

B.R.E.A.D.

People of Faith, Building Power, To Do Justice



B.R.E.A.D. Newsletter

Jep Hostetler, Editor – 299-1961

February 2009

Neighborhood Blight: This is the problem chosen by BREAD at our 2008 Annual Assembly for research and action. To date, the Research Committee has discovered the following facts about blight in Columbus and Franklin County.

- Ten thousand foreclosures occurred in 2008 in Franklin County affecting over 100,000 people (approximately one out of 10 individuals)
- One in five houses are vacant in Weinland Park and the Near S. Side; 1 in 6 are vacant in Franklinton and King Lincoln neighborhoods
- Studies indicate that blocks with accessible vacant structures have twice the crime rate as blocks without
- Subprime and similar types of loans will continue/begin to “reset” to higher interest rates, causing a new wave of foreclosures in 2009-2011
- In Philadelphia, the presence of one abandoned property on a city block caused the market value of each of the other properties on the block to be lowered by \$6,500
- There are between 4,000 – 5,000 documented vacant houses in Franklin County (the Director of CHP estimates many more that are not documented)
- Vacant and abandoned buildings cost the City of Columbus more than \$8 million in 2007 alone;
- 50% of foreclosures are due to sub-prime loans
- In the same financial situation, African



Americans are 30% more likely to receive a sub-prime loan than Caucasians.

- The gap between affordable housing and the need in Franklin County is 17,000 units for people making less than \$15,000/year

Can you imagine what could happen if...

- Vacant and abandoned properties were removed from your neighborhood
- Boarded up building were rehabbed and put into productive use
- Well-constructed parks sprung up in the place of burned out properties
- The \$32 million that the City of Columbus is seeking to tear down City Center (which was built in 1989) was used to remove blighted properties from your neighborhood.

**Releasing the Prophetic Imagination
BREAD Clergy Breakfast
Thursday, March 5, 2009
9:30 a.m.
First AME Zion Church
873 Bryden Rd.**

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Clergy Caucus-Report by Jep Hostetler

Have you ever had a fire lit under your “britches”, as my dad used to call them? Then you were not in attendance at the recent BREAD clergy caucus. Three terrific preacher/teachers in Rev. Tim Ahrens, Bishop Margaret Barnett and Rabbi Howard Apothaker each expounded on the meaning of doing justice and how God perceives our approaches to worship, peace-making and justice. As an eye witness to these three mini-sermons, I can tell you that God is not happy about the prevalence of injustice while we sit in prayer and song praising God, and BREAD member organizations should have their tails lit on fire to get them moving...or something like that. All I am saying is that it was truly an inspiration, a prophetic moment, and a stirring tribute to the variety of congregational approaches to justice work.

Alice Rathburn, presented the approach First Unitarian Universalist Church is using to expand its justice ministry network at her congregation. It was a very enticing and encouraging presentation. If we are dragging our feet regarding expansion of the Justice Ministry Network, then we need to talk to Alice. She and her Justice Team have put the plan into action and the results speak for themselves. (She was able to polish the presentation just in time to present it at the board meeting that evening). See below.

As reported at the BOARD meeting...

Developing Justice Ministry Networks:

Alice Rathburn shared the approach taken by First UU to increase its turnout to the Action Meeting from 60 in 2004 to about 256 in 2008. They are planning to turn out 300 in 2009. Average weekly attendance at First UU is about 400 people. First UU will: a) commissioning BREAD team members sometime in early spring, b) recognizing JMN members visibly in the church via posters and/or recognition during service, c) strong clergy support including preaching about the importance of justice work, d) having each team member overseeing and keeping contact with a group of people in the JMN, e) JMN buttons, f) maintaining a list of JMN and people they intend to invite, f) holding a mid-March JMN gathering, g) encouraging that children attend

the meeting, and h) targeting specific people to be in the JMN based on their past involvement.

Each congregation reported their turnout goal for the 2009 Nehemiah Action Meeting and the steps they have taken/are taking to reach that goal. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.

**B.R.E.A.D. Organization
BOARD Meeting
Thurs. February 26, at 7 p.m.
Broad Street Presbyterian Church
760 East Broad Street**

Agenda

- Neighborhood Blight Research Update
- Update on past issues
- Building our Justice Ministry Networks

Important dates to put on your calendar

Team Assembly Meeting

Thursday, March 26th

Columbus Mennonite Church, 35 E. Oakland Park

Start time: 7 p.m., doors open at 6:15 p.m.

Rally

Monday April 20 at 7 p.m.
Congregation Tifereth Israel
1354 E. Broad St.

Nehemiah Action Meeting

Monday May 4, 2009
Veterans Memorial Auditorium
Registration 6:30 p.m.
Child Care will be available