Faith-based Community Development:

An Exciting Call to Servanthood for Christians in Social Work

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NACSW Audio Conference

- **When:** September 27, 2004

  1 pm- 3 pm (Eastern Daylight Savings Time)
- **Primary Audience:** Social workers and related professionals, students
- **Primary Content Level:** Basic and Intermediate
- **Speaker:** Marty Kooistra

- **Description:**

  What is faith-based community development? This audio conference workshop will explore key concepts of community development and what makes communities healthy and whole.

  In addition, this audio conference will look at effective models of faith-based community development and evaluate a variety of indicators of success. Finally, it will challenge participants to find ways to "build community" in their respective locales.

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Learning Objectives

As a result of participating in this audio conference, participants will be able to:

✓ Define key concepts in community development and articulate distinctive faith-based practices;

✓ Evaluate possible indicators of success for faith-based community development;

✓ Locate resources to engage in faith-based community development.

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Presentation Agenda

- Welcome, introductions and special instructions —Rick Chamiec-Case
- Topic 1 : Review definitions and concepts of community and community development. --Presenter
- Topic 1 : Questions and Discussion —Moderated by Rick Chamiec-Case
- Topic 2: Look at models of faith-based community development and explore indicators of success. --Presenter
- Topic 2: Questions and Discussion —Moderated by Rick Chamiec-Case
- Topic 3: Ways for us as Social Workers to get involved and additional resources. --Presenter
- Topic 3: Questions and Discussion —Moderated by Rick Chamiec-Case
- Concluding remarks and final instructions —Rick Chamiec-Case

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Introductory Remarks

As work progressed on assembling this presentation the following became evident:

- While there is a great deal of material available on the broad topic of community development, there appears to be far less that points to prescribed solutions with impact data that can be universally applied.

- Materials specifically focusing on faith-based "community development" are emerging. Much more is said about faith-based engagement in "community organizing".

- Being specific about the broad topic of "community" is challenging.

The material presented draws on a number of print and web-based resources. The title and author are provided on the screen on which the quoted material is presented. A complete bibliography can be requested from mkbuilds@bellsouth.net.

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Topic 1 Concepts and Definitions

" Folks, umm, I know we are all anxious to get going on the actually building aspect of this project…but, uh, it will be a lot safer, enjoyable and we'll do a better job, more quickly if we erect that scaffolding first. Trust me."

A Habitat for Humanity Site Supervisor

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What is Community?

- Biblical perspectives

- Definitions

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What is Community: Biblical Perspectives

The Old Testament is full of examples of how, justice, love and caring for those experiencing need points us toward "community". From Leviticus to the prophets we find prescriptions for how we are to live and love. In the New Testament the walk of Jesus Christ provided clear examples of welcoming and inclusiveness.

"…there he brought the hungry to live, and they founded a city where they could settle. They sowed fields and planted vineyards that yielded a fruitful harvest; he blessed them and their numbers greatly increased, and he did not let their herds diminish."

Psalm 107: 34-38 NIV

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

Acts 2: 44-46 NIV

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What is Community?

"A community exists when a group of people form a social unit based on common location, interest, identification, or some combination of these characteristics.

Three major types of communities:
1. those with geographic boundaries that are distinguished by locality or place, such as metropolitan, municipal, and neighborhood communities;
2. those created and maintained through identification and interest, such as communities based on ethnicity, culture, race, religion, lifestyle, sexual orientation, social class, occupation, ability/disability, age; and
3. those distinguished by an overlap of geographical location with identification and/ or interest communities."

Taken from *The Community and the Social Worker* by Phillip Fellin, page 1, Thomson

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Another Way to Put It…

"Community is a term that is used very specifically on the one hand and very casually on the other. Community evolves around three nexuses:

- the community of relationships;
- the community of interests;
- the community of place."

Taken from *Smart Communities* by Suzanne Morse, page 2, Wiley

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What Are Attributes of Good Community?

