



THE URBAN NETWORKER

SPRING 2009

GENERAL CONVENTION ISSUE

The Episcopal

Urban Caucus

Ministries of Reconciliation,
Social Justice and Peace

Founded 1980

- Check our website at:
- episcopalurbancaucus.org

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KEYNOTE ADDS LEVITY TO GRAVE SITUATION

Rosemary Braxton

Leevones Dubose a no non-sense college graduate and grass roots activist spoke on the many projects a local group of women and one man successfully completed in Mobile Alabama with help from Habitat for Humanity, congressional leaders, local politicians and “God-sent blessings”.

Dubose’s success stories of building a senior citizen’s center of more than 400 houses, and a ball park, and successfully negotiating the construction of one Habitat for Humanity house, were sprinkled with her jovial ribbings of seeking a husband among the single men present. Dubose was spurred to action as she saw the community she has loved for more than sixty years disintegrate into a crime-ridden area where her son was shot and killed.

Two speakers were invited to the stage by Dubose to contribute additional successes. One was a woman introduced as

“Sweets,” who began her own business, “Sweet’s Candies,” after she abandoned her beauty salon when new state-licensing requirements forced her out of business. Sweets shared how their grass roots group introduced school jackets and improved staffing at a local elementary school that now ranks in the upper 10% of Alabama schools for academic excellence.

The second speaker invited to the podium was Zack Carter, Organizer of *Alabama Arise*. His organization is seeking \$110 million in stimulus funds to rebuild 1,020 homes in lower Alabama.

Following Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, thousands of residents in the unincorporated coastal towns of Mobile County lost everything when the hurricane submerged the coast in a tidal surge. Today, the majority of these families have received little assistance.

Approximately 400 families are still living in FEMA campers and many more are doubled up in single-family homes. The state’s process for distributing Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money has put these residents at a disadvantage, pitting them against neighboring incorporated cities in their own county, and forcing them to rely on the overburdened Mobile County to pro-

(cont’d p.3 Keynote Speaker)



(Cont. p.3 Keynote Speaker)
Ms. Leevones Dubose, Keynote Speaker

Photo Courtesy of Jan Adams

THE CHURCH WILL REBUILD THE CITY—John Rabb

This article is a continuation of an article begun in the last issue of *The Urban Networker* by the Rt. Rev. John Rabb, President of the Episcopal Urban Caucus.

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Biblical mandates are not limited to urban ministry, but to all we are called to do. The specific challenges of urban min-

istry we currently face demand a serious revival of the Biblical teachings. This does not mean we cease advocacy or working in collaboration with government and other religious bodies and community resources. It means that the church must step out in active faith because it is what Jesus demands.

Urban life is marked by divi-

sion and a wider and wider separation of resources. In Baltimore where I live, our city has sadly been noteworthy due to a much too high murder rate and notoriety from the HBO series *The Wire*. Yet a neighbor of mine while well intended wrote in *The Baltimore Sun* that for most of the city dwellers violence is not (cont’d on page 2)



Panelists in The Order of Myths Workshop who were also part of the documentary

Photo courtesy of Jan Adams

MORE ON THE ORDER OF MYTHS—Dianne Aid, TSSF

Being a “kid at heart”, I was really looking forward to going to Mobile and experiencing at least a part of Mardi Gras. I have not spent a lot of time in the deep South, just bits and pieces of time in rather controlled environments. It was reassuring to me to see the hotel staff made up of Black and White working mutually side by side. I took a journey during my time in Mobile, a personal journey and a disturbing awakening.

On Wednesday afternoon between the ending of the

meeting of the Consultation, and the beginning of the EUC, I visited the Museum of Mobile a block from the hotel. Part of the museum display was dedicated to slavery and slave ships. Two very good friends of mine were on pilgrimage to Ghana in West Africa at the same time. That connection of Roberta and Lilly’s journey and my own was profound. I could not wait to talk with them once we all returned to Washington State.

