

## Foreword

This extraordinary book by an extraordinary scholar may succeed in taming one of the most contentious public policy debates of our time; namely, the battle over whether government ought to partner with religious organizations that supply social services, and, if so, how.

Stephen V. Monsma's *Putting Faith in Partnerships* is a remarkable, in-depth, four-city study of public-private welfare-to-work partnerships. Monsma, a Pepperdine University political scientist, not only challenges much conventional wisdom on church-state issues, but also offers specific, policy-relevant advice about how government might in the future foster faith-based approaches to supplying social services and ameliorating social ills without violating well-established constitutional norms or courting myriad practical problems. The literature on the subject has been exploding, but if policymakers, activists, researchers, journalists, and average citizens were to carefully read just one academic book about faith-based issues, I would pray it be this one.

As Monsma writes, "there clearly is a centuries-old tradition in the United States of government helping to provide certain public services by funding the social services rendered by nonprofit organizations, including faith-based nonprofit organizations." Years before anyone had heard the term *faith-based*, Monsma was producing path-breaking historical, empirical, and cross-national research on how diverse, "religiously based" organizations (as he would prefer to call them) serve secular and civic purposes. For example, his 1996 classic, *When Sacred and Secular Mix*, documents that faith-based family and child care agencies, international aid and relief organizations, and colleges and universities are often deeply religious in their programming,

even when they function as legally separate nonprofits apart from any parent congregations or denominations.

Now, in *Putting Faith in Partnerships*, Monsma once again greatly advances our knowledge about the actual cast and characters, the real strengths and limits, of public-private social service delivery partnerships involving community-serving faith-based organizations. Neither orthodox secularists who demand strict church-state separation nor orthodox sectarians who insist that religious groups be permitted to proselytize with public funds; neither right-wing ideologues who are allergic to government nor left-wing ideologues who are addicted to it; neither theorists who romanticize civil society nor theorists who deny that families, churches, and other civil institutions matter greatly to social welfare will find comfort in these data-rich pages and the pluralistic perspective that emerges from Monsma's scrupulously fair-minded approach to the subject.

In the mid-1990s, when I began promoting "faith factor" research, arguing that most social capital in America (volunteers, charitable contributions, civic good works) is religious or "spiritual capital," and advancing policy-relevant ideas about how "faith-based organizations" matter to social welfare, some ostensible experts insisted that social services provided by local congregations and other religious nonprofits, however laudable, were few, short term, and largely confined to food, clothing, and temporary shelter. But, thanks to major studies by Monsma, Ram A. Cnaan of the University of Pennsylvania, Stephanie Boddie of the University of Washington at St. Louis, Nisha Botchwey of the University of Virginia, and other good social scientists, it is now obvious to almost everyone that faith-based organizations figure prominently in delivering literally hundreds of different types of social services. Monsma aptly cites Cnaan as concluding that the "role of the religious community in the provision of social services is enormous and secondary only to that of government."

*Putting Faith in Partnerships* shows that welfare-to-work programs are no exception. As Monsma reports, Chicago, Dallas, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles together harbor some 1,600 welfare-to-work programs. He studied about 500 of these programs, finding them to be variously administered by government agencies; for-profit organizations; large, secular nonprofit organizations that depend on paid, professional staff; small, community-anchored secular nonprofit organiza-

tions that rely heavily on volunteers; faith-based organizations that keep their religious elements largely separate from the social services they provide (faith-segmented); and faith-based organizations that tend to integrate religious elements into the social services they supply (faith-integrated). Combined, the two types of faith-based organizations figure prominently in welfare-to-work programs in each city, from 14.1 percent of all such programs in Los Angeles to 40.6 percent of all such programs in Philadelphia.

But how, if at all, can and should government support faith-based welfare-to-work and other social service programs? The first major federal statutes prohibiting government from discriminating against religious organizations seeking public funds available to groups that deliver social services were passed with bipartisan support and signed into law by President Bill Clinton in 1996. Under these “charitable choice” provisions, faith-based organizations can now compete for selected federal public funds on the same basis as all other nonprofits, provided that they honor relevant federal civil rights laws, do not discriminate against any client on the basis of religion, and do not use the funds to proselytize, lead worship services, or support sectarian activities. Neither federal nor state government can require an otherwise qualified faith-based organization to remove religious art, icons, scripture, or other symbols as a condition for applying for or receiving public funds or technical assistance.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, I met with both major candidates and advised both campaigns on various domestic issues. When George W. Bush became president, he asked me to join his senior staff as the first director of the new White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. As I told the president and stated publicly at the time, for health and professional reasons, I would serve for only six months, or just long enough to complete and publish the charitable choice implementation study expressly mandated by the executive orders that established the new office. I served about eight months, announcing my resignation on August 20, 2001, the morning after we released *Unlevel Playing Field*, a report detailing grant-making patterns in five federal departments (Justice, Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services).