"I think a healthy community is one where people are not just out for themselves, and they are not just working on their individual pursuits, but where they understand their relationship and responsibility to other people."

--Wilma Mankiller

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What Are Some Desirable Attributes of Community?

In his book, *Toward a Just and Caring Society*, page. 31, Baker, David Gushee makes these points regarding community:

- "Persons are created for community, the Scriptures understand the good life as sharing in the essential aspects of social life. Therefore justice includes restoration to community. Justice includes helping people return to the kind of life in community which God intends for them. The concern is for the whole person in community and what it takes to maintain persons in that relationship.
- Community membership means the ability to share fully, within one's capacity and potential, in each essential aspect of community. It includes participation in decision-making, social life, economic production, education, culture, and religion. Also essential are physical life itself and the material resources necessary for a decent life."

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Definitions of Community Development

- "Community development definitions tend to share the common elements of a process of bringing people together to achieve a common goal, usually related to changing the quality of life. Some definitions involve the process of building networks and improving the capacity of individuals and organizations. Other definitions focus more on improvements within the community without necessarily working on relationship building."

  Taken from *Community Building: What Makes It Work*, page, 57, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

- "Community development is asset building. It centers around housing and community economic development but also includes developmental efforts, such as job training, to prepare residents for more productive lives."

  Taken from HUD Report: *Faith-Based Organizations In Community Development*

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What is Community Building?

"Community building generally refers to building the social networks within the community, and developing group and individual problem-solving and leadership skills. Our definition of community building is: Any identifiable set of activities pursued by a community in order to increase community social capacity.

Examples of definitions of community building

- Community building is the practice of building connections among residents, and establishing positive patterns of individual and community behavior based on mutual responsibility and ownership. (Gamder in Leiterman, 1993, p.6)
- Fundamentally, community building concerns strengthening the capacity of neighborhood residents, associations, and organizations to work, individually and collectively to foster and sustain positive neighborhood change. (Kubisch et. al., 1995)"

  Taken from *Community Building: What Makes It Work*, page 60, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

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What is Community Organizing?

"Community organizing refers to the process of bringing community members together and providing them with the tools to help themselves. Community organizing is a strategy for building communities and for community development."

Taken from *Community Building: What Makes It Work*, page 60, Amherst H. Wilder Foundation

Perhaps best known in the community organizing field is the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF).

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More…Just a Small Sampling of Definitions of Community Development on the Internet

- collaborative, collective action taken by local people to enhance the long-term social, economic, and environmental conditions of their community. The primary goal of community development is to create a better overall quality of life for everyone in the community. preventionpartners.samhsa.gov/resources_glossary_p2.asp
- enhancing the social networks, physical safety, economic vitality of communities and neighborhoods and to improve communication between residents and the institutions that serve them. www.foundationconsortium.org/site/commapp/community/gl_comm.htm
- deliberate efforts to foster sociocultural change on the human community level, change of a kind seen as valuable or progressive, usually including an improved quality of life through increases in resources, skills, facilities, technology, social competence, and social power. fwie.fw.vt.edu/rhgiles/appendices/glossc.htm
- is an incremental process through which individuals, families and communities gain the power, insight and resources to make decisions and take action regarding their well-being. www.sdh.sk.ca/ships/PHReports/senreport/Main/Glossary.htm
- citizen-led efforts to define problems, develop solutions, and attract the resources necessary to implement programs or activities that address the identified problems. www.communitydevelopmentworks.org/glossary.htm

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Confusing…All This "Community…

Community development might be seen as overall activities and interventions:

- that enhance the "relationships" of members;
- which respect and leverage the "interests" represented;
- that transform the "place" through housing, economic and workforce development;
- that have the goal of improving quality of life.

Community organizing and community building can be viewed as aspects of, or methods to do, community development.

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Let's Conclude Topic 1 with Just a Few More Concepts That Will Help Us Going Forward.

