



East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO) Presents

**Affordable Housing Week, May 7-16, 2010**

*“Affordable Housing: Healthy Families, Sustainable Communities”*

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# **Housing Sabbath 2010 Resources**

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### Housing Sabbath 2010

May 16, 2010

*“Therefore love the stranger,  
For you were once strangers in the land of slavery.”  
Deuteronomy 10:19*

*“Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”  
Matthew 25:34-35*

As people of faith guided by our religious traditions which affirm the dignity and equality for all peoples, the sanctity of work, and the integrity of the family, we are called to care for the most vulnerable residents of society.

Immigration, low wage jobs and housing insecurity are the unholy trinity of millions of our sisters and brothers. The three are deeply connected, perhaps inseparable. If one is an immigrant, there is a high probability that person works one, two, or three low wage jobs; and an even higher probability that the person knows housing insecurity.

Housing Sabbath is rooted in the values that we share across boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, and gender or income levels. They are the common values of shelter for all persons, respect for our neighbors, appreciation for having a home, a place to belong, support and celebration of our diversity, fairness and our commitment to justice.

We are inviting you to participate in our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Housing Sabbath on the weekend of May 16, 2010 by becoming a Speaker at one of the participating congregations, or serving as a visitor, accompanying a Speaker. The theme for Affordable Housing Week 2010 is “Affordable Housing: Healthy Families, Sustainable Communities.”

East Bay Housing Organizations (EBHO), the Interfaith Committee for Workers Justice (ICWJ) and Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI) are working together to develop worship materials suitable for sermon preparations, scriptures, litanies, as well as speakers. Speakers will be affordable housing residents, housing advocates, low wage workers and/or immigrants. By sharing our stories, and meeting family members we've never met before, we can become a much more powerful spiritual and physical force for justice.

We anticipate your active participation on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Please complete the enclosed 2010 Housing Sabbath Signup Form and return it to EBHO's offices at 538 Ninth Street, Suite 200, Oakland, CA 94607. You can also find out more information about EBHO's 2010 Housing Sabbath by going online to [www.EBHO.org/ICU](http://www.EBHO.org/ICU).

**The struggle continues!**



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### **Why a Housing Sabbath?**

**Q: Why plan a Housing Sabbath?**

**A: EBHO’s Housing Sabbath has many goals:**

- To highlight the great work that our inter-faith communities are doing in response to the housing crisis, foreclosures, homelessness and hunger;
- To create awareness about the impact of foreclosures and the lack of housing for low income people;
- To proclaim that this is injustice, and socially, politically, religiously and economically unacceptable, and unsustainable;
- To learn about how we can become engaged about housing policies that negatively impact low income persons;
- To act on what we’ve learned to create sustainable housing policies, to increase affordable housing for all; and
- To work with other faith communities who are equally concerned for housing justice.

**Q: What can my congregation do to be engaged in affordable housing in my community?**

**A: There are several ways to be involved, including:**

- Direct Service: provide a service focusing on helping families face foreclosures, emergency relief funds, food pantry, join community feeding and shelter programs for those without homes.
- Participate in a task force of neighbors engaged in developing our city’s housing element that must be given to the State of California.
- Direct funding of existing community groups.
- Organize a housing ministry within your congregation.

Any of these and any combination of these can bring your congregation closer to housing justice. Together and with focused hearts and minds, we can move in that direction.

Many places of worship are beginning to feel the strain of too few resources for too great a demand for food and shelter. Many are seeking to establish bridges with others to build community-wide, even state-wide advocacy networks.



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### **Suggestions for Sabbath Activities**

- Read the responsive prayer on Housing Sabbath. (*See included prayers*)
  
- Publish article in the congregation bulletin. (*See Sample Bulletin insert*)
  
- Give sermon on the importance of shelter, land, a home, a place of belonging within our faith tradition. (*See Scriptures*)
  
- Organize a study group on affordable housing for the poor and what we can do.
  
- Plan a religious school activity engaging young people to think about the impact of inadequate housing or education, religion, jobs, family and community. (*See Activities for Young People*)
  
- Invite a guest speaker to talk about foreclosures and homelessness and what the community did in the past and what is being done today.
  
- Organize delegations to meet with the Mayor, City Council, and Board of Supervisors asking for hearings on the housing crisis and possible solutions.
  
- Coordinate a community tour of affordable housing sites built by faith communities.

