open the possibility of being informed and transformed relationally. There are undeniably Christian bases for these precepts following on the relational and story telling practices of Jesus as recounted in Christian scripture; however, the language that Rev. Hamilton uses here also reflects his exposure to GBIO practices of relationality, public respect, and story telling.

The third time equal marriage was formally addressed was again among the five key clergy leaders on the afternoon of the legislation's enactment on May 17, 2004. It was arranged that pastors Hamilton, Mills-Knutsen, and Olson would gather with Rabbi Pesner and Pastor Hammond at the latter's church, Bethel AME in Jamaica Plain. Rev. Olson recalls that the day was complicated by the fact that the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court had ordered implementation of marriage equality to fall on the 50th anniversary of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education ruling. While some celebrated the timing as an appropriate next step in civil rights, Rev. Olson remembers that there were "many African

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[28] Interview with Rev. Hurmon Hamilton, July 26, 2006 in Boston, MA.

Americans who said, ‘Ah, excuse me. We don’t know that Brown v. Board of Education has even been fully implemented. And now you’re ready to move on to other things?” Nevertheless, on that afternoon, the five leaders met for 90 minutes to talk about their perspectives and hopes, both for their congregations and for GBIO as an organization. Rev. Olson closed the time by praying the 90th psalm:

> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn us into dust, and say, “Turn back, you mortals.” For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night….Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper, the work of our hands![29]

Reflecting on this meeting several years later, Rev. Olson smiles and summarizes the moment: “It marked that we had indeed grown spiritually. To have confidence in each other and in the durable bonds of our relations, in our voluntary association with each other. The Holy Spirit was involved in equipping us by grace with the will to choose each other. I choose you and you choose me. That’s a piece of the expression of God. In the work that we did around equal marriage, we chose each other [in relationship], but we did not choose to work together on this issue. The work we were going to do was the work of choosing each other. I think we evidenced a level of spiritual maturity that I am very proud of.”

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[29] Psalm 90: 1-4; 16-17 (NRSV)

One week later, Rabbi Pesner and Rev. Hamilton stood and jointly addressed a 1,000 member GBIO Delegate Assembly, the focus of which was on the campaigns to develop a portfolio of advantaged financial products for its members at Citizen's Bank and to work for a Bill of Rights for nursing home workers in the state. Ruth Akman, a GBIO member from Temple Israel, recalls this moment:

> I was crying. The two of them got up in front of everyone and they basically said, "We realize what's going on here. We realize there is a lot of tension [around equal marriage], and we're still committed to working together." They said it better than I can. They made [the night]. They were accountable to their membership and weren't afraid to have the tension not be secret. Because it clearly wasn't a secret. It wasn't just for people 'in the know.' It was for everyone.[30]

For Akman, that moment was the emotional and transformational highlight of the evening.

Two years later, Rabbi Pesner remembered these events as follows:

> There were voices that argued, "Let's not even talk about equal marriage, because it will divide us and kill the organization." You had Hurmon [Hamilton] and Ray [Hammond] out in front of the anti-marriage camp, and you had me and Ronne [Friedman] and others out in front of the equal marriage camp. And creating pain for each other across the aisles. And rather than ignore it, we talked about it head-on in a couple of different ways, sacred ways. I think that made us a better organization, a more trusting organization, a more relational organization.

In this instance, what emerged from diversity and conflict was a more robust organization, one in which reflective pluralism had a chance to develop, and one that ultimately became more capable for future campaigns.

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[30] Interview with Ruth Akman (alias), May 9, 2006, in Boston, MA.

Massachusetts legislator Rep. James Marzilli remembers the organization from this time and later came to know it well during the healthcare campaign in his role as a member of the House and Senate Joint Committee on Healthcare Financing. He observes that GBIO demonstrated one of its “real strengths” in its “capacity to work so closely together on health reform [even though it had been] deeply divided over the issue of equal marriage.”[31] While the equal marriage debate in the State legislature was a time of “profound joy,” “real anger,” and of tumultuous rallies inside and outside of the State House, one organization stood in contrast:

> Within that context, there was clearly a group of people from the faith communities [with members] on opposite sides who didn’t have a problem with each other. And those were the GBIO folks. They were the ones who had enough respect for each other to recognize that this is just part of the disagreement that we all have. And it stood in sharp, sharp contrast with [other religious groups that] were showing the ugliest kind of hate.

In his view, the GBIO experience had transformed the way in which its member organizations were able to deal with this controversial issue.

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[31] Interview with Rep. James Marzilli, July 18, 2006, in Arlington, MA.

INTERPRETING THE STORY

Given the complicated nature of the public equal marriage debate, it is not surprising that the story of equal marriage as it unfolded within GBIO congregations is perceived in different ways. In large part, this can be attributed to the fact that the GBIO leadership – its staff, lay, and clergy members of the Strategy Team – were unaware for several years that this story had gained such currency and importance in the wider membership. The story of how GBIO clergy leaders renewed their commitment to each other and to the organization at this time spread without any Strategy Team metanarrative to frame it. Instead, it developed as a powerful grass-roots story in a grass-roots organization.

Dorshei Tzedek

For Dorshei Tzedek, the Reconstructionist synagogue in West Newton, the story of this conflict reinforced its commitment to living and learning in a covenantal community which extended beyond its membership to encompass groups that are not Jewish and whose socio-political commitments do not always coincide.

The concept of covenantal community is central to Judaism. With roots in the Ancient Near East, the covenant is a formal contract between two parties. Many covenants are identified in Hebrew scripture; the most important one is the covenant between God and the Israelites made at Mount Sinai in which legal norms of relationship, embedded in larger moral norms, are established.[32] While most traditions within Judaism interpret this as a relationship in which God chooses Israel exclusively, Reconstructionist Judaism interprets it more broadly. Thus, according to Dorshei Tzedek's Rabbi Toba Spitzer, "when we joined GBIO, I said [to the congregation], 'We're going to be coming in covenant with a lot more people, and our main covenant with people is that we are in a relationship even when we do things that are different.'"[33] In her view, covenantal community, standing together with others, extends to all those intentionally allied for common purpose, even if divided on specific issues.

