



## *May 3, 2010 is nearer than you think!*

It is only February, and the blanketing of persistent snow has Columbus and surrounding areas ready for the first daffodil to poke its head through the frozen crust. We are ready for spring! With spring comes the wonderful gathering of common souls, a gathering of people of faith, to continue the march toward justice.

Congregations in the BREAD Organization are actively involved in preparation for the **Nehemiah Action meeting on May 3, at Veterans Memorial Auditorium.**

BREAD teams are meeting to plan their strategies for building Justice Ministry Networks, and to prepare for greatly enlarging our numbers for the Action meeting. It is exciting to hear different congregations' plans, excitement, and actions, to maximize the number of people attending. Also, they are preparing for the March 18 team assembly, the April 12 Rally, and of course, the Nehemiah Action meeting on May 3.



## *Youth At-Risk Research Team finds startling statistics*

Since the Youth at Risk Committee was formed in December, we've had nine research meetings with experienced professionals around the city to gather information about the three main topics of concern: School Discipline Policies, Juvenile Crime/Gang Activity, and the Closing of Recreation Centers. The purpose of these meetings had been to gather enough information to better understand the problem of youth getting into trouble in Columbus, especially how the three topics mentioned earlier play into the problem. Thus far, we've learned that:

- In the 2008-9 school year, 11 out of 15 of the middle schools in the Columbus City District had more than one suspension/expulsion per student. For example, Clinton, Champion and Johnson Park Middle Schools all averaged three per student (Ohio Dept of Education);
- Columbus City Schools suspended 4,262 out-of-school for missing school (truancy) during the 2008-9 school year (Ohio Dept of Education);
- 5,900 students dropped out of the Class of 2008 in the Columbus Metropolitan Area (Source: Alliance for Better Education).
- Chronic truants, defined as those who report missing ten or more days in a school year, are 16 times more likely to initiate use as non-skippers (Henry & Huizinga, 2005).
- Chronic truants are 12 times as likely to report having committed a serious assault, 21 times as likely to report having committed a serious property crime, and almost seven times as likely to have been arrested as non-skippers (Henry & Huizinga, 2005).

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- Gang members in 2008 accounted for 25% of the homicides in Columbus, although they only account for .17% of the total population. The average age of a gang member in Columbus is between 13 and 25 (Strategic Response Bureau, Cols Police Department).
- In 2009, there were 83 homicides in Columbus. 46 of the victims were black males, about 21 of them were under 25, and 8 of them were under 15. Almost half of those arrested or suspected in connection with these homicides were under 25 years of age.

The Youth At Risk Research Committee last met on February 8th, and will meet again on March 9th at 7 p.m., location to be determined. Our research is beginning to focus on finding possible solutions and best practices that could address the specific problems that have been uncovered.

***Come to the April 12 Rally***

Even children are getting involved in the BREAD Organization. This lovely lady showed up at the December Assembly, and she told me she was there because she wanted to do some "Good". Someone is teaching her, by example, that to do justice one really does need to show up, speak up, stand up and stand out!



Some congregations met that goal at last year's Action meeting. Several congregations are pledging to reach that goal this year as well.

Turning out your average worship attendance is one way in which to measure the degree to which your congregation is putting the biblical requirement to "do justice" at the center of its work.

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS**

**Thursday March 18 at 7 pm**  
**Justice Ministry Team Assembly**  
 North Broadway UMC  
 48 E. North Broadway

**Monday April 12 at 7 pm**  
**Rally**  
 First Congregational Church  
 444 E. Broad Street

**Monday May 3, 2010**  
**Nehemiah Action**  
 Veterans Memorial Auditorium  
 300 West Broad Street, Columbus  
 Doors open at 6 p.m.  
 Music at 6:40 p.m.  
 Child care will be available



Columbus Mennonite Church has organized to get Youth Group Members to the Nehemiah Action for the past four years.

So now is the time for action, for preparation to turn out the equivalent of each congregation's average worship attendance.