As that review found, faith-based organizations that provide social services receive very little public money, even when they strictly fol-

low all charitable choice rules. For instance, from south-central Los Angeles to north-central Philadelphia, many local religious groups run exemplary after-school education and literacy programs. But, in 2000, these organizations received less than 2 percent of Department of Education discretionary grants across 11 different funding programs. Likewise, thousands of community-serving ministries sponsor anti-delinquency programs, help adult parolees get a fresh start, and more. But, in 2001, the Justice Department awarded a mere .03 percent of its discretionary grants to faith-based organizations.

Among its many other special strengths, *Putting Faith in Partnerships* contains reliable data and analyses that should help to discipline debates concerning what is behind this gap in faith-based government funding and what might work best to help close it. For example, according to *Protecting the Civil Rights and Religious Liberty of Faith-Based Organizations*, a report released by my former White House office in June 2003, faith-based organizations are “reluctant to administer federally funded programs” because they “could be subject to different” intergovernmental “rules and regulations” governing whether they can “hire according to [their] religious beliefs.” Others have asserted that most faith-based groups either fear that government partnerships beget program secularization or have no desire to expand services with or without public funds, or both.

Monsma’s findings pour cold empirical water on such claims. For starters, faith-based welfare-to-work programs, like most faith-based programs, rely greatly on volunteers, not paid, full-time staff. In Monsma’s huge sample of faith-based welfare-to-work programs, 60 percent are faith-segmented, not faith-integrated. Of the former, just 2.8 percent hire only co-religionists, and only another 6.9 percent give preferences in hiring to co-religionists. Among those receiving government contracts, nearly 40 percent complain about paperwork demands, but none reports that partnering with government makes them “less efficient” or reduces volunteer manpower in favor of paid, full-time personnel.

Rather, two-thirds say that getting government dollars has permitted them to expand their services to more people in need, and only 8 percent feel that the partnership with government has caused them to “cut down” on their religious emphases and practices. Even 4 in 10 of the faith-integrated programs have no religiously based hiring restric-

tions, and none reports being dissatisfied with how government has managed its end of the service delivery contracts.

Instead, over 90 percent of all those who lead faith-based welfare-to-work programs want to expand their programs “greatly” or “some-what.” Over half receive no public funds, but 6 in 10 want to apply. While public-private partnerships involving faith-based programs have been increasing, faith-based organizations are still rejected for funding at about three times the rate of secular nonprofits, even though there is no “firm evidence” that they perform any less well.

Monsma observes that faith-based welfare-to-work programs are more of a piece with their small, secular community-based counterparts than the latter are vis-à-vis the big three—the government agencies, the large secular nonprofits, and the increasingly ubiquitous for-profit government grantees—that still dominate this service delivery sector. But he is also careful to note that many of the faith-based organizations’ “staff and clients” are “overwhelmingly African American,” such that, barring policy efforts “to emphasize faith-based programs,” most “of the overwhelmingly African American programs will be missed.”

In my view, therein lies one real reason for the gap in faith-based government funding: even perfectly well qualified local minority-led faith-based groups, both congregations and legally independent nonprofits, are not given equal treatment in the government contracting process and receive little, if any, cognate technical assistance or support from government.

Indeed, in 2001, five years after charitable choice became federal law, Philadelphia, where, as Monsma calculates, 4 in 10 welfare-to-work programs are faith-based, only one faith-based welfare-to-work program, an African American-led, faith-segmented 501(c)(3) program founded by a local black church, has received one penny of federal funding for a year or more. Monsma estimates that small, faith-segmented welfare-to-work programs serve, on average, 200 clients a year on \$90,000 annual budgets that include very little, if any, public funding, while large, professional secular nonprofits serve, on average, 400 clients a year on amply tax-supported budgets nearing \$900,000 a year—ten times the funding for only two times the clients.

Thus, if, as Monsma observes, the faith-based programs’ “potential capacity . . . is greater than their current capacity,” it is, in my view, largely because their present public support is so paltry, both in

absolute terms and relative to what secular nonprofit and for-profit organizations receive from government coffers and in the form of technical assistance from government agencies. And, because inner-city community-serving ministries are disproportionately minority-led and serve predominantly low-income people of color, the failure to implement and expand charitable choice laws has a disproportionately adverse impact on urban African American and Latino children, youth, families, and communities. The First Amendment (church-state) issues at stake here are real and important, but so, alas, are the Fourteenth Amendment (“equal protection of the laws”) issues.