When the equal marriage issue arose, Rabbi Spitzer recalls that there were members of Dorshei Tzedek who expressed concern about being aligned with congregations that opposed equal marriage legalization. These questions led her to think about the role of conversation in covenantal relationship. In her view, its role is not to change the other but rather to create some basis of shared understanding and insight. Its purpose is also to generate internal reflection, even discomfort. Living in a "very divided world," she observes, "we are almost never challenged across social and economic boundaries."[34] To the extent that GBIO provides relational tools to begin crossing these boundaries – "whether it is challenging people about homophobia or challenging suburban people around their privilege" – it contributes to the creation of productive discomfort and potential change. The conversations that took place around equal marriage, although not wholly transformative of GBIO because not everyone participated, reminded Rabbi Spitzer of the goal of covenantal relationship; it is a "messianic" one in which there is an "ability to have these [contentious] conversations and [yet] build real alliances so that we won't be torn apart."

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[32] Exodus 19-24

[33] Interview with Rabbi Toba Spitzer, May 9, 2006, in West Newton, MA.

[34] Rabbi Spitzer makes this argument as a married lesbian.

Sarah Friedman, a member of Dorshei Tzedek, speaks about the conflict over equal marriage in a similar way. For her, the fact that "people have managed not to splinter" within GBIO over the issue of equal marriage "is one of the things I'm most impressed by, actually."[35] She interprets this experience as a lesson in the value of "outward-looking" community, one that eschews operating autonomously in the civic arena. It stands in "fascinating" contrast with her experience of progressive politics, which she finds to be quite unconcerned with difference. Progressive politics "continues to talk to itself and get smaller and smaller. It leads to a pretty limited life." In contrast, Dorshei Tzedek's involvement in GBIO, "keeps my religion and politics from being too insular." For Sarah Friedman and Rabbi Spitzer, being in covenantal, or "outward looking," community with other GBIO congregations entails being in relationship with diversity in such a way that difference stimulates resiliency and creativity within the community. Their experience of GBIO and this internal debate was interpreted by and actively incorporated into their understandings of their religious narrative. GBIO's relational practices provided a framework within which covenantal community could be more fully experienced.

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[35] Interview with Sarah Friedman (alias), 2006, in Boston, MA.

First Church in Cambridge

At First Church in Cambridge, the story told about GBIO's encounter with equal marriage also focused on diversity, but with a key difference. Whereas for Dorshei Tzedek, the encounter with diversity led to reflection on the value of difference and covenant, for First Church, the encounter with diversity led to an experience of oneness and reconciliation, themes that are important to Christianity in general and to this congregation in particular.

First Church, founded in 1636, is a United Church of Christ congregation with a long history of social engagement. It formalized its position on sexuality in 1991 when it issued a statement affirming its commitment to stand against "homophobia, racism, and all individual and systemic attitudes and acts of injustice, discrimination, violence, and hatred that work against peace and wholeness."[36] First Church was not a member of GBIO during the debate on equal marriage. It joined GBIO in July 2005 and as a full member in January 2006, approximately 18 months after the series of internal GBIO meetings described above. Nevertheless, a number of members of the congregation interviewed for this study volunteered an account of that time.

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[36] "First Church Statement of Openness and Affirmation," adopted January 27, 1991.

Liza Johnson is a young woman in her thirties who has been a member of First Church for ten years. Her first significant exposure to GBIO was when she attended the Temple Israel Delegate Assembly announcing the healthcare campaign in May 2005, an experience that was "fabulous. I was blown away by the event."[37] She is a self-described "person of faith," and church attendance is important to her. When she is not able to "worship in a community over several weeks or months, I notice it."

Although First Church is a strong advocate of equal marriage, a position that she supports, she is aware that "equal marriage isn't going to make sense for all of GBIO, from what I understand. I don't know all of the details, but there are [member] congregations that feel differently" than First Church. When asked how she feels about this, she replies at length:

> I think it feels real. I'm happy to embrace the fact that it [GBIO] is not perfect, that we don't all see eye to eye, and that someone else may say that the way I view the world, or view marriage equality, is wrong, and that they wish I would change my view. But I think [the GBIO approach] is incredibly practical. Not in an unethical way. I don't think [First Church] is compromising itself by being involved. I don't feel like I'm compromising myself by being involved in an organization where I know some people may not believe everything that I believe. But if we all agree that what has happened to healthcare in our country is a tragedy, and that we all want to fight to make it better, then I'm all for that. I don't feel like I'm joining with an organization where the majority may say, 'We're not sure what we think about gay people,' as long as what [First Church is] doing isn't actively being blocked. [As long as that is the case,] then I'm happy to be a part of [GBIO]. If we can find the commonalities, I think we can get closer to being able to have those discussions

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[37] Interview with Liza Johnson (alias), June 26, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

> [about difference] and be able to keep working toward more inclusivity.

Liza clearly accepts the GBIO commitment to common purpose around issues, and extends it to incorporate a goal of a more robust – if future – sense of inclusivity and commonality.

Janet Goode, a member of First Church for twenty years, casts her narrative about equal marriage in more theological terms. She learned about the internal GBIO debates from a friend at Old South Church, a prominent GBIO member and equal marriage supporter at the time. When she heard that there had been a process of internal dialogue among the organization's leadership, she "had the realization that being part of GBIO meant being in relationship beyond a specific issue."[38] She continues:

> I realized that you might actually be having a serious faith dialogue with people who have a very different stance than you on certain kinds of social issues. That for me is a huge part of the call to faith, the call to be in reconciling dialogue. To learn to see the depth and complexity of one another's lives. Not to brush the differences under the carpet and also not to demonize or 'other-ize' the person you're in dialogue with. That to me is what is so compelling about GBIO. It's this element of bridge building and reconciliation of relationships.

The key concept for Janet is that of reconciliation, that is, the healing of relationship between those formerly at odds.

Covenant and reconciliation both concern relationships, but they are not identical. These two lenses on GBIO's confrontation with equal marriage – at Dorshei Tzedek and First Church of Cambridge – point to the fact that participating congregations were actively interpreting their work in the organization, and doing so in distinctive theological modes.

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[38] Interview with Janet Goode (alias), July 8, 2006, in Cambridge, MA.

Roxbury Presbyterian Church

Roxbury Presbyterian Church stands in fascinating contrast with Dorshei Tzedek and First Church of Cambridge. Founded by White Presbyterians in 1886, the congregation of Roxbury Presbyterian gradually changed along with its surrounding neighborhood. In 1994, Pastor Hurmon Hamilton, Jr., an African American graduate of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, arrived to lead the Roxbury church in a neighborhood that was by that time predominantly African American and plagued by violent crime. Under his leadership, a major renovation of the original stone structure, along with a significant expansion of its community outreach facilities, was completed in 2006.

