

THE URBAN NETWORKER

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SUMMER ISSUE

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

MINISTRIES OF RECONCILIATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE & PEACE
Founded 1980

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ATLANTA 2012: RESURGING The Rev. Kimberly Jackson

On Atlanta Student Movement Boulevard, students from Morehouse and Clark Atlanta rallied alongside food service workers in an organized strike. Their cause; **gaining the freedom to unionize. Their song; “We Shall Overcome.”** In north Atlanta, **another group of students** from several local universities engaged in a nonviolent act of civil disobedience in front of the Emory University Administration Offices. Their cause; worker’s rights. **Their song; “We Shall Not be Moved.”** In front of the state’s Capitol, young undocumented **students marched in protest** of anti-immigration legislation. Their cause; equal access to higher education. **Their song; “Power to the People.”** These student protests all occurred within the Diocese of Atlanta in the last school year.

On February 29, 2012, members of the Episcopal Urban Caucus will gather in Atlanta, Georgia. Their purpose is to “hold the feet of the Episcopal Church to the fire of social justice,” and their song(s) will come forth over the course of the conference.

The local committee for the **2012 EUC** conference has chosen the **theme, Atlanta 2012: Resurging... Singing New Songs of Faith, Hope and Love.** This theme expresses our belief that Atlanta’s economic, educational, social and spiritual resurgence is intimately tied to our ability to **tap into the songs of our souls.** During the conference, we will offer an array of workshops, site visits, and worship opportunities that are designed to help us (re)connect with the freedom songs of our hearts. Following is a **brief description of the**

workshops being featured this year:

One workshop will feature a panel of local Atlanta youth who are involved in social action and outreach. Another workshop, led by Dr. David Rice of Morehouse College is titled, “Authentic Engagement and Courage to Love: Meeting Our Young People Where They Most Need Us.” This workshop will explore how young boys and men consider community, and how we can insert ourselves into those spaces to help us all grow. Both of these are in accord with the Caucuses commitment to youth participation. Also, in keeping with the theme of singing new songs, students from the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center (which serves Clark Atlanta, Morehouse, Morris Brown, and Spelman Colleges) will lead sung Compline on the opening evening of the Conference. (see Resurging, page 2)

Redeveloping Urban Congregations—The Rev. Geoff Curtiss

There is a new Spirit of mission trying to get into the Church. It is a Spirit calling people out of the Church’s selfish delusions of purpose into the world to join God in mission. The Church needs to stop naval-gazing, always talking about itself, and to start talking about its context and interpreting it with scripture; to start paying

attention to the context(s) in which we are located. In our ever changing context many of our congregations were planted in communities that are now very different. Our culture has changed, our cities have changed, our first and second tier suburban neighborhoods have changed; yet we are still presenting the Gospel as if the

neighborhoods of the 50s and 60s were our context. Most persons who gather inside the church to practice ministry continue to perpetuate what worked 40-50 or even 60 years ago. So in many situations the local neighborhood church has become an interesting museum of (see p. 2 Urban Congregations)

ATLANTA 2012 RESURGING—The Rev. Kimberly S. Jackson

2012 ASSEMBLY THEME:

*“Atlanta 2012
Resurgin...Sing
-ing New Songs
of Faith, Hope
and Love”*

Vicky Partin of the Chattahoochee Valley Episcopal Ministry, Inc. (CVEM), an outreach arm of the Diocese of Atlanta, will present a workshop titled, “Fostering Racial Harmony through Building Relationships.” She will highlight the work of CVEM through stories of grassroots organizing in a low wealth neighborhood, developing interfaith and multi-cultural programs for diverse children, and the formation of One Columbus, a city-wide interfaith organization that addresses racial issues.

In his workshop, Geoff Curtiss will offer tools for helping congregations to resurge and redevelop into healthier churches. (see p. 1: Redeveloping Urban Congregations) There will also be opportunities to learn more about the role of the Church in responding to Capital Punishment, and about the ways in which faith organizations are helping Atlanta Public Schools resurge from the recent cheating scandal.

