PHILANTHROPY AND THE SIXTIES
A Voice from the Sixties
Rev. Donald G. Jacobs

I knew very little about philanthropy in the 60s. In Black churches, only a few large givers can be found. It was a time of change, so I was one of several who accepted positions in ecumenical situations. I came to the Council of Churches with very little preparation. Mel Brenkus, executive of the Inner City Renewal Society with offices in the same building, offered assistance. As a minister of the Presbyterian Church, he encouraged me to take the position and gave me support in many ways. He depended almost entirely on philanthropy to keep his program going. The Council of Churches had support from several places including the county government, the Church denominations and certain large congregations were generous, as well as several foundations.

Response to our ministry in the Council was usually because of very important issues. "Human Need" were very important words, and still are. Hunger was usually well received as a means which demonstrated the ministry of Christ on earth. This is a clear call to be helpful to some people who are really needy. The awful indictment that the poor are greedy and not needy is true in only a few situations. A retired social worker, a member of the congregation I served as pastor, the late Margaret Rogers assured me that this was a fact so this Council of Churches found great response in this area.

Other programs included tutoring to read, called Project Learn, an offer to the former prisoners for opportunities to be prepared for jobs and returned to fruitful living. Another was desegregation of public schools, which became a county wide service. We found ourselves very busy with our programs and many poor people appreciated the available help. Some changes have taken place, but in the sixties the Interchurch Council was truly involved in community service and some action. Homer Wadsworth, at the Cleveland Foundation, became a true partner. Seth Taft was also very supported as a county commissioner. Joan Campbell was our associate director, and did a great job in those years. Since that time she became the general director of the National Council of Churches based in New York City.