According to Rev. Hamilton, the confrontation with equal marriage – which cut across racial, social, and theological lines – "epitomized what GBIO was intended to be from the beginning."[39] He understands the goal of GBIO as being "to bring people together from diverse parts of the city, bound by the common thread of faith in general, not exclusively, but in the sense of east and west and north and south. To create an organization where a kind of unity would be developed that could subvert the spirit of divisiveness that used to define this city, theologically, culturally, and politically." In this respect, and in focusing on reconciliation of divisiveness, Rev. Hamilton sounds like his Christian brethren at First Church in Cambridge. But he goes on to add:

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[39] Interview with Rev. Hurmon Hamilton, July 26, 2006, in Boston, MA.

> The equal marriage debate tested whether or not we had gotten there. It meant that there were folks who were on opposite sides of an issue that was deeply felt community-wide, both culturally and theologically. We were existing in the same organization, leading the same organization. It wasn't that one group had an advantage over the other. The fact that we could ultimately talk about it meant that we had enough relationship and trust around things that we knew we agreed upon that we were able to begin to talk about an issue over which we really disagreed. And to do so in a way that was God-fearing and respectful.

For Rev. Hamilton, this experience was "an opportunity to live out a good paradigm for the expression of the love of Jesus Christ" in which difference continues to exist. He goes on to explain: "The love of Jesus Christ, if you look at it theologically and from the vantage of discipleship and the cross, is not the kind of love that says in order for love to be implemented or experienced there has to be agreement. It is the kind of love that says in the face of serious disagreements that love can be made visible and depended upon." He remembers thinking at that time, "if you really want to experience Jesus Christ in your life, don't try to figure it out when I'm agreeing with you or when I like you. You really only get to see it when I disagree with you."

Although Rev. Hamilton was an experienced pastor by this time, he found the conversations around equal marriage to be "transformative. It's what the gospel is supposed to be about, at least one aspect of it." He continues:

> That experience was what I would call a conversion experience. It was just as radical and just as dramatic as when I came into the church through a conversion experience. And I use the term

> ‘conversion experience’ in the full sense of what it should mean. When people of faith radically disagree politically, culturally, or theologically, and can still relate to one another in honesty, and can grapple with an issue, and come through it closer than they were before – and yet still disagree – then it says something about the human experience and the experience of God. I saw that it’s not necessary to resolve every issue in order to have authentic, deep, God-filled relationships. *It’s transformative when faith has been deconstructed and reconstructed, your world view has been deconstructed and reconstructed, in ways that you may not be able to articulate, but you end up in a different place and different space.*[40]

A midlife, second conversion experience for an evangelical African American Christian is surely memorable. What made it even more remarkable, however, is that for Rev. Hamilton it took place within the context of discussing equal marriage with four other clergy members, only one of whom shared his theological, cultural, and racial background (Rev. Hammond). GBIO’s relational practices influenced the way in which the group proceeded. In listening to Rev. Hamilton, it is clear that he experienced these practices theologically as much or more than he did politically.

Rev. Hamilton distinguishes his experience from the oft-cited axiom, ‘love the sinner but hate the sin.’ What occurred for him was “a more internal thing.”

> You are forced to confront your own sin. In order for you to go into this experience, you’ve got to confront your own sin, your own brokenness, your own judgment [about equal marriage]. That was a good model, but the issue could have been about the Palestinians and Israel, or whatever. The part of you that resists relating authentically with those you adamantly disagree with – there’s sinfulness there. And when you push beyond that to say that somehow I’ve got to find a way to relate to you, that my humanity depends on it, my Christianity depends on it, my

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[40] Italics added.

> witness of Christ depends on it, it is in that effort and struggle that something happens.

Rev. Hamilton discovered that the resolution of internal differences on equal marriage was not his ultimate goal. Instead, “the highest goal is to experience a dimension of what it means to be faithful human beings in relationship to God and in relationship to each other.”

In reflecting on this experience, Rev. Hamilton concludes, “if I had walked away from the table [of GBIO] around same sex marriage, then brokenness would have had the last word on human relationship. And I’m not talking about homosexuality. I’m talking about my own.” What changed for him was “having a conversion experience and understanding that difficult issues have a value that’s higher than resolution. It is only by engaging and seeking to be relational that human brokenness cannot have the last word.” Thinking back on those months in 2003 and 2004, Rev. Hamilton believes “I came through a different person. To some extent, I reached a depth of what it means to be human that I could not have reached without the adamant disagreement that forced me to move into that struggle. That alone was worth the whole experience.”

Not all of Rev. Hamilton’s congregation shared his experience. According to John Robertson, a long time lay member of Roxbury Presbyterian, “The way I saw [equal marriage] coming together at GBIO, although it was brought up in that big meeting, is that no one jumped up hollering and screaming and said, ‘I’m not gonna do this.’ It was perfectly said [by the clergy leaders]: ‘That’s a real issue.

But today our issue is healthcare.'"[41] This is obviously a much more restrained, and less transformative, interpretation of the encounter than the one offered by Rev. Hamilton. Nevertheless, it is a well-remembered moment for Robertson. He is impressed that his pastor helped lead the organization during that time.

GBIO's 10th Anniversary

On the evening of May 27, 2008, GBIO held its 10th Anniversary Action in Boston University's Case Gymnasium. The following day, the organization hosted a lunch for its founding members in Roxbury Presbyterian Church's recently opened Social Impact Center. The clergy who guided GBIO's handling of equal marriage were in attendance, three of whom that day were visiting Boston from new positions in other cities. As is customary, attendees were asked check-in, and on this day to share a key memory from earlier years. For Lead Organizer Cheri Andes, current Co-Chair Hurmon Hamilton, and past Co-Chair Jennifer Mills-Knutsen, that memory concerned the organization's confrontation with equal marriage. All three recalled their anxiety and fear at the time. Fear that the organization could not withstand one more stressor. Fear that their efforts to create a pluralistic organization would collapse under the strain of fierce socio-cultural and theological divisions. Fear of alienating a colleague and, simultaneously, fear of failing to stand up for one's religious and congregational commitments. Their recollections elicited smiles and laughter around the room.

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[41] Interview with John Robertson (alias), July 26, 2007, in Boston, MA.