Our prayer is that these workshops coupled with fellowship,

worship, and site visits, will encourage, inspire, and rejuvenate you as we continue in the good work of being Christian disciples. As you prepare for this conference, the local committee invites you to begin thinking about the songs that have empowered and continue to inspire social justice and political action in your lives. Bring those songs with you, and come prepared to share in the songs of others. (The Rev. Kimberly S. Jackson is Co-chair, along with Bruce Ingram, of the Atlanta host committee)

ENEJ Presence at Atlanta EUC Assembly—Michael Maloney

The Episcopal Network for Economic Justice (ENEJ) has worked in partnership with EUC since 1998. In 2012 ENEJ will sponsor three events at the Atlanta Assembly. **The Gloria Brown ENEJ Awards Luncheon.** An annual feature of the EUC Assembly, this luncheon will be held on Friday, March 2. Bus service will be provided to the downtown church location. The cost of the luncheon will be on your

EUC registration form. At this event, the Gloria Brown Award will be presented to an outstanding economic justice ministry. ENEJ will also present the Hugh White Award for economic justice advocacy and the Michael Bryant Award for outstanding service to ENEJ. All Assembly participants are invited. **Immigration: A New American Dilemma.** Vast numbers of human beings (the majority being children and

young adults) are forced into slave like conditions for capital gain throughout the world. Forced migration for survival is happening all around us and most are unaware of the number of victims in our own communities. This workshop will focus on the movement of people being sold for economic gain and gratification of citizens of industrialized, wealthy nations. (see p.3 Immigration)

URBAN CONGREGATIONS—Curtiss

the old patterns of worship, service, education, evangelism and pastoral care instead of working to be current centers of community life forming disciples to be sent out into their neighborhoods.

Where once our mission strategy was to come into the neighborhood with our Episcopal flag and our Book of Common Prayer and plant it, thinking that “if we plant it they will come,” we now live in a world that requires a different model

of church because God has changed the missionary strategy for the Church. So in many situations we are losing our church structures to closure because they no longer impact their local neighborhoods. Not that neighborhoods are any less populated but in our transitional culture the people living in these neighborhoods have changed. God has sent us a new group of people to work with so why has the local congregation not changed?

There is a new focus in mission. We need to stop talking about church and start spending our time walking the neighborhood and talking with local people, then use scripture to interpret our and their experience. We have lost our connection to culture and the ability of our scripture to interpret the context for the people living in the neighborhood. Matthew and Luke had to reinterpret the Good News of God in Christ for their time

and we need to be interpreters for our changing contexts. Using Luke 10 as the paradigm, the Gospel is about sending disciples out into the world rather than gathering them from the world. For too long the local congregation has assumed “that if you build it they will come.” Somehow if we offer the right program or offer the right mystical experience that people will find us. But mission believes in a relational God. (see p. 3)

ENEJ Presence (cont'd from p. 2)—Mike Maloney

The workshop will look at issues from a domestic (US perspective). We will especially share what is happening on the U.S. Mexican border regarding trafficking and economic migration of men, women and children. We will address the growing hostility to foreign/immigrant labor and the paradox of dependency on this labor to keep rich economies afloat. We will address the misconceptions of immigrant workers as "law breakers and job stealers" in the harsh realities of the broken U.S. immi-

gration system and we will draw attention to the fact that we are looking at economic systems which are creating a painful and moral crisis for families.

The workshop will include a presentation of active ministries and models for action and response to forced migration issues through education programs, advocacy for policy change which will begin to break down exploitive systems, pastoral programs which offer victims a place of safety and

possibilities for re-building their lives and relationships through accompaniment as found in the New Sanctuary Movement.

Workshop attendees will gain an understanding of the issues and practical resources to begin or enhance ministries with immigrants in their own communities. **Community Investing: Our Assets at Work in Underserved Communities.** The workshop will define and describe community investing, a way to safely and effectively invest/loan

(not donate) our financial assets in communities near to home and far away. The workshop's goals are to bring awareness about the established network of Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) around the country, including the Church itself. These CDFIs are ready to put our funds to work as capital in distressed neighborhoods as they rebuild and develop housing, small businesses, cooperatives and community services. The workshop will include a DVD overview followed by a local CDFI presentation.

Redeveloping Urban Congregations (cont'd)—Curtiss

However, we often find ourselves unwilling to relate to our God who is outside our doors acting in the communities around us. We are not connected to this "God who forms and shapes history" working in our community, but rather we find it easier to come to our closed "sanctuary" to worship God as though we can find the divine inside these walls but not out in the midst of our neighborhoods. This new paradigm of being sent understands

discipleship to be about practice and not as much about belief. Not that you believe someone is poor but that you assist someone who is poor.

The Church in Metropolitan Areas will be holding a consultation this fall with Alan Roxburgh of the Roxburgh Missionary Network to explore this new understanding of mission. Alan, who is an Anglican priest from Vancouver, Canada, will be working with us around

Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood. The Church in Metropolitan Areas has also encouraged the Episcopal Urban Caucus to identify a congregation that is undertaking this renewal as part of the annual Assembly. A tract around mission in the local congregational setting is being explored for next year's Assembly in Atlanta.