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What is Community Capacity?

"Refers to characteristics of communities that affect their ability to identify, mobilize, and act to resolve community issues and concerns. Key dimensions include:
- participation and leadership
- access to and wise use of resources
- social and interorganizational networks
- sense of community
- a community history of collective action
- community power
- shared core values
- capacity to engage in critical reflection"

Taken from *The Foundations of Social Work Practice* page 228, Mattaini, Lowery and Meyer NASW

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What is Community Competence?

"The ability of any kind of community to problem solve effectively and thus to master social and environmental challenges (Eng, Salmon, & Mullin, 1992).

(Cottrell, 1977) Suggested that the process of enhancing community competence typically involves the following:
- activities that strengthen investment and commitment.
- clarification of issues and interests in the community.
- development of the ability of community members to articulate views, attitudes, needs, and intentions.
- enhancement of communication skills.
- the ability to negotiate differences and manage conflict.
- membership participation."

Taken from *The Foundations of Social Work Practice* page 228, Mattaini, Lowery and Meyer NASW

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Assets and Deficits
What About Them?

- **Strength/Asset-based perspective:**
  Identifying the capacities and assets that a community possesses and building on those strengths. A concept known as Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) has been developed by Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight.

- **Need/Deficit-based perspective:**
  Looking at a community that focuses on all that is lacking or wrong and developing solutions and programs to change these deficiencies.

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Make it Relevant
Reflection Questions

1. How often do you confront or use the term "community" in your practice? What percentage of your work is spent trying to transform community?

2. What specifically can you say about the capacity and competence of the community you live in?

3. Name specific examples of when you were involved in assessing community assets? Needs? Did you prefer either focus? Why or why not?

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Topic Two
Faith-based?

- What is "faith-based community development"?

- How would I know faith-based community development when I see it?

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First…a Return to Justice and Community

Ron Sider in his book *Just Generosity* Baker page 75, derives from the Bible "three norms pertaining to the distribution of resources to meet basic needs:

1. Normally, all people who can work should have access to the productive resources so that, if they act responsibly, they can produce or purchase an abundant sufficiency of all that is needed to enjoy a dignified, healthy life in community.

2. The difference in wealth between the rich and the poor dare not become so great that great inequalities of wealth and therefore power lead to oppression.

3. Those that cannot care for themselves should receive from their community a liberal sufficiency of the necessities of life provided in ways that preserve dignity, encourage responsibility, and strengthen the family."

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From the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

Faith-Based Organizations In Community Development

Prepared for U. S. Department of Housing and Community Development Office of Policy Development and Research

Prepared By: The Urban Institute Avis C. Vidal August 2001

- "Faith-based organizations are of three types: (1) congregations; (2) national networks, which include national denominations, their social service arms (for example, Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services), and networks of related organizations (such as YMCA and YWCA); and (3) freestanding religious organizations, which are incorporated separately from congregations and national networks.
- More than half of all congregations and many other faith-based organizations provide some form of human services. Congregational participation in providing human services is greater among worship communities that are larger (and hence have more resources), are located in low-income neighborhoods, are theologically liberal, and are African American. Supportive pastoral leadership is central.

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A key finding of the HUD report is that relatively few faith-based organizations participate in community development activities. The most common participants are faith-based community development corporations (CDCs), some national denominations and their affiliates, and Habitat for Humanity.

Faith-based participation in community development is limited for several reasons:

- Congregations have two preferred approaches to service: they donate small amounts of cash or in-kind goods to other service delivery groups, or they provide small groups of volunteers to conduct relatively well-defined, periodic tasks. By contrast, community development activities require regular and sustained involvement in a range of complex processes and tasks.