Ultimately, what was once perceived as a serious organizational threat became a turning point in its leadership's commitment to go forward together, with both overlapping interests and critical disagreements. In fact, it was only four months after Rev. Hamilton and Rabbi Pesner stood together on the stage at the May 2004 delegate assembly that GBIO began to consider joining the healthcare campaign, a campaign that ultimately boosted the organization's profile and reputation in Boston and throughout the Commonwealth.

HERE WE ARE, LORD. SEND US!

In response to God's call, the prophet Isaiah replies, "Here I am; send me!"[42] Rabbi Pesner of Temple Israel borrowed this as he closed the GBIO 10th Anniversary Action in the late spring of 2008. He asked the audience to join him in calling out, "Here we are, Lord. Send us!" The response was vigorous. And it was remarkable given where the organization had been just a few years earlier. The GBIO relational practices of acting publicly and conducting one-to-one meetings throughout the organization fostered an ability to address difficult theological and cultural differences. In the view of the clergy leaders, these practices contributed to a new normative understanding of conflict, cooperation, and common purpose within the organization.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the civic common good remained the focus in the face of religious, ethnic, socio-economic, and racial particularity.

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[42] Isaiah 6:8 (NRSV)

Philosopher John Rawls' argument that public argumentation should be supported by public (secular) reason, and grounded in a "reasonable political conception," is challenged by this experience.[43] Religious warrants need not, and undoubtedly at times do not, enable salutary political debate. In this case, however, an experience variously cast in religious terms of covenant, reconciliation, and conversion – *and* supported by relational organizing practices – enabled an organization to surmount one of its most difficult times. For the key clergy members involved, it was their religious faith, now informed by and made public through IAF democratic theory and practice, that allowed them to work through the issue and emerge more committed to each other and to the organization as a whole. A highly effective *modus vivendi* developed that has influenced GBIO ever since. The leadership bonds created, and the grassroots interpretive narratives shared by other clergy and lay members, do not necessarily portend a stable and effective organization in perpetuity. But then, nothing does. While the search for democratic foundations continues, this way of life has proved remarkably transformative for GBIO.

The confrontation with equal marriage, and the way it was handled by the application of different theological lenses in conjunction with GBIO practices of storytelling, one-to-one relationship building, and focus on public relationship, served as a turning point for the organization. In more closely binding the leadership, and in giving rise to a story of sustained commitment in the face of disagreement, this experience helped shape both GBIO's internal narrative and future possibilities for coping with difference.

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[43] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, li.

This experience reinforces the work of scholars who have been exploring lived religion, identity politics, and/or the intersection of religion and politics.[44] Paul Lichterman has observed how custom (traditional practice) and the ability to be self-critical strongly influence the ability of civic groups to bridge significant social divides.[45] The reflections of Rev. Hamilton and Rabbi Spitzer reinforce his finding. GBIO customs, what this study has been calling its relational practices, and the leaders' willingness to invoke particularistic theologies in the service of self-criticism contributed greatly to the organization's ability to survive this challenge. Individuals and congregations learned how the practice of community organizing can both instantiate and be revelatory about religious commitments.

Ziad Munson terms events polysemous when they have multiple or competing meanings, and persuasively argues that religion overlaps with other spheres of activity.[46] His argument is not that religion should be conflated with other spheres, but rather that human events are experienced in multiple spheres simultaneously, and evoke multiple meanings that may compete. Based on his research among pro-life activists, Munson concludes that the “religious domain frequently overlaps with other aspects of social life. Events and experiences in the social world take on multiple and yet equally genuine, meanings.”[47] This is borne out in the GBIO confrontation with equal marriage. This chapter has emphasized that two strands of experience – community organizing practices and religious commitments – contributed to a powerful and transformational experience for staff, clergy leaders, and lay observers. The point has been to demonstrate the influence of the former upon the latter. Nevertheless, Munson is right in arguing that multiple inputs should not be dichotomized. Both politics and religion provide resources for moral reflection. They have overlapping interests that need not stand against each other, but can work together within a democratic system. The concept of polysemy applies to the case of GBIO, where the opportunity was taken to hold multiple identities and meanings together in a common campaign.

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[44] See, for example: Martha Minow, *Not Only for Myself;* Ziad W. Munson, *The Making of Pro-life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Nancy T. Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2007); Paul Lichterman, *Elusive Togetherness: Church Groups Trying to Bridge America's Divisions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[45] Lichterman, *Elusive Togetherness,* 3.

[46] Ziad Munson, "When a Funeral Isn't Just a Funeral: The Layered Meaning of Everyday Action," in Ammerman, ed., *Everyday Religion*, 126.

Finally, the GBIO experience with equal marriage supports Iris Marion Young’s argument on behalf of communicative democracy, a form in which difference becomes a resource. Liberal political theory, as epitomized in the work of philosopher John Rawls, shares a concern about discord in the face of diversity similar to those evidenced in the more recent writings of Robert Putnam and

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[47] Ibid., 127.

Robert Wuthnow.[48] For Rawls, without a freestanding political conception expounded apart from other reasonable comprehensive doctrines, including those anchored by religious commitments, the hope of a stable and just society of free and equal individuals is imperiled. However, GBIO's actual confrontation with equal marriage most closely illustrates Young's argument that political dialogue "justly requires a plurality of perspectives, speaking styles, and ways of expressing the particularity of social situations as well as the general applicability of principles."[49] Drawing on cultural and theological resources specific to themselves, and casting their words as personal narrative, the GBIO participants faced their strongly held beliefs to remain aligned for common purpose.

Again the question occurs: What work is being done by the concept of a de-particularized, rational language of public and political discourse? The GBIO experience suggests that religious language, in combination with relational principles of organizing, can – not always, certainly, but can at times – function to effectively bridge differences in ways that contemporary political language has largely failed to achieve.

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[48] See Chapter 3.

[49] Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy" in Benhabib, *Democracy and Difference,* 132.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to explore the ways in which democratic practice, in the form of congregationally based community organizing, engages and influences the religious life of participating religious congregations. It confirms and extends earlier research that indicated CBCO membership can strengthen connections to one's faith tradition, deepen one's encounter with the divine, and build awareness of the connections between religious tradition and social justice.[1]

Chapter Two in particular reinforces these earlier findings. Individuals and congregations within GBIO often found that this hybrid form of democratic practice pressed them to reflect on their faith tradition, its ties to social justice, and its call on their everyday lives. In addition, this research indicates that participation in GBIO prompted members to think about where the wall of separation in American public life is established, and the extent to which religion is a communal and public undertaking rather than one that is personal and private. Rather than secularize religion, exposure to other traditions and public engagement through GBIO helped to clarify and sometimes even deepen religious commitments.