Wednesday evening, we were treated to a wonderful dinner at the Cathedral and

then, much like Palm Sunday which begins on a celebratory note and ends in the darkness of Holy Week, we saw (the film) *The Order of Myths*. I could not believe it. Our EUC coordinator, Nell Gibson, told me that it brought up a lot of old stuff for her. The reality of the movie impacted my perceptions of everywhere we went in Mobile. I tried to get locals engaged in conversation without much success. I asked the concierge at the hotel where the other parades were. He told me I would (see below)

MORE ON THE ORDER OF MYTHS—AID (cont’d from above)

“My Black friend asked, ‘Would I be welcomed at your ball?’”

see all that I would need to see in front of the hotel. I directly asked him where the Black parades were, he finally showed me a map, but told me it was clear across town. I remember on our site visits, we traveled down the street where the last lynching in America happened. Our guide told us we were on the street, but she was not exactly sure where it happened. I remember thinking, “A lot of other

people know the exact spot.”

Well, I did enjoy Mardi Gras parades in front of our hotel, and with a little help from my friends caught lots of beads, moon pies and other trinkets - all headed for the Shrove Tuesday pancake supper in my home parish. After the parade, I joined a group of friends in the hotel restaurant - four of us White, one Black. Our waiter, spotting me all decked out in beads began talking

about the whole Mardi Gras scene in Mobile. He told us he was a member of one of the mystic societies. He talked and talked about activities, parades and balls. My Black friend (who wishes to remain anonymous) asked the waiter a stunning and direct question “Would I be welcome d at your ball?” The waiter paused, then answered, “You could if you had a ticket; the only way you could (see insert, More OOM)

THE CHURCH WILL REBUILD CITY (cont’d) Rabb

the way we live in relative safety. In one sense he is quite correct. However the reality that any of our sisters and brothers lives with violence diminishes each and every one of us. The attitude of looking out for me or just my family or neighborhood is not faithful. We must see and overcome the barriers that isolate the poor and needy. In this same vein resources are not adequate for those most in need. Education is a prime example.

Resources do not mean solely money but seeing that the best teachers, even best discipline and best opportunity are there for all of God’s people. If we as the church are to be faithful to our Lord and His commands we will work to overcome division and provide adequate resources.

Many Christians think of the Resurrection in terms of life and death. It is limited to, “what happens when we die.” But resurrection is about what

God in Christ has done and is doing in the world in which we live so that the reign of God may continue to break forth in our time. (Here) I want to note N.T. Wright, who states that the mission of the church must match the hope revealed in the New Testament (from Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church, 2008, p.230)

The resurrection is (see insert, Church Will Rebuild)

2009 Resolutions

IN SUPPORT OF LOW AND MIDDLE WEALTH COMMUNITIES

Whereas four years after Hurricane Katrina, 50,000 housing units remain uninhabitable in lower Alabama, **RESOLVED**, That the Episcopal Urban Caucus urges Congress to consider a second economic stimulus bill to direct \$110 million to Hurricane Katrina victims.

ENABLING NEW DEPUTIES TO GENERAL CONVENTION

RESOLVED That the 2009 Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus meeting in Mobile, AL in February 2009, expresses its sorrow and regret that the General Convention will deprive itself of the insight, energy and fresh commitment of its first time deputies by limiting their participation in the work of Convention Legislative Committees, and urges that their orientation to the Convention process be accomplished in such a manner as will facilitate their full participation

in the work of the legislative committees.

TITLE FOR EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS RESOLVED

That the 2009 Assembly gathered in Mobile, AL add the following to, The Episcopal Urban Caucus, "Ministries of Reconciliation, Social Justice and Peace."

SUPPORT OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE RESOLUTIONS

RESOLVED That the 2009

Assembly of the Episcopal Urban Caucus endorse the following resolutions from ENEJ: Economic Justice for and with

Lower Income people. Episcopal Network for Economic Justice enabling and funding the Network Cancellation of Debt of Heavily Indebted Impoverished Countries

Resolutions referred to from the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice may be accessed through an ENEJ Link at our website home page:

www.episcopalurbancaucus.org

KEYNOTE SPEAKER Cont. from Page 1—Braxton

vide basic needs. Moreover the state's failure to conduct a comprehensive unmet needs assessment means these unincorporated communities cannot rely on the benefit of state surveys and concrete numbers to substantiate their claims. The State's failure to provide for these citizens in the first round of CDBG fund disbursements contradicts the federal program's intent to assist low-to moderate-income people, and violates Alabama's own

stated objective to address unmet needs. Additionally low wealth and middle income families are victims of newly enacted waterfront zoning requirements. In some cases their land has been in families since Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States. Other property has recently been acquired.