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- Community development is best done by independently incorporated organizations. Establishing and fostering the growth of such affiliated organizations are the least common mode of congregational engagement in services, and poses numerous challenges.
- Congregational staff and volunteers typically lack the skills, knowledge, and time required to successfully sponsor community development projects.
- Most congregations have not applied for government grants or undertaken the legal and financial responsibilities required to sponsor community development projects, and many lack the management capacity to do so.
- No existing research compares how the outcomes of community development efforts sponsored by faith-based organizations with those of secular organizations. Some information is available about the challenges facing organizations that have tried to enter community development, but little is known about the impediments faced by the minority of faith-based organizations interested in obtaining government funds to sponsor community development. These are among the questions requiring new research.

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The implications of the report's findings include the following:

- The community development field needs significant technical assistance to ensure that faith-based organizations in community development spend government funds responsibly, given the small size and inexperience of many such organizations. This is especially the case for new entrants to the field.

- Faith-based organizations interested in community development may increase their effectiveness by partnering with existing CDCs and other experienced nonprofit organizations (even though such collaborations present known challenges) rather than by sponsoring projects independently. These collaborations might be facilitated by Federal technical assistance. Other forms of participation, such as securing new vehicles for social investing, should be explored.

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- Only a fraction of the organizations studied currently have the resources to successfully engage in community development activities. However, when they do have such resources, faith-based organizations are uniquely positioned to have a significant impact beyond simply sponsoring community development projects. Congregations can increase public support for affordable housing and other community development initiatives in their communities by engaging in public dialogue and joining coalitions that support social justice.

It is important to note, however, while this report suggests possible roles that faith-based organizations can play in community development, it is built on limited research and programmatic experience. There is still a great deal about this topic that is unknown or uncertain; much more research and exploration is needed to built the base of useful knowledge."

http://www.huduser.org/Publications/PDF/faithbased.pdf

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What is Faith-based Community Development? Seven Proposed Qualities

- Is connected to/performed by the faith community. Takes risks from a position of faith.
- Is grounded in social justice with a desire to improve the quality of life in the community.
- Has a holistic focus and is development rather than charity oriented.
- Holds participation of/by the local community paramount.
- Respects and builds on the gifts and strengths of the community.
- Models a "spirit of community" by collaborating with others. Avoids duplication and promotes stewardship.
- Is built on patience and perseverance and a long-term commitment…not instant gratification.

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Models and Resources

- John Perkins
  www.ccda.org

- Christian Community Development Association
  www.ccda.org

- Habitat for Humanity
  www.habitat.org

- Nehemiah Plan Homes
  www.cpn.org/parties/upashes.html

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How Do We Define Success?

"If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."
  --Lilla Watson

Determining what to assess can be challenging. Looking at change over time requires the patience to do longitudinal studies. The "bottom line" is social and economic.

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Defining Success Continued…

- Physical changes in buildings, parks, lots, streets and infrastructure.
- Increase in property taxes being generated.
- Reduction in nuisance abatement, crime events.
- Reduced homelessness, health problems.
- Local leadership/ownership in decision making.
- Increased linkages and social networks.

For faith-based entities:
- Increased engagement of members through gifts of time, talent and tithe.
- Other qualitative measures.

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Local Engagement?

"Contemporary Issues in Community Development
Are Community Based Organizations (CBOs) Truly Community Based?
Articles in the news media and community development public relations materials frequently suggest that community development groups are grassroots, indigenous organizations that express the aspirations of low-income residents of the inner city. Although small groups of local activists started or sponsored many community development organizations, as a rule CBOs are neither democratic or indigenous.
The people who manage CBOs and their projects differ from most of their constituents in education, occupational level, and not infrequently, neighborhood of residence.