This new Spirit that is trying to get into the Church has a

purpose to make disciples that are being sent out of the church and into their neighborhoods. The congregation becomes the place to do situational analysis, biblical parallels and paradigms, theological interpretation and gospel projects as we call people into vocations of discipleship that are practiced in their communities of family, work, recreation and livelihood. Contact us for the fall consultation: gcurtiss@allsaintshoboken.

THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY CENTER

The Atlanta University Center was created in April of 1929 when John Hope, then president of both Morehouse College and Atlanta University saw the potential gains from such a consortium. The former Atlanta University, Spelman College and Morehouse College signed the affiliation agreement and became the original members of the AUC. Clark College and Morris Brown College joined in 1957, followed by the Interdenominational Theological Cen-

ter in 1959. Morehouse School of Medicine joined the AUC in 1983. The AUC is the largest contiguous consortium of African Americans in higher education in the United States.

The AUC has undergone several administrative and governance changes since its inception. In 2004 the business operating as the AUC was dissolved. A new corporation known as the AUC Consortium, Inc. was established in its place and Marilyn Jackson be-

came the first female Executive Director. In 2011 the current Executive Director, Dr. Sherry Turner, was selected to expand the Consortium's community revitalization efforts.

Two denominational campus ministry centers have been established to serve the students of the Atlanta University Center. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Atlanta operates the Lyke House Catholic Student Center and the **Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta**

operates the **Absalom Jones Episcopal Student Center and Chapel**. Each of these campus ministry facilities is named after a notable African American cleric.

The Rev. Kimberly S. Jackson, Co-Chair of the 2012 EUC Assembly host committee and author of this issue's **Atlanta 2012: Resurging** article is Chaplain at the Absalom Jones Center.

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

MINISTRIES OF
RECONCILIATION, SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND PEACE

P.O. Box 21182
Park West Station
New York, NY
10025

Phone: (212) 699-2998
Fax: (212) 699-2998

E-mail:
coordinator@episcopalurbancaucus.org
WEBSITE:
www.episcopalurbancaucus.org

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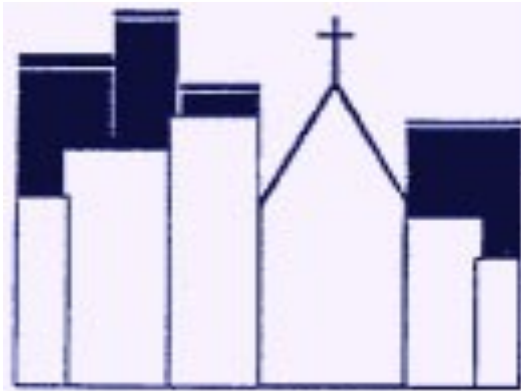
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**The 2012 Assembly, February
29—March 3 Atlanta, GA**

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS—Founded 1980



MID-POINTS—Sheila Cunningham Sims

Moving from summer to fall my personal calendar becomes more crowded with activities from all parts of my life. I think that since we are at the mid-point between EUC Assemblies it is a good time to check-up on what I am doing to further the justice issues that are near and dear to my heart.

I thought of two areas. One is the moratorium on the death penalty. I live in a state that still has the death penalty on the books. There are 16 states that do not. There is a bill, SB 490, moving through the California legislature to bring the death penalty to the voters to decide to abolish it or not. The Episcopal Church's stand is against the death penalty. The California economy being in dire straits means the state can save millions of dollars by not performing executions. Educating

the voting public will be crucial for this issue.

On a more personal basis, I plan to include in my calendar time to work as a volunteer with programs that target poverty. Extra hands are always needed to prepare lunch bags, or hot meals. Giving a donation to these programs is one way to participate but actually being there is another way of seeing the faces of those who struggle for daily bread.

Where are we as member of the Episcopal Urban Caucus at this mid-point of 2011? I would love to hear from you and what you are doing in your part of the world. Share your "good works" with all of us.

(Sheila Cunningham Sims is President of the Episcopal Urban Caucus)

Share your good works at: coordinator@episcopalurbancaucus.org
Please type "Newsletter: Good Works" in the Subject line.

The **2012 Episcopal Urban Caucus Assembly** will take place from **February 29 to March 3 in Atlanta, Georgia at the Holiday Inn Atlanta Capitol Conference Center, 450 Capitol Avenue, S.E. Atlanta, GA 30312**

Telephone number: (404) 591-2000

Please go to our website for additional information and for hotel online registration instructions as the time for the conference draws near.