Monsma highlights the growing “role of conservative Protestants” in social service delivery, noting that over 4 in 10 of the welfare-to-work programs led by orthodox Protestant believers are nonetheless faith-segmented, not faith-integrated. Thus, it is unjustifiably prejudicial to assume, as so many in the mainstream media do, that just because a faith-based program is founded, organized, or staffed mainly or even entirely by evangelical Christians, it is bound to involve proselytizing or religious discrimination against prospective clients.

Monsma pierces another prevalent assumption by showing that faith-based welfare-to-work programs that “integrate religious elements into their programming” are less, not more, likely to be run by a congregation than by a legally independent nonprofit group. The “programs sponsored by faith-based nonprofit entities” are generally as religious as “those sponsored directly by religious congregations themselves.” He also finds that “less than 30 percent of the welfare-to-work programs” are “run directly by congregations.”

In light of these facts, and to “make public-private partnerships less controversial,” Monsma recommends that henceforth “government partnerships” with faith-based organizations exclude “the social service programs of churches or other religious congregations.” Otherwise, he reasons, we come “too close to unnecessarily mixing church and state”; besides, “the symbolism of the government writing checks directly to churches is all wrong.”

To fully appreciate the evidence and reasoning behind this recommendation, one must treat oneself to the complete intellectual feast in the pages of this book. As for me, I would be sympathetic to Monsma’s provocative policy proposal—essentially, as I would characterize it, excluding churches, synagogues, mosques, and other congregations,

but including integrally religious and other faith-based nonprofits, under charitable choice protections and related statutory rules and administrative protocols—under one hitherto unmet condition; namely, that faith-based organizations be assured governmental technical assistance and capacity-building help with respect to everything from notifications of funding availability to grant-writing procedures, from volunteer mobilization to financial management.

Recent history makes me skeptical that, without congregations in the eligibility pool, there can be any reasonable political hope of this happening anytime soon, or anytime at all. Recall that on January 29, 2001, the day President Bush launched his new Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, I was rightly the second, not the first, person he introduced. The first was former Indianapolis mayor Stephen Goldsmith, whom the president praised as a government reform visionary and nominated to head the Corporation for National Service (CNS). The president explicitly directed the new faith-based initiatives office and affiliated centers in cabinet departments, working with CNS's to-be-revitalized AmeriCorps and other programs, to focus, laser-like, on implementing existing charitable choice laws while identifying and recommending ways to overcome nongovernmental barriers to increasing faith-based organizations' capacity to serve the nation's needy and neglected citizens.

But, before it officially opened on February 20, 2001, the new office was engulfed by conflicting demands, most notably demands by some religious conservatives who insisted that the administration abandon charitable choice in favor of new "beliefs and tenets" and related provisions that would permit religious groups to proselytize with public funds, discriminate freely on religious grounds in hiring, and accept generous service-delivery vouchers. Meanwhile, Goldsmith did eventually become CNS chairman, but House Republicans nonetheless zeroed out the agency's budget and, on-the-record Republican presidential preferences to the contrary notwithstanding, continued to bash the agency and its "paid volunteers."

Despite Goldsmith's gallant public and behind-the-scenes efforts, CNS never even began to play the technical-assistance, capacity-building, or other roles promised by the White House in 2001, and reiterated by it after 9/11 and during 2002 as the president launched the new USA Freedom Corps office. By mid-2003, as a result of unre-

lated controversies, the agency that was supposed to help drive the administration's faith-based and community efforts was fighting for its own fiscal and political life.

Monsma extrapolates that at least 35,000 congregations function directly as faith-based social service providers. Arguably, in addition to respecting their civil rights and valuing how their civic results might expand with due government funding and technical assistance, there is a political reason for keeping these community-serving congregations in the charitable choice pools. Today, as in 2001, such pressure as exists for implementing and expanding charitable choice, for real, in ways that benefit America's most truly disadvantaged citizens, often comes from congregations and their leadership.

To cite just one example, in 2001, the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), a Pentecostal Christian denomination that is the country's second largest, and fastest growing, African American church community, was the first publicly to proclaim support for implementing the charitable choice laws touted by President Clinton and targeted for expansion by President Bush. COGIC has spawned many legally independent faith-based programs, most notably the Ella J. Baker House and National Ten-Point Leadership Foundation ministries led by Boston's Reverend Eugene F. Rivers III. But COGIC also has numerous congregation-based programs that are worthwhile, and its leaders' hopes for receiving equal treatment in the government grant-making process, as well as technical assistance from CNS and other agencies, for *both* types of programs led them to support the bipartisan plans first articulated by the president.

So, even while I am not sure that I can yet adopt Monsma's chief policy prescription as my own, I am sure that *Putting Faith in Partnerships* is the finest empirical study of its kind yet published and that, whatever one's specific policy preferences or general point of view, this book will enlighten, enliven, and elevate understanding.

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