The GBIO experience also suggests that religious commitments and warrants need not be incorrigible or irrational. In fact, a persuasive case can be made that GBIO arguments on behalf of healthcare were substantially more available to reasoned debate and straightforward review than much of the national political discourse (death panels, socialized medicine, etc.) Members of GBIO became practiced in connecting their traditions to contemporary social needs in ways that were at once particular *and* generally accessible.

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[1] Mary Ann Ford Flaherty and Richard L. Wood, *Faith and Public Life: Faith-Based Community Organizing and the Development of Congregations*, 29-31.

Chapter Three relates the story of how religious congregations came to better know the diversity of 'Big Boston.' It suggests that people with even strongly held faith commitments can indeed appreciate and be able to practice reflective pluralism. Within GBIO, religious narratives, prayers, and teachings were drawn upon for the interpretive task of identifying overlapping interests. There was no demand for syncretism or the suppression of particular commitments. GBIO congregations learned to consider the political common good on the basis of distinctive narratives cast in distinctive forms and containing distinctive symbols. GBIO's incorporation of religion as a resource for democracy stands in contrast with the phenomenon known as civil religion. Civil religion, itself neither Christianity or Judaism, is a "collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity."[2] As described by Robert Bellah, civil religion "served as a genuine vehicle of national religious self-understanding."[3] In contrast, there is no single or identifiable religion of GBIO; the organization does not foster any national or even local religious self-understanding. GBIO has created a framework in which specific religious traditions connect particularist links between their own beliefs, symbols and rituals and the common good.

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[2] Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *Daedalus*, Journal of the American Academy, Winter 1967, Vol. 96, No.1, 6.

Chapter Four challenges the conviction that religion necessarily functions to socialize adherents in united and cooperative behavior. The GBIO experience with equal marriage did not unite its membership on any side of the debate. It did however demonstrate that even one of the most culturally, historically, politically, theologically, and institutionally fraught subjects can be addressed, under certain conditions. Conflict was not resolved as much as it became better understood and served as a resource for self-reflection. Religious symbols and narratives were neither inherently divisive nor healing. Rather, they served as the interpretive tools that enabled members to move forward despite disagreement. Meaningful learning was created, not capitulation. This case suggests that located religious commitments and tradition can endure and be enriched by confrontation. Even the organizing professionals were surprised by this outcome.

This is a relatively short term qualitative study; based on participant input, all of the congregations experienced some degree of change. The impact of GBIO membership – participation in one-to-ones, attendance at actions, exposure to different people and ideas – occurred unevenly across the congregations as would be expected. The extent to which democratic practice provoked and stimulated religious practice was based largely on how regularly and for how long participants and congregations remained active within GBIO. The integration of GBIO theory and practice with pre-existing religious practices and beliefs is more regularly noticeable among leaders and congregations that have worked with GBIO since it Co-Missioning Assembly in 2000, or since its conception in 1996, than it is among new members and/or irregular participants. This study cannot address where the internal tipping point is, where GBIO culture can be said to have officially changed local institutional culture. But there is no doubt that GBIO's approach to democratic engagement is almost immediately received as dramatic, provocative, and engaging simultaneously. It leads participants to reflect on the historic and contemporary demands of their faith traditions, without asking them to abandon or minimize them. It would be interesting to follow several congregations longitudinally, but that remains for another study.

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[3] Ibid.

Munson's use of the term polysemous is helpful in thinking about what takes place when congregations become exposed to CBCO practices. He introduces the term to argue that religion is not a discrete phenomenon, operating on its own in a private sphere of influence. Rather, religious commitments may be reinforced by public, political engagement because "polysemy introduces both ambiguity in social situations and multiple modes of meaning that can crossfertilize one another."[4] This is also the implication of this study's opening metaphor: that religion is an interactive coral reef in humanity's social existence.

For participants, GBIO actions and campaigns are more than just political events; they are at the same time moments in which religious meaning is created and revitalized. This is not to conflate religion with politics, but to admit that they are not walled off from each other. They share an overlapping concern for what it means to live a good life in community.

The value of ethnographic case studies that examine lived religion is much debated these days. Are they idiosyncratic and thus not particularly helpful from a theoretical point of view? Or are they the works that add crucial texture and nuance to quantitative and/or historical studies? From my perspective, there is no one answer. However, I would argue for the importance of this case study beyond the confines of Boston for two reasons: (1) the GBIO experiment in creating a religiously diverse is now in the process of being replicated and extended in IAF organizations around the country; (2) the GBIO experience with conflict –around equal marriage – has been widely disseminated within the IAF network. There is hope that this learning and experience will not be localized.

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[4] Munson, "When a Funeral Isn't Just a Funeral" in Ammerman, ed. *Everyday Religion*, 131.

APPENDIX A

OBSERVATIONS OF GBIO, IAF, AND CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

The following is the list of the organizing activities I observed for this study, in chronological order.

IAF National Training. March 8-15, 2005. San Antonio, TX.
Temple Israel Community Teach-In: Expanding Access to Healthcare in Massachusetts. March 21, 2005. Temple Israel
Delegate Assembly. April 12, 2005. Greater Love Tabernacle.
Healthcare Campaign Planning Meeting. May 12, 2005. Fourth Presbyterian Church.
Healthcare Action Practice. May 24, 2005. Temple Israel.
Healthcare Action. May 26, 2005. Temple Israel.
Healthcare Action Day – Religious Leader Press Conference, Public Hearing, Rally. June 8, 2005. Church on the Hill, State House. Boston, MA.
Moving from Debt to Assets Peer Group Meeting. June 12, 2005. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church.
Strategy Team Meeting. July 11, 2005. Temple Israel.
Strategy Team Meeting. August 8, 2005. Temple Israel.
Signature Collection Training. September 18, 2005. St. Mark's Roman Catholic Church.
Delegate Assembly: Affordable Healthcare Signature Collection Kick-Off. September 22, 2005. Temple Salem.
IAF East Coast Training. October 18-22, 2005. Braintree, MA.
State House Action. October 27, 2005. State House.
Signature Collection. October 31, 2005. Boston, MA.
Strategy Team/Key Leaders Meeting. November 1, 2005. Temple Israel.
Strategy Team Meeting. November 14, 2005. Temple Israel.
Action and Celebration: GBIO Cooks in 2005! December 1, 2005. Bethel AME Church.
Healthcare Action Team Meeting. January 9, 2006. Temple Israel.
Letter Writing Training. January 15, 2006. Church of the Nazarene. Dorchester Center, MA.
Healthcare Action. January 25, 2006. Friendly's Ice Cream, Watertown, MA.
Leadership Retreat. February 5-6, 2006. Braintree, MA.
Arlington School Committee Action. February 6, 2006. Arlington, MA.
Delegate Assembly. March 2, 2006. Temple Israel.
Leadership Training. March 6, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
State House Press Conference. April 4, 2006. Boston, MA.
Delegate Assembly: Celebration and Determination! April 6, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.

