

Living It Out

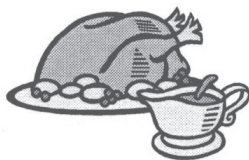


2010 HOLIDAY WITH HEART

Each year, GBM provides Christmas food and gifts to families struggling to survive in our communities. We serve as many families as resources and donations allow. To make this all possible, we need your help to collect, organize, package and provide the following:

FOOD

Each family will be given enough food to prepare a holiday meal and additional meals while children are out of school. Non-perishable foods are always needed, but during the holidays we also need fresh vegetables (like potatoes, celery, carrots and sweet potatoes) and fresh fruits (like apples, oranges, and grapefruit). GBM also has a large freezer allowing us to accept frozen meats like turkeys and hams. If you would like to arrange a food drive for GBM in your neighborhood, congregation or school, we are always appreciative and willing to assist.



CLOTHING



All ages need warm clothing during the cold winter months. Coats, hats, mittens, pants, shirts, sweaters, shoes, and underwear are needed for infants through adults.

Please, only NEW items for the holidays.

GIFTS

Gifts for boys and girls ages 1 through 12 are needed. New toys (no toy guns), books, sports gear, games, crayons, coloring books, craft sets, infant pull toys, watches, radios, skate boards, toiletries, stuffed animals, bikes ... anything children would enjoy. Please note greatest need is for toys for kids older than 8, particularly boys. African-American dolls and action figures are also in demand.



TIRED OF SHOPPING?

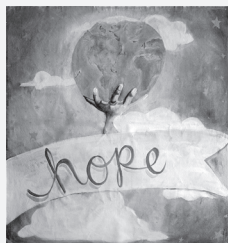


Financial contributions can ALWAYS be used to purchase needed food and gifts. In addition, volunteers are needed to assist in all stages of the Christmas Project. Individuals and groups of no more than 10 people are needed between 9 AM and 4 PM daily from Monday, December 13th through Tuesday the 21st. Volunteers will help bag groceries and help select toys and clothing for the different families. This is a popular community-building volunteer opportunity.

For more information, please contact Sarah Price or Mary Jones at 205-326-6821 or visit our website at www.gbm.org.

MUSEUM OF URBAN ART MURAL

Art by Brittany Howard



"I created this mural with the earth and the sky as the main elements. The hand of a higher spirit is supporting us - lifting us when we are down or unhelpful."

Art by Chris Andrews



"I create all types of art, but I am most known for my Graffiti murals. I wanted to bring in the use of the spray paint, the vivid colors and stars to exemplify the word LOVE."

Art by Merika N. Johnson



"I created this mural to look Barik in style, an African tradition of dyeing material to create art."

GBM is pleased to announce the unveiling of a 3-part mural depicting Hope, Love and Unity produced by the Museum of Urban Art (MUA). While the official unveiling took place during the GBM Open House on Tuesday, November 9th, the project began over a year and a half ago. Rose Jones, then co-chair of the Direct Services Work Group, knew of the Museum and the story behind its founding. Due to the loss of a son to street violence, Charlena Jackson was inspired to provide other options for city youth. The mural project grew out of a desire to make GBM's waiting area more comfortable and inviting. After the walls were painted by volunteers from Holy Infant of Prague Catholic Church, the "new" walls needed new art. Thanks to the three artists and the MUA the lovely mural now brightens our walls. GBM is producing note cards of the art for sale throughout the year. Please check out our website for order information.

Winter 2010/2011

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Today it is fashionable to talk about the poor. Unfortunately, it is not fashionable to talk with them.

- Mother Teresa

Our Mission...

... to serve God's purpose of justice and peace by assuaging the wounds of the community and by struggling in community to realize more just systems and more faithful relationships.

Serving

... providing financial help, personal assistance, and ...

FALL FESTIVAL



Community members go through the stock of clothes and shoes during the Fall Festival on October 23rd.



Flying Jenny provided Old Time String band music for the event. Check them out at <http://sites.google.com/site/flyingjennysite/>.



Cassandra Scott delighted all the young at heart with story telling.

On Saturday, October 23, GBM celebrated the beautiful weather with a Fall Festival Community Day.

The Leisure Ministry of Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church provided a surprisingly large Moonwalk and delicious popcorn. Additional food and drinks were provided by board and staff. Special thanks to Bill McMullen who grilled hotdogs for the hungry crowd.

