

THE STORY OF GREENLEAF'S REBUILDING BROKEN PLACES

LIVING KWANZAA

KWANZAA IS...

an African American and Pan-African holiday that celebrates history, values, family, community and culture. The ideas and concepts of Kwanzaa are expressed in the Swahili language, one of the most widely spoken languages in Africa. The seven principles which form its core were drawn from communitarian values found throughout the African continent. These principles are: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

Source: National Museum of African American History and Culture

In 1997, the members of Greenleaf Christian Church broadened their vision and invested \$550,000 to purchase an abandoned 26,000 square foot grocery store and restaurant located on 5.5 acres of land in the North End community of Goldsboro. Greenleaf's community revitalization and restoration strategic plan, Project "FAITHFORCE" (Faithfully Asserting Initiatives to Help Families Organize Resources for Community Empowerment), became the impetus for the formation of Rebuilding Broken Places Community Development Corporation (RBPCDC), a "faith-based" non-profit organization.

Source: www.rbpcdc.org

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DAY ONE: UMOJA

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Deacon John Barnes is the CEO of Rebuilding Broken Places (RBPCDC). In an interview, he shared there was a meeting held with church leaders in the late 90s. They had been planning to expand the classrooms and church space to accommodate more internal ministry. Someone suggested they consider outreach from the abandoned building across the street. While many were focused on the previously discussed expansion, the group of leaders were open to inquiry and investigation around the possibility of growing outside the walls of the church.

The priorities of the people at the beginning of that meeting were not uniform, yet the group moved forward in unity with imagination and faith. Had there been no unity, there would be no community development corporation born out of Greenleaf Christian Church. The impact on thousands of lives started with unity (Umoja).

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Walking the grounds of RBP's garden this fall, I could see where collard greens, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, peas, and cabbage had grown. Their "Seed to Plate" initiative teaches children to grow food and learn about nutrition. In this garden, community members can volunteer gardening time to have a small exclusive area for growing their own food alongside food that is free to the community.

After meaningful time on the grounds, Chef Artis from Daily Bread Restaurant shared sweet potatoes and cabbage from the garden that she uses. There are many ways to help insulate ourselves and culture from the oppression of a racist society. Growing food is surely one of them. Kujichagulia--Self-Determination.

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DAY THREE: UJIMA

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The seven principles of Kwanzaa are called the Nguzu Saba. It is fair to say, children in the community and children to come were thought of in the development and celebration of Kwanzaa principles. Though there are few children in the Sunday worship community of Greenleaf Christian Church, it did not mean children were not a mission priority for the church. Catch that. Ujima--collective work and responsibility.

Touring the RBP Childcare Center was pure joy. It became crystal clear lasting memories and immeasurable seed for this community were being planted.



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Adjacent to the abandoned store where Greenleaf CC established their community center, there was an old restaurant space they also purchased and decided to bring up to code. In establishing early plans for that space, they were approached by many local restaurant owners who wanted to buy the space from them, but their plans for the restaurant were more communal.

A partnership with Chef Artis and her spouse Karl provided space for their catering business, Daily Bread, to thrive while maintaining Rebuilding Broken Places' ownership and use of the community kitchen as needed. Chef's southern hospitality is superb! Ujamaa--Cooperative Economics.

During the pandemic, this kitchen served over 20,000 meals to meet the needs of children struggling the most from school closures.



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DAY FIVE: NIA

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Greenleaf Christian Church had a past partnership with the National Benevolent Association to provide affordable housing. Their Rebuilding Broken Places Community Development Corp. now provides 41 affordable apartments to seniors at Grace Village and has supported homeownership for 16 families on their land called Faith Estates.

The members of Greenleaf Christian Church did the necessary prayer, discernment, investing with Disciples Church Extension Fund, and faithful vision casting to both identify and live into their purpose. Nia means purpose.



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DAY SIX: KUUMBA

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At RBPCDC, Imani Hall is a room that can host up to 300 friends for celebrations, performances, outreach. Community members can rent the space if they get an early space. Mr. Barnes shared, every weekend for multiple months were already booked. This is a gem for the church and neighborhood.

Near the multi-purpose event space is a corridor lined with the pictures of “movers and shakers” from North Carolina who have made fruitful contributions to their community over the years. This display of appreciation is for children and guest to see the good of many who come together to create good. Kuumba (Creativity).



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Faith can move systemic mountains from peoples lives. Help is what Jesus came to bring. Help is what Jesus taught the disciples to do. Help is something none of us can live or die well without. The faith of Greenleaf Christian Church and leadership of CEO John Barnes have changed the landscape of Goldsboro, North Carolina and of Christian ministry. Faith established Rebuilding Broken Places, a 501c3 that helps people live. This is a worthy witness from one of our National Convocation churches for the Christian Church to celebrate and glean from in this time.



HAPPY KWANZAA AND A POWERFUL NEW YEAR!



Some learning and teaching must be done up close for lasting formation to take root. We hope you have enjoyed this story of Kwanzaa as much as we enjoyed sharing it. Be inspired. Be faithful.

With grace,
Rev. Monique Crain Spells

For more information about Christian Education and Faith Formation resources, please email mcrainspells@dhm.disciples.org or visit us on our website:

www.discipleshomemissions.org



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