Expanded Strategy Team Meeting. May 4, 2006. Temple Israel.
House Meeting. May 6, 2006. St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church.
Dorshei Tzedek House Meeting. May 11, 2006. West Newton, MA.
Signature Collection Kick-Off! May 18, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
Delegate Assembly Planning Session. May 23, 2006. GBIO office, Dorchester, MA.
House Meeting. May 24, 2006. Jamaica Plain, MA.
GBIO North Regional Assembly. May 25, 2006. Calvary Methodist Church, Arlington, MA.
Delegate Assembly. June 8, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
Moving From Debt to Assets Peer Support Group Meeting. June 17, 2006. St. Mark's Roman Catholic Church. Dorchester, MA.
House Meeting Interpretive Training Session. June 26, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
House Meeting Campaign. July 9, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
House Meeting Interpretive Session. July 11, 2006. Temple Israel.
GBIO Interpretive Session. July 25, 2006. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.
Gubernatorial Candidate Action. September 17, 2006. Carson Place, Dorchester, MA.
Tenth Anniversary Action. May 27, 2008. Boston University, Case Gymnasium.
Tenth Anniversary Founders Luncheon. May 28, 2008. Roxbury Presbyterian Church.

The following is a list of congregational worship/services I attended.

Dorshei Tzedek: April 29, 2006; June 1, 2006.
First Church of Cambridge: April 16, 2008; May 21, 2006.
Fourth Presbyterian Church: October 2, 2005; January 18, 2006; March 12, 2006; July 5, 2006 (summer picnic)
New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church: July 16, 2006; July 23, 2006.
Roxbury Presbyterian Church: May 21, 2006; June 4, 2006; June 18, 2006; July 9, 2006.
St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church: June 12, 2005; July 17, 2005; June 11, 2006; June 25, 2006.
Temple Israel: June 10, 2005; June 9, 2006.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED FOR STUDY

The following is a list of interviews conducted for this study. Positions and affiliations were correct at time of interviews. I have not included the interview dates for most lay leader interviews so that they cannot be identified in the body of the text (where I have also used aliases to protect the confidentiality of their comments). If an interview date is listed, that interviewee kindly granted me permission to use her/his name.

IAF

Chambers, Edward. Executive Director. February 13, 2005. San Antonio, TX.
Cortés, Ernesto, Jr. West and Southwest Director. February 14, 2005. San Antonio, TX.
Graf, Arnold. Mid-Atlantic and New England Director. February 12, 2005. San Antonio, TX.
Stephens, Sr. Christine. National Staff. February 15, 2005. San Antonio, TX.

GBIO Organizers

Andes, Cheri. Lead Organizer. July 14, 2005; April 28, 2006. Boston, MA.
Early, Fran. Organizing Staff. July 13, 2005. Oak Bluffs, MA.
Gifford, Rebecca. Organizer. June 9, 2005; May 7, 2006. Boston, MA.
Lipman, Ari. Organizer. June 10, 2005. Telephone; April 21, 2006. Cambridge, MA.
Schwartz, Joel. Program Staff. June 17, 2006. Dorchester, MA.

GBIO Leaders

Dorshei Tzedek
Cohen, Abby.
Hattis, Paul. Boston, MA.
Hemley, Ellen.
Kohn, Esther.
Gladstone, Ora.
Goldberg, Ellie.
Gutman, Becca.
Mazur, Amy.
Sper, Emily. Newton, MA.
Spitzer, Rabbi Toba. May 9, 2006. West Newton, MA.
Steinberg, Marc.

First Church of Cambridge
Coffin, Carolyn. Cambridge, MA.
Fennel, Pauline. Cambridge, MA.
Harter, Richard. Cambridge, MA.
Higginbotham, Sarah. Cambridge, MA.
Kidder, Alice. Watertown, MA.
Kidder, David. Watertown, MA.
Layzer, Kate. Cambridge, MA.
Morgan, Gaylen. Cambridge, MA.
Smith, Rev. Daniel. April 6, 2005. Cambridge, MA.
Wilson Braun, Carolyn. Cambridge, MA.

Fourth Presbyterian Church
Brook, Peter. South Boston, MA.
Buckman, Sheila. South Boston, MA.
Curtis, Phyllis. South Boston, MA.
Douglas, Paul. South Boston, MA.
Humphreys-Loving, Meghan. South Boston, MA.
Keswani, Nancy. South Boston, MA.
Kuehl, Elizabeth. Cambridge, MA.
Long, Ann. South Boston, MA.
Moran, Dan. Cambridge, MA.
Stanfield, Rev. Burns. May 5, 2005. Cambridge, MA.; June 6, 2006. South Boston, MA.

New Jerusalem Haitian Baptist Church
Beauchamps, Bob. Mattapan, MA.
Casimir, Joel. Mattapan, MA.
Cenafils, Doudelyne. Mattapan, MA.
Dorelus, Chester. Mattapan, MA.
Kebreau, Rev. Tony. Mattapan, MA.
Meritil, Saurel. Mattapan, MA.
Millien, Roland. Mattapan, MA.
Sitton, Marie Claude. Mattapan, MA.
Valentine, Maymone. Mattapan, MA.

Roxbury Presbyterian Church
Barnes, Laverne. Roxbury, MA.
Broderick, Lisa. Roxbury, MA.
Carter, Vera. Roxbury, MA.
Hamilton, Rev. Hurmon. December 7, 2005; July 12, 2006. Roxbury, MA.
Henderson, Joann Carter. Roxbury, MA.
Johnson, Dennis. Roxbury, MA.
Kidd, Joshua. Boston, MA.