Special thanks, too, to Cassandra Scott from the North Avondale Public Library and Flying Jenny Old Time String Band for providing story telling for the kids and music for all.

We also had a visit from Senator 1901, a local character created and enacted by John Wright, Jr., who showed us why we need Alabama constitutional reform.

SUSTAINING JUSTICE

The following is a revised and much reduced version of a sermon delivered by staff member George Thompson at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham on Sunday, November 7, 2010.

While justice may begin with enforceable legislation, it requires public participation from all within the society, culture, country or community to be sustainable, in my opinion. Justice is not something we can hire or elect others to do for us. It, like all relationships, cannot be done by proxy. It requires our own participation, our own commitment, our own energy. At the same time, it can be done at anytime and by anyone. It can be seen in the simplest of acts and can be seen in the most powerful of movements. It is something that can be tied to all our decisions - tied to our very fabric as members of any group. But the rub comes with what defines "group". Is it my family, not yours? Is it my religion, not yours? So with justice, in order for it to be sustainable, it needs to be universal. This is so eloquently stated in a quote by Martin Luther King, Jr. - "We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

So what about the recent elections? While I am not going to pander to the conversations already in proliferation on both sides of the argument, I do want to look at something far deeper and far more evasive. This is not about an election, this is not about a competition between left and right, or between Democrats and Republicans, or between the quasi-religious and the truly religious - and remember those terms define both sides depending on which side is doing the defining. This is about democracy, about justice, about the fabric of society.

When indeed did we allow democracy to be a competitive sport? I don't mean elections; I mean democracy. When did we allow human rights to be determined by "majority rule"? When did we start believing that being blessed by wealth is a sign of being blessed by God? When did religion stop being a tool for living and become the battle cry to align with power? When did it become common to equate balanced coverage on an issue to equal marketing of both viewpoints? Yes, "the long arm of the moral universe might bend toward justice," but there is a shadow to that arm that is also long. But in my opinion it is not about arguing which is longer, the arm or the shadow, the issue is how can we, today, now, refocus on the issue of justice to make it sustainable and substantial enough so that even the shadow can become a tool for strengthening the arm.

Today, more and more people argue that "majority rule" is a characteristic feature of democracy, if not the very foundation of it. But history has taught us that without the protection of individual liberties, it is possible for any minority to be oppressed by the "tyranny of the majority". From our own religious stories we learn of the fate of

majority rule. Remember the golden calf? Remember what happened when the majority determined the right way to worship and the right God to worship?

More importantly, what about the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? The sin of Sodom is stated in Ezekiel 16:48-49 "This was the guilt of Sodom: Its citizens had pride, abundant food and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." The sin that brought the curse to the city was not as touted by those fanning fear these days, claiming the "curse of sexual perversion." No it had nothing to do with sex, it had everything to do with the sin of refusing to help those in need, those who are strangers. When power uses fear to justify the abuse of others, that power unravels the very fabric of society. Fear does not lead to cooperation between groups, it leads to factionalism and division and separatism. Walls are built, gates are shut, lynching takes place in full view, wars are waged and lives are lost.

Why the stranger? There is extreme importance placed on caring for the stranger throughout the holy texts - listening to the voice of the stranger, the minority, and the outcast. That is the only way to uncover the shadow. This is not a shadow that can be cut from the fabric of the culture; it is part of it. Listening to the oppressed, the overlooked, and the stranger is the only means by which we can see that change is needed, otherwise we retreat to fatty feasts blind to the beggar under the table. It becomes critical to listen to the voices of those oppressed, abandoned, overlooked and ignored - those criticized for not fitting in, for not choosing or believing what the majority does. If we try to do good without listening, we have only the clanging brass of "charity" without the clarion call for "Justice".

Here at GBM, we run up against the wall of fear in many congregations where being good means giving to the poor. It means nothing about caring for them, or listening to them, or building a relationship with them. Charity alone, no matter how good, is about keeping the status quo. It is simply a transaction between those who have and those who have not. Power and control always stays in the hands of those who have.

Justice on the other hand creates great potential for change and is a great threat to the status quo. It requires listening to the "other" to hear why the person is in need. This often requires hearing how systems are failing - and I don't mean only systems of government or culture. The systems of businesses, of agencies, of non-profit organizations, of congregations, of neighborhoods, and of families can all be broken and dysfunctional. It requires those in control to listen to the critical opinions of others to deeply hear the need for change and to be patient enough to work with those critical of the systems

People

... support for families and individuals in crisis ...

to mend and repair and create new forms of systems.

