

Mainline discovers allies among evangelicals: Collaboration without compromise

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When evangelicals took center stage at an interfaith “Make Poverty History” rally, Chloe Breyer was uneasy. A progressive Episcopal priest and a staunch defender of abortion rights, she worried how evangelicals might upset a left-leaning coalition of religious activists lobbying the UN World Summit.

She became impressed, however, with stories of evangelical relief work in Sierra Leone, quick responses to Hurricane Katrina and even a willingness to criticize President Bush on a handful of issues, like foreign aid. “It was eye-opening for me,” said Breyer, who is a daughter of Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer and lives in Harlem.

On a small but widening spectrum of topics ranging from genocide in Sudan to global warming, liberal religious groups are beginning to see evangelical Christians as unlikely allies. As evangelicals exert increasing political influence, particularly with the White House, progressive religious activists are seeking ways to collaborate—without compromising their principles.

“They believe we have access,” said Richard Cizik, vice president of government affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, who attended the September street rally with Breyer outside the UN.

Cizik has been courted more by liberal activists since Bush took office, and he’s happy to help on issues of common ground. “It doesn’t bother me at all,” he said. Based in Washington, Cizik said his interfaith collaboration dates back ten years, but no one wanted to write about it then.

He has taken some flak from conservative evangelicals, who caution him against being seduced by Washington, the left and the media. But he insists he’s not easily swayed. He remains adamantly opposed to abortion, gay marriage and embryonic

stem cell research. -*Religion News Service*