

THE ASCENT™

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Jacob's Ladder™

Community Development Corporation

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Come Up Higher...



Dear Friends of Urban Faith-Based Ministry:

According to tradition, on Christmas night in 1223 C.E., St. Francis of Assisi celebrated Mass, in memory of the birth of Jesus and His poverty, in front of a re-enactment of the first Holy Nativity - "a living crib." As I contemplated both of these historical events, certain scripture verses flooded my mind... "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45 NIV); "He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant" (Phil. 2:7 NIV); and "So I beg you, brothers and sisters, because of the great mercy God has shown us, offer your lives as a *living sacrifice to Him*" (Romans 12:1 ERV).

The parallels between the natures of the 13th century figure, St. Francis of Assisi and the new Pope Francis of the Catholic Church are apparent. Drawing inspiration from the Saint whose name he took, when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, the new Pope Francis was known to sneak out at night to visit and break bread with the poor and homeless. Obviously this became much more difficult to do when he was selected Pope. Already named by Time Magazine as "Person of the Year," Pope Francis, of necessity, is often forced to travel much of the time separated from the people by bullet-proof glass. And yet, this new Pope will not be denied the call on his life for making connection.

Just recently, Pope Francis appointed a trusted Archbishop to the little-known papal office known as the "Almoner," a centuries-old position of ministry designated to give alms to the poor. The newly-appointed Almoner, Konrad Krajewski, related their initial conversation: "The Holy Father told

me at the beginning: *You can sell your desk. You don't need it. You need to get out of the Vatican. Don't wait for people to come ringing. You need to go out and look for the poor...Be with people and share their lives, even for fifteen, thirty minutes, an hour.*" So every day Krajewski receives from the Vatican a stack of letters from needy individuals with personal instructions inscribed by the Holy Father on each envelope, such as: "You know what to do" or "Go find them...Go talk with them."

What a beautiful picture of one of the most powerful leaders in the world! It is the use of power, not to rule, but to serve as a "living" example of sacrifice and emptying of oneself in ministry to the masses. Somehow we all know what to do...the Spirit of Christ has implanted within us the mandate to sell our own desk, get out of our own little "vatican," to open our eyes and ears and go out and look for the needy. As Executive Director of Jacob's Ladder Community Development Corporation, I would like to personally and sincerely thank all of those associated with this ministry for being "almoners" for God. With that concept in hand, each of our volunteers, friends and donors have invested a significant part of their lives building a campus dedicated to learning - working as carpenters, teachers, planners and counselors in one of the most challenged areas of our city. Together they have made it possible for Jacob's Ladder to be a "Community Almoner."

If asked, "Does the Pope still have his old habit of slipping out at night to break bread with the poor?" Archbishop Krajewski would probably shrug and then politely respond: "Next question?" I do believe, however, that this same Spirit of Christ which dwelled in St. Francis of Assisi and the newly-elected Pope Francis, has clearly slipped into Memphis in countless ways through the lives of dedicated "almoners," who regularly practice their faith working and giving to the ministry of Jacob's Ladder. Every day in the Belt Line we are reminded that God calls us to "Come Up Higher" by seeking the form and nature of a servant. The Call of God has gone out...the Call never changes, nor does the steadfast love and mercy of God shown toward us all in the giving of His Son, Jesus. May peace and joy be yours this Christmastide!

Rev. William D. Marler, Exec. Director

(Selected portions above are taken from the Commercial Appeal, Nov. 29, 2013 in an article by Nicole Winfield.)

To learn more about Jacob's Ladder Community Development Corporation, a 501(c)3 charity organization, go to our website jacobsladdercdc.org. We rely heavily on prayers, volunteers, and outside financial support. Please prayerfully consider becoming a regular contributor to this worthy inner-city ministry. All donations are tax deductible.

Belt Line Community Resource Center Campus Hub 427 Boston Street

Construction Stages and First Use of New Building



Setting Roof Trusses in early October, 2013

The Jacob's Ladder Educational Campus construction gets underway as a crane furnished by Barnhart Crain & Rigging sets roof trusses in place under the direction of carpenters from The Cowles Company, General Contractor for the new Belt Line Community Resource Center.

Extending the Campus with More Building & Community Organizing



Student Day Clean-Up September 25, 2013

CBU students, the Belt Line Civic Association and Belt Line community children and parents join hands to clean-up Boston Avenue, pathway to local Hanley elementary school.

A Thanksgiving Celebration "Belt Line Style" September 23, 2013

A neighborhood-wide Thanksgiving Celebration for the new facility at 427 Boston Street was held on Saturday, November 23, 2013. Jacob's Ladder Community Dev. Corp as well as sponsors from Lord of Life and New Tribe Lutheran Churches, Buntyn Presbyterian, Williams Temple COGIC, Mt. Pleasant Baptist & Emmanuel United Methodist Church as well as 150 Belt Line neighbors and congregants gathered in the new Belt Line Resource Center to break bread together after meeting at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church for music, praise and worship.



First - We praise God and Thank Him for His Great Bounty



Then - We Eat!!

Jacob's Ladder carpentry volunteers renovate newly-acquired properties at 410 and 403 Boston on the north edge of the new campus. When completed, these newly refurbished residences will house staff and local working families.



Pictured above from left to right are: Rev. Ken Burnette, Wendell McAlexander and Dick Barnhart, retired owner of Barnhart Crane.