

## Helping communities in pain

*"We are in a community that is hurting." – Rebecca Dow*

For this special issue, our journal is turning to a focus on ministering to children and their needs. Too many of our children doubt that God is there at all, let alone the healing power of an adult figure, to the point that they challenge people like the Rev. Dale Kelley to answer, "Why do you care about me?" In these two heartening pieces, these ministers are directly confronting the fear and alienation that keep communities from becoming safe and loving places for children.

What's so encouraging about Ms. Dow's work and the work of the three pastors profiled in our Pastor's Roundtable are how, well, doable it seems. As Dow says, we forget how basic and Christian this work is: It involves sharing the Gospel through all the things that we remember about Jesus' love for us, with careful attention to how to apply that love in a multicultural, ecumenical society.

It's easy to get overwhelmed and even, despite our call to serve as Christians, hopeless at the obstacles we see in our children's paths. That's why as ministers and laypeople serving children, it's helpful to be able to look at the big picture and also celebrate how the past 14 years have not been all bad news for children and their families. The Foundation for Child Development Report on their Child and Youth Well-Being Project (2006) helps us see that on a host of hard data indicators, childhood safety (homicide and injury) has improved, educational attainment overall has improved, and for some key health indicators (like mothers smoking while pregnant and children getting vaccinated), children's health has improved. But not all is well: Obesity rates are growing at exponential rates, and violence is a persistent problem, despite the relative decrease in rates of death for children. For a full copy of the report, go to [www.fcd-us.org/resources/resources\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=679234](http://www.fcd-us.org/resources/resources_show.htm?doc_id=679234).

And as the report makes clear, violence does still disproportionately affect certain groups, particularly children living in urban areas. In Chicago where I live, more than 20 children have been killed by gun violence on the streets this year. As one pastor said ruefully, "that's almost a full classroom."

Those you will read about in Faith in Action have chosen to use their anger about such violence to fuel their activism and their love for the communities they serve to build lasting relationships and institutions to make a difference for children. They have the hope and the faith to help their children in their communities through the many intense challenges ahead.



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### SHARE YOUR MINISTRY

Are you doing something powerful in your church ministry? Do you want to share your ideas? Submit an article to Faith in Action (1,500-2,000 words) to [mkell17@luc.edu](mailto:mkell17@luc.edu)