Though I am not an expert at helping people open up to such types of critical exchanges, I have learned from my experiences a few tips.

I believe that in order to truly hear and understand what the stranger, the other, the critical client or friend might have to say, I have to have a certain comfort with self doubt. If I go into any relationship or conversation with the idea that I know it all and my way of seeing things is the accurate way, then I will never really hear what another says and offers. This requires one to be well grounded in a personal belief system – knowing what cannot be compromised and what may be personal preference or interpretation. To truly cultivate listening, there also has to be trust in the relationship. In order for true listening to take place, it requires both parties to listen, to open up and share their pain and confusion and struggle...both sides. This may be easy when the system being criticized is a third-party issue. It becomes a whole different story when it is the criticism of the actions or intentions of one of the two parties conversing. Listening to both sides can be very difficult.

A good leader has to listen to and understand both sides but, in a sense, not agree with either. This is not about doing battle to replace one group for another in the seat of power, it is about changing the system so that justice is created and sustained. It is about unmasking the shadows and giving voice to those affected by the shadow so that power can look at itself clearly. This requires a leader to be willing to face the injustices and point out the deeper reasons for the need to change on both sides. Yes, both sides. As stated earlier, seeing and listening to both sides of an argument is not the same thing as giving commercial time to both products. This is not about competition, nor is it about commodity sales and profits. It is about justice, community and humanity.

So we have a lot to do. Some equate this with doing battle against the evils of the world. I do not particularly like the metaphor of battle, for it, too, brings everything down to a competition. I also believe that the destruction of the fabric of our society and community is due in part to competition. Think about the ethics of consumerism. The greater number of consumers the better the profit margin. If people think they need something for themselves instead of sharing it, then sales increase. If people are afraid of sharing, then there are further increases in profits.

So do we gather forces to battle a competitive foe that is armed with fear and money and power. Or do we choose another way, telling those bent on competition, "You may want us to battle until one side wins, but the community I want to live in is not about competition

and fear and profit and power. It is not about winning or losing; It is about community, and sharing and listening, and nurturing and being in relationships with all kinds of interesting and diverse people, particularly the "stranger." We have the choice to move onto a battleground determined by the competitive side of fear and separatism, or we can simply choose to create more just relationships in all aspects of our immediate lives - relationship by relationship building a more just and sustainable democracy for all people.

Here we are in the great month of November. The month of Thanksgiving, harvest time, and the transition to the seasonally introspective months of winter. The season brings back memories for me of watching both sets of grandparents grow their own vegetables, tilling the ground, planting seeds saved from previous years, weeding the rows, harvesting the fresh produce, shelling and cooking and canning the fresh veggies for storage to eat later. One thing that is not seen much in industrial sized agribusiness is the use of cooperative planting. I remember planting pole beans in with the corn so that they would grow up the natural stalks of the corn. We would also plant squash around the base of the plants to help keep the moisture in the soil and help prevent the proliferation of weeds. Great concept – nurturing cooperation rather than competition.

Similarly, by nurturing the relationship between serving people, pursuing justice, and building community, not only can the needs of the people be met, and not only is the sense of community extended to include everyone, but a sustainable sense of justice is produced that ties us all together in an "inescapable network of mutuality," sown together in a single garden of destiny.

OTHER NEWS NOTES

As is always the case, there is more news from GBM than a newsletter can handle. We thus encourage all our readers who have access to the internet to go on line and read more. Included there is news on our Vote4Birmingham project engaging voters in issue awareness in two council districts in Birmingham.

Another topic has been the great relationship developing between GBM and Holy Family Cristo Rey Catholic High School. For the past two years, Holy Family students have been coming to GBM on a regular basis, providing much needed help around the office and exposing the students to the work environment.

In addition, the new 2011 Constitutional Reform Calendar is now on sale - \$15 for 1 or 10 for \$100. Please visit us on the web at www.gbm.org for more information.

OPEN HOUSE



The extended GBM family was on hand to celebrate the organization during the recent Open House.

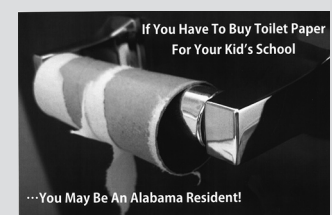


Charlena Jackson, Founder of the Museum of Urban Art, spoke of the Museum and the project at the unveiling of the mural.