Taken from *Issues in Nonprofit Community Development: Industry Note*, page 10 by Alexander von Hoffman Kennedy School of Government

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More on Community Organizing

Richard L. Wood on page 6 of his book entitled *Faith in Action,* Chicago, shares:
"The term 'community organizing' typically describes work inspired by the dean of community organizers in the United States, Saul Alinsky.
Although faith-based organizing remains rather unknown in academic circles, the first nationwide study of the field shows it to be second in size only to the labor movement among drives for social justice among low-income Americans today. With 133 local or metropolitan-area federations linking some 3,500 congregations plus some 500 public schools, labor union locals, and other institutions, faith-based organizing can plausibly claim to touch the lives of some two million members of these institutions in all major urban areas and many secondary cities around the United States."

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Have We Lost It?

"Although Americans are by and large affluent beyond the dreams of the rest of the world, many of us have lost something invaluable: belonging to a community. The presence of community is a powerful reminder that authentic wealth does not consist in the size of one's bank account, but in the depth and diversity of the relationships within the community: the mechanic who won't overcharge you, the neighbor you can trust your kids with, and the landscape and other creatures so familiar that you know you are home."
  --Cecile Andrews
  Taken from *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life* page 207 Michael Schut Earth Ministry

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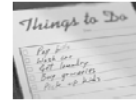## Make it Relevant
Reflection Questions

1. What are your specific reactions to the report from the Department of Housing and Urban Development?
2. Have you ever been involved in a community organizing effort? What did you learn?
3. How would you overcome some of the obstacles identified in the HUD study?
4. What indicators of success do you suggest be used for faith-based community development?

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Topic Three
Getting Involved

Start with an early win.

Choose an activity that will give you a sense from the beginning that you are making a difference!

Become educated by attending NACSW, CCDA conferences, reading and surfing. Then educate others in your circle of influence.

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Ways to Get Involved
(Not Exhaustive)

- Take a stand on social justice issues and join a movement.
- Get to know your community, its strengths and challenges.
- Find your local CDC, HFH affiliate or IAF organization and pay a visit.
- Visit the CCDA website and attend their conference.
- Become an advocate…AND advocate!
- Challenge your place of worship to go deeper and get engaged.
- Get on the board or committee of a local faith-based organization.
- Start a research initiative that helps clarify areas of success.
- Develop partnerships between your school and/or agency and local community development initiatives.
- If you are in micro practice help your clients engage in transforming their environment and get involved in community work. Encourage clients to become advocates.
- Sponsor presentations on this topic in your neighborhood, congregation or at work.
- Engage in policy reform and/or educate policy makers.
- Keep an eye on your NACSW…it is going to challenge you.

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Getting Down to Business

Amy L. Sherman in the book *Christianity and Social Work* by Beryl Hugen and T. Laine Scales, pg. 291 NASCW writes:

"People need to be shown that it really is possible for them to make a difference in their communities: it is possible, because real Christians in real places are running real programs with real results! **Social workers armed with knowledge about a diverse range of ministry models** will be well-positioned to work with pastors and lay people who have the desire to help, but lack "how-to" skills."

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A Wee Bit More on Relationships
Interestingly…

The well known Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville observed the following during his visit to America in 1831:

"In the United States, political associations are only one small part of the immense number of the different types of associations found there. Americans of all ages, in all stations of life, and all types of dispositions are forever forming associations.

Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another.

Among laws controlling human societies there is one more precise and clearer, it seems to me, than all the others. If men are to remain civilized or to become civilized, the art of association must develop and improve among them at the same speed as equality of condition spreads."

Taken from *Democracy in America* page 513 by J.P. Mayer HarperCollins

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Abundance and Community

"The abundance to which Jesus pointed was explicitly not the abundance of possessions. It was the abundance of the restored relationship, the God-relationship. It was the freedom to enjoy the community—the giving-and-receiving relationship with one another for which we were created."

--William Gibson

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What is Civil Society?

"One of the distinguishing marks of a democratic society is its conception of the role of citizenship and voluntarism in creating a civil society. 'As a first approximation, civil society may be defined as all those social interests not encompassed by the state or the economy' (Dryze, 1996). Civil societies are those 'free societies where government, commerce and civic institutions are balanced, citizens participate their communities, and the culture promotes civility' (Merida & Vobejda, 1996)."

