



# THE MOSES PROJECT

# **The What, Why, and How of the Moses Project**

## **Background**

In February, our church Council voted that we would embark upon a church-wide social action project running over the course of a year. In an effort to find a common cause that will unify and inspire our entire congregation, we will collectively decide upon what issue of justice we want to address and what partner organization we want to have guide us to a culminating action. To accompany this action, there will be several opportunities to reflect upon our undertaking and to celebrate its successes. As the name suggests, Moses will be our inspiration.

## **God's Call to Action**

When God called Moses from the burning bush, Moses responded, "Here I am." In the Bible, this is the common response when one is called by God to a sacred undertaking. By embarking upon the Moses project, our church is likewise declaring, "Here we are, God." For years, we have been a church that has responded to the call of God by taking stands and striving to live justly. We now find ourselves with our sandals off standing on holy ground once again.

From the burning bush, God spoke of having seen the misery of the Israelites. God had heard their cry and knew their sufferings. No longer would this continue. God was taking their side, and God was calling for action. Moses was to be the instrument through whom God would act. Moses would lead his people as they united together to escape from bondage and head to the promised land.

## **What is Social Action?**

Moses did not act by himself. He acted as part of a people. Social action is when people collectively join together to bring about change. For the Israelites, change meant leaving Egypt and going on a long journey in search of the promised land. Today, change typically means altering or transforming institutions and their policies. This type of change was seen in the civil rights movement as people came together to change institutional laws and practices that furthered segregation. Social action at its best is not only a means for change, but it is also a means through which God's will can be done.

## **Why Do It?**

Instead of leading his people out of Egypt, Moses could have responded to their enslavement by other means. He could have collected donations from the Egyptians so that the Israelites had more food to eat. He could have opened a clinic to treat on-the-job injuries such as heat stroke and whip lacerations. He could have run a school for the children of slaves and taught them Hebrew. None of these activities, however, would have freed his people.

Throughout history, social action has repeatedly been a key part of making our world a better, more humane place. Charity can only take us so far in addressing suffering and oppression. Charity can provide a meal, but it cannot take away the social and economic

causes of hunger. Social action can. Charity addresses the symptoms of a problem, but social action addresses the underlying causes. Social action is one of the most effective means we have available for reaching the promised land and realizing the Kingdom of God in our midst.

## **Why Us?**

The famous German theologian Dorothee Soelle once said, “God has no other hands than ours.” To effectively serve as the hands of God requires our collective action. As individuals, we can do acts of service and kindness to bring about God’s will. These acts are undoubtedly to be encouraged and celebrated, but, ultimately, as individuals, we can only do so much to bring about God’s will on earth. Joined with others, however, we can do much, much more. Our church has a tremendous amount of potential to advance God’s kingdom if we act together as faithful disciples.

## **How Will It Work?**

Moses did not do it alone. He was teamed up with his brother Aaron who had strengths and abilities Moses did not possess. Likewise, for us to be successful as a church, we cannot do this alone. Fortunately, there are a number of organizations with whom we can work. On the following pages, you will see a list of five organizations who have been researched and vetted as having great potential to be our partners. For each organization, you will find a short description of who they are and what kind of action we would take with them. For more information, you are additionally encouraged to visit the websites of the organizations.

Please bring this information packet to the burning bush party to which you have been invited. At these parties, we will do some fun community building, but we will also discuss what issues we feel individually and collectively called to address. This packet will provide some reference points for that discussion.

Along with the burning bush parties, we will also be conducting a series of three special worship services devoted to reflecting upon Moses. This series will begin on May 9th and conclude on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. During worship on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, each member will be invited to bring forward the enclosed ballot card to submit his or her preferences for who will be our partner organization. On the back of this card, one will also find a place where you can indicate ways in which you would like to participate in the Moses Project in the months leading up to the culminating action, which will likely take place in February or March of 2011. Note that ballot cards will only be counted if they have a name written on them. There will be no anonymous votes.