On Tuesday, November 9, GBM opened its doors to its many friends and supporters for a celebration of who we are and what we continue to do. The event provided a place for GBM to honor all the volunteer time and financial support of individuals, congregations and organizations.

As part of the evening celebration, the three-panel mural produced by the Museum of Urban Art was publicly unveiled in the downstairs waiting area. (Please see page 1 for more information on the mural.)

In addition, GBM's 2011 Calendar on Constitutional Reform was on hand for purchase. Published thanks to the generosity of the Grodner Group, the calendar was created in collaboration between our own Constitutional Reform Task Force and the Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform. Below is the picture for August. Come by and purchase some for yourself or as gifts for others. You can also purchase calendars online at www.gbm.org.





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Thank you for adding your hope, vision and resources to ours as we work together to build more just systems and more faithful relationships. Please remember that all contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

Sponsoring Faith Communities

- African Methodist Episcopal Church - 9th Episcopal District • African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church - North Alabama Conference • Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship • Birmingham Friends Meeting (Quaker) • Birmingham Islamic Community - Birmingham Islamic Center, Birmingham Islamic Society, Masjidullah • Cahaba Valley Church • Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Alabama & Northwest Florida Region • Christian Methodist Episcopal Church - 5th Episcopal District • Covenant Community Church of Birmingham • The Episcopal Church - Diocese of Alabama • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America - Birmingham Congregations • Holy Trinity - Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Cathedral • Lutheran Ministries of Alabama • Presbyterian Church (USA) - Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley • The Catholic Church - Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama • Sixteenth Street Baptist Church • Temple Beth-El (Conservative Judaism) • Temple Emanu-El (Reform Judaism) • Unitarian Universalist Church of Birmingham • United Church of Christ - Birmingham Congregations • United Methodist Church - North Alabama Conference •

VOLUNTEER OPPS

Please consider volunteering to help collect, organize, package and distribute holiday donations to the 250 families or more we are serving this year. You will be glad you did. The experience can be life changing. We can use your help for any segment of time between the hours of

9:00 AM and 4:00 PM
 on any or all of the days from

Monday, December 13, through

Tuesday, December 21

We also need volunteers to help transport Food Bank items to GBM from 7:30 to 9:00 on the mornings of Wed. Dec. 1st and 15th.

For additional information, please contact GBM, phone 205-326-6821 or e-mail info@gbm.org.

TOYS, CLOTHING AND FOOD NEEDED

GBM needs your help to provide holiday gifts and food to families at Christmas. Please consider organizing a toy and new clothing drive in your neighborhood, congregation or school. Items needed include:

Toys

- action figures
- baseball gear
- basketballs
- bikes
- board games
- card games
- coloring books with crayons
- computer games
- craft sets
- dolls
- footballs
- infant pull toys
- scooters
- skate boards
- softball gear
- stuffed animals (please, no guns)

Clothes - NEW ONLY

- blouses
- dresses
- gloves
- pants
- pull-ups
- scarves
- shirts
- socks
- sweaters
- t-shirts
- underwear
- winter coats

Other Items

- baby diapers
- blankets
- books for all ages
- perfumes
- radios
- school supplies
- videos and dvds
- watches

Every time you gather this holiday season, have your guests bring an item to donate. Remember your neighbors this Holiday.

GBM and the other area food pantries are all experiencing growing demand for food in these difficult economic times. Each week, GBM serves 50 families, but lines outside our doors often contain far more than that. Please consider donating items listed here:

Cereal - hot or cold cereals, breakfast bars.

Drinks - instant drink mixes, cans or plastic jugs of fruit or vegetable juices.

Fruits - plastic jars or cans of fruits.

Meats/ Fish - cans of chili, spaghetti, fish or meats. During the holiday season we also need frozen turkeys or hams.

Soups - including cans and dry mix.

Staples - including corn meal, flour, jelly, pasta, peanut butter, powdered milk, rice, stuffing mix, and sugar.

Vegetables - cans or dried bags of vegetables and beans.

Other - Baby food, formula, and toiletries.

GBM can only give according to what we receive from donors like you. Please remember our neighbors, who struggle to make ends meet.

For more information, please contact Sarah Price or Mary Jones at GBM 326-6821. If you need to arrange a pickup, please call Ronnie Moore at 613-6296 to coordinate.