Losier, Toussaint. Roxbury, MA.
Mills, Milton. Roxbury, MA.
Richardson, Don. Roxbury, MA.

St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church
Alves, Maria. Dorchester, MA.
Barbosa, Maria. Dorchester, MA.
Chisholm, Marguerite. Dorchester, MA.
dePina, José. Dorchester, MA.
Evora, Ines. Dorchester, MA.
Gomes, Anna. Dorchester, MA.
McLaughlin, Sr. Sally. Dorchester, MA.
Millett, Charlie. Dorchester, MA.
Monteiro, Sergio. Dorchester, MA.
Walsh, John. Dorchester, MA.

Temple Israel:
Barbara Berke. Boston, MA.
Chason-Sokol, Martha. Boston, MA.
Coleman, Alex. Boston, MA.
Dreyfus, Sam. Cambridge, MA.
Godine, Fran. May 6, 2005; May 26, 2006. Boston, MA.
Goldman, Steven. Boston, MA.
Pesner, Rabbi Jonah. May 15, 2006. Boston, MA.
Rowe, Cindy. Boston, MA.
Van Praag, Carla. Boston, MA.
Vinikoor, Lisa. Cambridge, MA.
Weisman, Barry. Boston, MA.

Community/Political/Other Religious Leaders
Doyle, Fr. John. April 5, 2006; April 19, 2006.
Finfer, Lew. Massachusetts Communities Action Network; Organizing and Leadership Action Center. June 9, 2006. Dorchester, MA. [Former GBIO Organizer]
Finn, Fr. Daniel. Dorchester, MA.
Hammond, Rev. Dr. Ray. Jamaica Plain, MA.
Heinemeier, Rev. John. April 19, 2006. By telephone.
Lakein, Meir. Organizer. Boston, MA.
Marzilli, Rep. J. James. MA State Representative. June 9, 2006. Arlington, MA.
McDonough, John E. Health Care for All, Executive Director. May 15, 2006. Boston, MA.
Olson, Rev. David Carl. Washington, D.C. April 16, 2010.

APPENDIX C

OUTREACH MISSION STATEMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS

Mainline Protestant

First Church in Cambridge: (United Church of Christ)	Imagine a church that cannot stay put, but takes God's welcome into the world. Imagine a church in conversation with other lives, other cultures, able to invite and be invited, to sit at other people's tables, to learn and share the inestimable riches of God, to build relationships outside its walls. Imagine a church where the hands, hearts and feet of every member, young and old, are shaped for service, and a church that does not lack imagination about ways to use them. Imagine a church compelled by the Spirit to travel with Jesus, healing, reconciling, and doing justice, a church filled with the daring and delight of the children of God. Imagine a church on the open road, agile and able, willing to follow Jesus into life's margins, a church that gives itself away and asks nothing in return, a church mobilized for mission. *Outreach focus*: Bridge differences, serve community
Fourth Presbyterian:	Through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, we seek to glorify God and shine as a beacon of hope in the community with open doors, eager hands and caring hearts. *Outreach focus:* Serve community

Conservative Protestant

New Jerusalem Haitian: (Baptist)	Our mission is to evangelize for Christ throughout the world. *Outreach focus:* Spread faith

African American Protestant

Roxbury Presbyterian:	As Christians we are committed to bring as many people as possible to Jesus and into the membership of His family. We will include them within the church family. We will discipline them into Christ-like maturity in ways that magnify Jesus Christ, and release the power of God to transform them, our community, and our world. *Outreach focus:* Spread faith, serve community, change world

Roman Catholic

St. Peter's:	The parish does not exist for itself; it only exists for the larger world. We are called to incarnate Christ in our lives so as to influence the society of which we are a part. The goal is the transformation of the structures that control our lives, so as to create a new society, one based on solidarity, justice, and dedication to the common good. *Outreach focus:* Change world

Jewish

Dorshei Tzedek: (Reconstructionist)	We affirm the concept of mitzvah as obligation, acting on our Jewish values through deeds of *Tzedek* (social justice) and *gemilut chasadim* (loving kindness), both within our congregation and in the larger community. *Outreach focus:* Serve community, change world
Temple Israel: (Reform)	We believe that the wellbeing of the world depends on…*G'milut Chasadim* (deeds of loving kindness). Through *G'milut Chasadim*, we work for the wellbeing of our community and the repair of the world through deeds of loving kindness and the pursuit of social justice. *Outreach focus:* Serve community, change world

APPENDIX D

TEMPLE ISRAEL HEALTHCARE ACTION TESTIMONY
MAY 25, 2005

Peter Brook, Fourth Presbyterian Church

My name is Peter Brook. I am a member of Fourth Presbyterian Church in South Boston. I work construction. My employer doesn't offer health insurance, and I can't afford to buy it myself. I have been a diabetic for over 30 years, and I'm starting to suffer long-term complications from this disease. I use the same disposable insulin syringe for up to a month instead of the four new ones a day prescribed, just to save money. I've nearly depleted my retirement savings. I fell off scaffolding in April and broke my arm. The medical expenses cost more than $2,000. I need health insurance. This is the most important issue in my life. Right now, I don't qualify for MassHealth because I'm a single adult. Our bill is the only bill that will change this for me. Now I'm a lifelong Republican, but all the parties need to get together and work together behind healthcare access, because I bet every one of you knows someone like me. Thank you.

Keith Rudolph, Roxbury Presbyterian Church

My name is Keith Rudolph. I am a member of the Roxbury Presbyterian Church and also a member of GBIO. I am a fulltime employee for a small personnel firm in downtown Boston. My wife and I, we have two children. She raises our kids at home. I make under $30,000, and in the bracket I'm in, I make too much to afford any kind of free care and not enough to afford the care offered by my employer. So my days are spent praying that nothing happens to me so that my family is left out in the cold. This act is the only act that will support a person like me. I have been diagnosed with sleep apnea. Instead of being able to afford quality care, I've had to settle for what I can take. I now face having surgery that I can't pay for. We have to make this bill pass.