Low wealth and middle income families also face new zoning requirements following Katrina that negatively impact

their ability to rebuild. The common threat they face is multi-million dollar companies turning their homesteads into luxury condominiums or river front casinos. The unconscionable actions of unscrupulous contractors have assisted in a double knockout punch to create physical and mental illness to those stouthearted citizens who have forged ahead.

"Low wealth and middle income families face new zoning requirements following Katrina"

PURPOSE OF THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

The purpose of the Episcopal Urban Caucus is to be an instrument of the Gospel exercising radical discipleship in Church and Society, and to hold the feet of the Episcopal Church to the fire of social justice. The EUC is committed to advocacy, strategy and action that influence the Episcopal Church's priorities and decisions regarding anti-racism, peace, war, poverty, hunger and other issues that adversely

effect the inclusion of any persons in the life of the Church. The Caucus embraces and supports youth and young adults in all its ministries and activities. It welcomes participation with, and support from the Episcopal Network for Economic Justice, Jubilee Ministry, the Anti-Racism Program, The Consultation, the Peace Policy Network and other groups and networks that share its vision.

The EUC serves as a network bringing into relationship individuals and organizations that promote the progressive agenda of the Church through an annual Assembly with focused workshops, dynamic speakers and preachers, site visits to exemplary models of urban ministry and learning tracks that effect positive change. The EUC offers in an issues focused newsletter and a website for purposes of (see reverse side of insert)



Bishop Philip Duncan welcoming the EUC to the Central Gulf Coast Diocese

Photo courtesy of Jan Adams

THE EPISCOPAL URBAN CAUCUS

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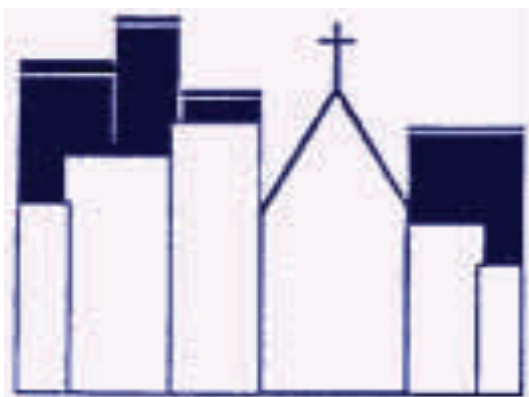
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**The 2010 Assembly:
February 24–27, Chicago, IL**

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Congressman Davis Speaks to Pelosi

"As you consider a second stimulus bill, please allow me to direct your attention to the recent testimony...on behalf of Governor Bob Riley.... The small towns dotting Alabama's coastline continue their struggle to rebuild. Over 3,400 occupied housing units suffered major or severe damage. In Mobile County, approximately, 1,020 families qualify for assistance. However it is estimated that with existing funds, the county will be able to assist less than 300 households." Among the 1,020 families who qualified for federal rebuilding assistance two years ago, the average income is \$19,202 a year. Thirty-one percent are elderly, 30% care for disabled family members, 58% have minor children "often in single parent (or grandparent) households.

Also among these 1,020 families 120 conventional or manufactured homes are either completely gone or totally uninhabitable—500 homes continue to need extensive rehabilitation. This need cannot be met with existing funds in the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). There are many others besides these 1,020 families, without assistance. "Hundreds applied after the one week deadline (but) but due to limited funding, Mobile County has been unable to assist (them)."

Note:
The reason the EUC Assembly met in Mobile, Alabama this year was to stand in solidarity with people who are still suffering from the effects of Hurricane Katrina. In a November

2008 publication called , *Alabama Arise*, Congressman, Arthur Davis cited statistics on the needs of hurricane victims in an article directed to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The quote above comes from that article. (Note: Nell B. Gibson)

In a March 2009 article in *Alabama Arise*, Paul Nelson, President of the South Bay Communities Alliance in Coden, Alabama said, "The Gulf Coast Civic Works Act would provide some 100,000 jobs that could rebuild storm damaged homes and infrastructure, restore the environment and the barrier Dauphin Island, thus putting fishermen back to work. Sadly as we continue our struggle to rebuild (the situation) has also become one of life and death."
