

**PROPOSAL FOR PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE
ORANGE COUNTY BAIL/BOND JUSTICE PROJECT
DRAFT 12-13-2019**

The [Faith Community] [Outreach, Missionary, etc.] Committee has identified a project for which we would like to solicit Church Council approval for official partnership.

The project is the Orange County Bail/Bond Justice Project, initiated by Binkley Baptist Church. The Project has two overarching goals:

- (1) Change bail practices in Orange County that are unjust; and
- (2) Provide direct support for people being impacted by this system.

The Project has four parts to help achieve these goals:

- a. Court Observation
- b. Data Collection/Assessment
- c. Bail Assistance through a Revolving Community Bail Fund (and support in getting to court)
- d. Community Education and Outreach

This is a faith-based initiative in Orange County.

Go to www.ocbailbondjustice.org for more details, and see **Background** on next page.

We propose that the [Faith Community] partner with Binkley Baptist Church and other faith-based communities to help rectify the injustices of money bail disrupting the lives of poor people who are not legally guilty, but who, due to the present system, may spend significant time incarcerated. The bail system particularly impacts people of color. People detained in jail pre-trial are more likely to be sentenced to prison and more likely to accept guilty pleas simply to get out of jail. Spending even two or three days in jail can mean losing your job, custody of your children, your home, and impact your whole future.

Bearing witness, seeking justice, and compassion for the poor are all tenets of our faith community and this Project.

What does being an Orange County Bail/Bond Justice Project partner mean? First and foremost, what is needed is adding our {Faith Community's} name to the list of faith-based communities that see this as an important moral issue to address. Our and other congregations' spiritual commitment to the Project will bring power and credibility, and promote success. Partnership could also include volunteers to assist in court observation, support for defendants in getting to court (e.g. texting court date reminders and providing transportation, if needed), and community education on bail justice issues. In addition, assisting in fundraising for the Revolving Community Bail Fund, when congregations feel led to do that, will help make a difference in how effective the Project can be. Therefore, we recommend that [Faith Community] be a partner in this important work and community justice effort.

Respectfully submitted,
The (Faith Community) Committee

Background

In 2018,

- Approximately 1,000 people in Orange County were detained pre-trial not able to afford to pay bail.
- 64% of people charged with misdemeanor offenses in Orange County had to post a secured bail to be able to go home and wait for their trial—that means they had to pay cash or put up home/property collateral or sit in jail.

We believe how much money you have should not determine whether you sit in jail.

In January, Binkley Baptist Church launched the Orange County Bail/Bond Justice Project. A number of faith-based communities in Orange County and justice organizations have already signed on as Project partners.

Since January, the Project has

- Led or participated in numerous community education and outreach events on the bail/bond system in our community.
- Led two Court Observation Training sessions. In the most recent training, 28 people participated including members from Kehillah Synagogue, Hillsborough Presbyterian, Hillsborough Unitarian Universalist, Binkley Baptist, Hillsborough PerSisters, NAACP, Carolina Justice Policy Center, ACLU, and UNC-Law School.
- Since early March, we have conducted daily court observations. At least 2 trained Court Observation Team members were present each day to document how bail was set, then entered data into a Bail/Bond Justice Project database for future assessment. We will use this assessment to educate the community on good practices used in Orange County and practices needing reform.
- Begun fundraising for a Community Bail Fund for Orange County to assist people who cannot afford to pay their low cost bail. We hope to begin accepting referrals for bail assistance in January, 2020.
- Formed a Project Steering Committee of faith based communities, the NAACP, and justice impacted individuals. We are now a certified non-profit.

We welcome your support and participation in this important work.