Emily Sper, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek

My name is Emily Sper. I am a member of congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Newton. I am self-employed as a graphic designer. Although I love the flexibility and freedom of self-employment, because of the high cost of health care premiums, I may be forced to close my business. Seven years ago I paid a monthly premium of $200. Now each month I pay over $500 with no sign that premium hikes will slow down. This bill will relieve pressure on self-employed people like me. Reinsurance will reduce my premiums by up to 20% without reducing the quality of my insurance coverage. I had bad health insurance before, and I got stuck with $8,000 in bills while I was insured. Cheap, stripped down insurance is not the solution. With good health insurance two years ago, I didn't pay a penny for emergency care for a week in the hospital with many expensive tests and procedures. I am alive today because, knowing I had health insurance, I didn't hesitate to go the emergency room. The Healthcare Access and Affordability Act is the only realistic solution.

Margarida DePina, St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church

My name is Margarida DePina, and I am a leader at St Peter's Church in Dorchester. I came to this country seventeen years ago from Cape Verde. While I was here, I gave birth to my daughter Angie who is very disabled. She has Down Syndrome and was born with a hole in her heart and a tumor on her brain. She needed many operations. She was the reason we had to stay in this country. Angie would have died if I had taken her home to Cape Verde where we do not have such good medical care. I had to leave my other three children then ages four, three, and eighteen months old back home. My mother-in-law has raised them. My husband eventually joined me in the United States. I work as a clinical aide at Children's Hospital. For a while, Angie got MassHealth. However, when my husband started to work, our income came to $50,000 a year…too much for Angie to qualify for MassHealth any longer. We now pay almost $200 a month for my employee insurance. This is a huge burden for us. We own our own home and we still send $700 a month to support our children [in Cape Verde]. Our whole life has been organized around getting good health care for Angie, and it should not be such a struggle. This bill would help hard-working families like mine by helping us to pay for our insurance. My family and many others could really use this help. Thank you.

APPENDIX E

SELECTED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON GBIO CAMPAIGNS

Bay State Banner

Miller, Yawu. “Interfaith Organization Pushing Healthcare Bill.” 10/13/05, 8.

Schwab, Jeremy. “Religious Groups Rally Support for Expanded Health Coverage.” 6/2/05.

The Boston Globe

Abraham, Yvonne. "Church Alliance Gives Wish List to City Leaders." 6/27/99, Metro, B2.

Andes, Cheri. “Real People Behind Real-Life Pressures.” 9/1/06.

Brelis, Matthew. “Keeping Their Faiths.” 11/22/98.

Dembner, Alice. “Change in Healthcare Law Urged; Group Asks State to Delay Penalties.” 1/25/07.

Downs, Andreae. “400 Grill Officials on Housing Crisis, Education.” 3/13/00, City Weekly, 3.

Ebbert, Stephanie. "Birmingham Commits to Housing Effort: Offers Trust Fund that Would Collect $100M in 5 Years." 5/10/00, Metro/Region, B1.

__________."Coalition Issues a Housing Challenge: Hub Activist Look to Build on $5M." 7/18/01, Metro/Region, A1.

__________. "Keeping the Faith, Group Puts Pressure on Politicians." 3/19/00, Metro/Region, B1.

Globe Editorial. “Health Law Uncertainties.” 6/10/06

Greenberger, Scott S. “Interfaith Leaders Invoke Morality in Healthcare Debate.” 12/29/05, Metro/Region, B1.

__________. “Mass. Group Set to Push for Universal Healthcare.” 5/26/05, Metro/Region, A12.

__________. “State Senate O.K.’s Healthcare Plan.” 11/10/05.

Greenberger, Scott S. and Janette Neuwahl. “Activists Push Romney, Travaglini to Do More on Healthcare.” 6/9/2005, City/Region, B4.

Hamilton, Hurmon and Jonah Pesner. “Romney’s ‘Yugo’ Healthcare.” 8/7/05.

Jonas, Michael. "A New Voice Holds Promise in Affordable Housing Debate." 12/5/99, City Weekly, 2.

__________."Activists Reeling Over Housing Trust." 4/22/01, City Weekly, 2.

__________. “Divine Ties That Bind.” 5/30/04.

__________. "Finneran Reveals Hostility to Housing Aid." 3/12/00, City Weekly, 2.

__________. “In Healthcare Row, They’re the Two and Only.” 3/12/06.

__________."Interfaith Group Gets Results." 5/14/00, City Weekly, 2.

__________. “To Her, the Company Line’s Bad Medicine.” 2/12/06, City Weekly, 6.

Lehr, Dick. "Volunteer Army Gathering Over 100,000 Signatures Is Not Easy Work for These Housing Advocates." 4/13/00, Living, D1.

Levenson, Michael. “Mass. Groups Back Ballot Initiative on Universal Healthcare.” 3/5/06, Metro/Region, B1.

McElhenny, John and Jenn Abelson. “Church Groups Rally on Gay Marriage.”3/08/04.

McNamara, Eileen, “Health Support.” 10/5/05, Metro/Region, B1.

__________. “Promises to Watch.” 4/5/06.

__________. “Unrealistic Health Plan.” 9/13/06.

Radin, Charles A. “Jewish Leaders Called to Aid Fight.” 6/1/06, Metro/Region, B2.

Schweitzer, Sarah. "Community Coalition Gets Job Done." 3/23/02, Metro/Region, B1.

__________. "Mattapan May Be Affordable Housing Site." *The Boston Globe*, Metro/Regions, A1.

Shartin, Emily. “Clergy Rally for Nursing Home Bill.” 11/4/04.

The Boston Herald

Kaufman, Nancy and Hurmon Hamilton. “Health Coverage for All Remains Moral Imperative.” 10/30/05.

McLaughlin, Sr. Sally and Br. John Rathschmidt. “Let’s Expand MassHealth.” 3/18/06, News & Opinion.

Dorchester Reporter

Fleurissaint, Dieufort J. “Health Care Reform Cannot Wait!” 6/2/05.

The Jewish Advocate

Lebovic, Matt. “Full House for Health Reform.” 6/10/05.

Siefer, Ted. GBIO Calls for Extending Coverage to More People.” http://www.thejewishadvocate.com/this_weeks_issue/new/?content (accessed 3/28/06)

Schimmel, David. “Campaign Launched to Improve State Healthcare.” 3/25/05.

The New York Times

Belluck, Pam. “Massachusetts Sets Health Plan for Nearly All.” 4/5/06, A1.

Freedman, Samuel G. “Faith-Based Views Veer Off a Straight Political Line.” 12/12/08.

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