Taken from *The Community and the Social Worker* by Phillip Fellin, page 1, Thomson

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More Civil Society

"Jean Bethke Elshtain has defined civil society as the many forms of community and association that dot the landscape of a democratic culture, from families to churches to neighborhood groups to self-help movements to volunteer assistance to the needy.

Gertrude Himmelfarb sees civil society as consisting of those mediating institutions (families, friends, neighbors, communities, churches, civic organizations, and informal institutions) that intervened between the individual and the state and that served as a corrective both to excessive individualism and to an overweening state.

Alan Wolfe has defined civil society as "those forms of communal and associational life which are organized neither by the self-interest of the market nor by the coercive potential of the state."

Taken from *Toward a Just and Caring Society*, pg. 31, by David Gushee Baker

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What About "Social Capital"?

Robert D. Putnam has awakened our attention to relationships in his book *Bowling Alone* Simon and Schuster

From page 19:

"The term "social capital" itself turns out to have been independently invented at least six times over the twentieth century, each time to call attention to the ways in which our lives are made more productive by social ties.

Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called "civic virtue". The difference is that "social capital calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations."

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"Beloved Community"

"The Beloved Community" is a term that was first coined in early days of 20th century by the philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce, who founded the Fellowship of Reconciliation. However, it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, who popularized the term and invested it with a deeper meaning which has captured the imagination of people of good will all over the world.

For Dr. King, The Beloved Community was not a lofty utopian goal to be confused with the rapturous image of a Peaceable Kingdom, in which lions and lambs coexist in idyllic harmony.

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood."

From http://thekingcenter.com/prog/bc

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Community
Concluding Remarks

- Can we as social workers support change in the lives of individuals and families without engaging in community work?
- Can we as social workers get involved in transforming communities without understanding the lives of individuals and families?
- How will you and I walk our social worker talk?

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Additional Resources

- There is a wealth of information to read or review. The best place to start is the website of the Christian Community Development Association.

- A comprehensive list of books, films, studies and websites is being created and will be available from NACSW in early 2005.

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"Unnoticed"

Sliding through the haze
of humankind,
none turns to distinguish.

Recognition reserved,
opportunity vanquished,
connection departed.

Seems there should at
least be some disturbance of the norm,
breaking the waves of disregard.

They don't acquiesce
At least not for such a quiet,
unsuspecting presence.

Patterns of complacency are determined.

Must there always be a bellow
or flaming litany?
Why perceive the golden facade
or sculpture exceptional?

What is wrong with
the common?
Why can't we receive
the ordinary?

Where is our awareness?

Or worse, the desperate
with wavering hidden heart,
wishing for one
to let loose their trance.

Yea, there is excessively central,
too much demanding.
Too much of me!

So trod along and keep your gaze
absorbed away.
Preserve your comfortable gait…
the course of your life.

Move along, only…attend!
For one day you will go… unnoticed.

Marty Kooistra 9-24-04

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"Sweetness"

Once perched by quenching stream,
timber stood, tall erect,
adorned by dancing buds
whose graceful role
color and bear aroma sweet.

Vista perfect, surreal,
proud hopeful trees of
stature and life so robust.
Until the cutting storm comes by and
life so grand is level hewn.

Milled, parched, then
segmented into pieces.
That once whole and alive,
becomes a pile, a mere bunk of lumber
bound isolate from root.

Now on a day not given to remark,
those separate begin anew to commune
in the caring craftsman's hands.
Sawn, shaped their beauty flows
and scent so elegant the senses stirred.

For a pilgrimage now fulfilled
comprise floor and ceiling,
resonating with lyric and healing word.
Spirits harmony flow with sweetness
from a gallant steeple ring.

The journeyman's spikes have been driven
home.

Marty Kooistra
4-11-04

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