If you are unable to submit your ballot in person on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, then you may either mail it to the church or drop it off at the main office between 9 am and 2 pm on any weekday. Mailed ballots must arrive by Saturday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Following worship on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, we will have an all-church potluck to celebrate the beginnings of this endeavor. Toward the end of the potluck, we will announce who are partner organization will be.

# **Social Action Organizations**

## **Children's Alliance**

Mission: The Children's Alliance is a statewide organization that works to promote and ensure laws, policies, and programs that advance the safety and health of children. They currently have four ongoing campaigns that focus respectively on access to early learning, child healthcare coverage, child hunger, and the equitable treatment of children of color in our state's child welfare system. Every year they craft legislative goals around these areas of concern.

Action: In February, they conduct an advocacy day in Olympia entitled "Have a Heart for Kids Day." The day begins with training workshops for meeting with legislators. There is then an outdoor rally. Following the rally, participants meet with representatives or their aides.

Website: [www.childrensalliance.org](http://www.childrensalliance.org)

## **Washington Low Income Housing Alliance**

Mission: The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance is a statewide organization that seeks to ensure that everyone in our state has access to safe and affordable housing. This past year their legislative priorities included increased funding for the state's affordable housing program, foreclosure prevention, the creation of a fair tenant screening process, protection against the sudden closure of manufactured housing communities, and the securing of public property for affordable housing development.

Action: In February, they conduct an annual Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day in Olympia. In the morning, they typically have an advocacy training session, a prominent keynote speaker, and a panel of people directly affected by homelessness or the lack of affordable housing. After this, people head to the Capitol to meet with legislators.

Website: [www.wliha.org](http://www.wliha.org)

## **Washington Association of Churches**

Mission: The Washington Association of Churches (WAC) is a statewide coalition of denominations, congregations, ministries, and Christian educational institutions. It seeks to deepen relationships between coalition members in order to promote the common good. Each year they develop legislative priorities through a process of consensus rooted in gospel values. Last year they focused on protecting funding in the state budget for education, health care, social services, and low-income housing.

Action: In March, they will conduct an advocacy day in Olympia. The morning will begin with an interfaith worship service. This will be followed by either workshops or plenary sessions on legislative priorities. At noon, they will have lunch at the Capitol and hear from prominent office holders. In the afternoon, participants will meet with their legislators. The day ends with an opportunity for evaluation and feedback.

Website: [www.thewac.org](http://www.thewac.org)

### **Earth Ministry**

Mission: Earth Ministry is a statewide organization that seeks to inspire and mobilize Christian communities to play a leadership role in building a just and sustainable future. Every year they join a coalition of 25 environmental, health, and faith organizations to develop three or four legislative priorities. This past year they focused on bills that would fund clean water projects, maintain environmental protections in the state budget, and eliminate the production of toxic plastic containers and baby bottles.

Action: In February, they will join with their coalition partners to conduct an environmental lobby day in Olympia. In the morning, there will be a training session on how to lobby as well as the different environmental issues that will be addressed. After a catered lunch, participants break into groups to meet with their legislators. At the end, there will be a celebration with food and drink.

Website: [www.earthministry.org](http://www.earthministry.org)

### **The Religious Coalition for Equality and Equal Rights Washington**

Mission: The Religious Coalition for Equality partners with Equal Rights Washington (ERW) to ensure and promote dignity, safety, and equality for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons in the state of Washington. In the up coming year, their legislative priorities will be focused on marriage equality, HIV-AIDS service and prevention, anti-bullying measures, and greater family recognition under the domestic partnership law.

Action: In March, they will conduct an Equality Day for advocacy in Olympia. The day will begin with training on how to lobby as well as updates on legislative priorities. At noon, there is a rally on the Capitol steps. In the afternoon, participants visit their legislators. This is followed by a reception.

Website: [www.equalrightswashington.org](http://www.equalrightswashington.org)