

Greetings colleagues and friends.

Last year we worked hard to take our name and our message to a national level. We made great progress and had successes that warmed our hearts and of which we can be justly proud. 2004 was a good year for Gamaliel and the network.

And while it is true that we can look on the results of the elections, as making our job more difficult in the years ahead, I would like to suggest that without the strides we made in 2004, our job would be even more difficult. Think what 2005 would look like had we not established ourselves as a power to reckon with.

So, let's take a moment to look at what makes us powerful.

First of all, as a network, we initiated a nation-wide campaign with a national issue, Civil Right of Immigrants. We did this through a series of 26 public meetings, which we called Rolling Thunder. For the first time, ever, we were able to project a common image of Gamaliel as a unified force.

I attended 11 of our Rolling Thunder meetings.
I was moved by the power of each meeting . . .
by the commitment of staff and leaders. . . .
And by the many allies and targets present.

But the unifying power of each meeting was the logo that read "Gamaliel United" and that appeared on the big banner, the t-shirts, fans and all the printed materials

In all 16 Rolling Thunder states people gathered under a common banner to speak with one voice.

In those meetings we were there talking about the moral values that the other campaigns seemed to forget

Moral values like poverty

Moral values like civil rights of immigrants

Moral values like housing for all

Moral values like healthcare, jobs and transportation.

This campaign proved that the religious right is not the only part of the faith community that can project a unified, coordinated, effective and powerful effort.

We did it too—and with each effort we will increase our power.

But we did even more than have a campaign of public meetings. We stayed true to our mission to give a voice to the unheard and we did this through another aspect of our national campaign – our groundbreaking and successful Get Out the Vote drive.

GOTV came about from people who were concerned that everyone needed to have a voice in this election.

So we created an awesome GOTV intern program that was unlike any other collaboration Gamaliel has attempted with affiliates.

Gamaliel raised money nationally for the GOTV and worked with the affiliates to hire 10 interns, who together with our core teams, registered 46,000 new voters.

But we were able to do this with considerably less money than other, more experienced organizations doing the same work.

How were 10 people able to make such a difference?

Because they had a professional staff of 50 of our organizers and a base of thousands of skilled grassroots leaders backing them up. Our program was strong on quality.

Just think what we will be able to do with 50 or 100 interns in the next election.

And we did more than register 45,000 new voters,
we got thousands of volunteers to work on election day,
we ran precinct operations in 100 precincts.

AND we mobilized 450,000 people to the polls [through person to person contact, pulpit announcements, Rolling Thunder meetings, phone calls, mailings, and rides to the polls.]

Many of our new voters were brand new citizens, like the 2500 people Birmingham Unitarian in Michigan registered.

Our congregations went into jails, homeless shelters, inner city high schools and community colleges, food banks, transit stations, and, of course, our own congregations.

And we made sure they had the most important right of every citizen—a voice in elections they can use again and again.

We weren't just building an electorate base for 2004—we were building a permanent get out the vote machine, because we will build permanent relationships with all those voters.

Through our non-partisan electoral work
we created data bases,
we performed electoral analyses,

we formed serious alliances with powerful organizations.

We know much more about our members, their concerns, and who has power in our communities today than we did at the NLA last year.

And as a result, our organizing efforts were transformed into a much more powerful and serious force than ever before.

And you know what? We may feel that even with all our work and efforts, that the wrong candidate won all too often – a candidate that does not reflect or has an interest in our moral values. But we don't have to be sore losers.

And in our own organizing, we may not have gotten quite as many core teams involved as we wanted to. But we don't have to point fingers or say “but if>”

Because let me tell you—we made a great beginning in transforming this organization into one that will exert power at the polls again and again and again over the next ten, twenty and thirty years.

We now have the necessary tools in our arsenal to persuade those in power to move the way we want them to move.

In fact, we're already seeing results.

For instance, voter participation was up in every metro region in which we worked! We were part of the deciding factor in such states as New Hampshire, Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin.

That, my colleagues, is power and it is not to be denied. And we will DO IT AGAIN!

People have noticed us and our work.

There were scores of newspaper articles and radio and TV coverage mentioning our united effort.

The New York Times referred to Gamaliel as a national network of congregations with a different set of “moral values.”

The Governor of Michigan stated that politicians are in the desert and they need MOSES to lead them to the promised land.

The mayor of St. Louis stated that MCU was revitalizing the city.

We are no longer under the radar.

2004 was a pivotal year in another sense too. WE RAISED MONEY.

Over \$5,000 for our voter registration and GOTV efforts.

Foundations that had never heard of Gamaliel gave major grants to the network.

ARCA, the Proteus Fund and the Bauman Foundation made grants totaling nearly \$200,000.

Out of the blue, the Discount Foundation made a grant of \$30,000 and THEN asked us to send a proposal. I liked the way that worked.

Tides, after giving \$25,000 to the African American Commission sent another Unsolicited \$12,000 for voter turnout work.

The Four Freedoms Fund gave a grant of \$100,000 and Carnegie a grant of \$25,000 for CRI.

Over \$350,000 of all these grants went directly to our affiliates.

All of this happened because we were perceived and dealt with as a National Power Organization.

We developed new alliances and strengthened old ones with ACORN, SEIU, and the Center for Community Change and with scores of local organizations.

Alliance making is an avenue that will continue to be developed over the next years, as it is imperative that ALL of us who are working for the same goals speak and work together. There simply must be more strong voices speaking for the faith community. Alliances are imperative if that is to happen.

2004 was a year of great energy within the network.

JOB of San Diego held its first public event with over 2,000 people.

East Hampton Roads held its first event with similar numbers.

Kansas City had a covenanting event with over 300 people from 20 congregations.

We signed a contract with a second organization in Maryland, the Interfaith Coalition in Prince George County.

We also signed a contract with a new project in Battle Creek, JONAH, our 4th Michigan organization.

We are opening up a new front in Atlanta.

And other cities are inquiring about how they can create a Gamaliel project.

That was a lot of activity for one year.

And we WILL keep the momentum going – that is how we will win!

Now a word about our sister organizations in South Africa, to whom we paid tribute in our Rolling Thunder theme, and the Zulu sticks we passed from meeting to meeting to meeting.

They have also broken new ground. Cape Town held a meeting of nearly 3,000 people. Durban had a meeting of over 1,500. We are now in Johannesburg. Just yesterday there was a rally of thousands of people in Cape Town about the devastating issues of AIDS.

And, I'm delighted to say, we now have a functioning President's Table which will help us create a more perfect union.

So 2004 was a pivotal, creative, groundbreaking year for Gamaliel.

We took risks, yes, in projecting ourselves as a national power. And like all risk taking, it was not perfect.

It revealed our flaws. But it also revealed our strengths.

And I think it made us all realize how important our work is.

Our voter data bases will be important in very single election, whether it's an election for school board, a bond issue, state officials or the next president.

And we will vote our values, those moral values this election seemed to forget.

We will be heard. Keep the thunder rolling.