# SCRIPTURAL REFLECTIONS

## From Jewish, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Sikh and Indigenous Traditions

**Isaiah 32:15-18** Then will the desert become an orchard, and the orchard will be regarded as a forest. Right will dwell in the desert and justice abide in the orchard. Justice will bring about peace. Right will produce calm and security. My people will live in peaceful country, in secure dwellings and quiet resting places.

**Sikh Fifth Guru** “No one is my enemy, nor is anyone a stranger to me.”

**The Qur’an 59:9, 10** The ones who have set up housekeeping and faith before them should love anyone who has migrated to them.... Those who are shielded from their own avarice will be prosperous.

**Isaiah 58:6-8** This is the fasting that I wish.... Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless, clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed.

**Matthew 25:34-35** Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you....for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

**American Indigenous Grandfather** Sacred One, teach us love, compassion and honor, that we Peoples may heal the earth and heal each other.

**Isaiah 58:10-12** Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and gloom shall become for you like midday.... Then ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past shall rise up: “Repairer of the breach,” they shall call you, “Restorer of ruined households.”

**Proverbs 24:3, 4** By wisdom is a house built, by understanding is it made firm, and by knowledge are its rooms filled with every precious and pleasing thing.

**Rabbi Jill Jacobs** ([www.myjewishlearning.com](http://www.myjewishlearning.com))

The parallel themes of homelessness and wandering pervade the Bible and Jewish history. In the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden, Abraham begins his relationship with God by leaving his native land, and Jacob and his sons leave their home to go down to Egypt. After the Exodus, the Israelites journey through the wilderness, homeless for 40 years. The destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem is followed by 70 years of exile, and the destruction of the second Temple in 70 C.E. is followed by two millennia of national homelessness, which ended only with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Jewish law offers a number of criteria for evaluating the condition of housing and a number of suggestions about responsibility to ensure that the poor have adequate housing. Central to all these laws is a concern that housing be safe, secure, and permanent, and that every home allow its inhabitants to live a full and dignified life.

### **From the Pontifical Commission Justitia et Pax**

Political authorities, religious leaders; and, in general, public opinion all recognize that a situation in which millions of human beings lack adequate housing is a serious problem... A fundamental human right is, in reality, being violated. An adequate response to such a large-scale problem calls for the shaping of a consistent political will, as well as increased awareness of the collective responsibility of all, and particularly of Christians, for the future of society. Galatians 6:9 And let us not grow weary doing good. If we do not relax our efforts, in due time we shall reap our harvest. While we have the opportunity, let us do good to all.

### **Al – Baqurah 2:177**

It is not righteousness For those who ask,  
That ye turn your faces and for the ransom of slaves;  
Towards East or west: to be steadfast in prayer,  
But it is righteousness and give to Zakat,  
To believe in Allah, to fulfill the contracts  
And the Last Day, which ye have made;  
And the Angels, and to be firm and patient,  
And the Book, In pain (or suffering)  
And the Messengers: And adversity,  
To spend your substance And throughout  
Out of love for him, All periods of panic,  
For your kin, Such are the people  
For orphans, Of truth, the God-fearing  
For the needy,  
For the wayfarer

### **Buddhist Texts Wanderer**

Wanderer, the road is your  
footsteps, nothing else;  
wander, there is no path,  
you lay down a path in walking.  
In walking, you lay down a path  
and when turning around  
you see the road you'll  
never step on again.  
Wanderer, path there is none,  
only tracks on the ocean foam.

### **Other Scriptures**

Micah 6:6-8  
Matthew 8:19-20  
Matthew 14:13-21  
Luke 9:10-17  
Micah 5:  
Luke 19:5-10  
Matthew 25:34-40  
Luke 16:19-31  
Acts 4:32-35

## CHRISTIAN SOURCES

- Love your neighbor as yourself. *Mark 12:31*
- Bring glad tidings to the poor...Proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind...Let the oppressed go free. *Luke 4:18*
- If a poor man or woman comes, whether they are from your own parish or from another, above all if they are advanced in years, and if there is no room for them, make a place for them, O bishop, with all your heart, even if you yourself have to sit on the ground. You must not make any distinction between persons if you wish your ministry to be pleasing before God. *Didascalia Apostolorum*
- If, as the church teaches, dignified housing is a human right for everyone, then housing must be affordable to everyone. *Cardinal John J. O'Connor*

### Jubilee 2000 Pledge (National Conference of Catholic Bishops)

*As disciples of Jesus in the new millennium, I/we pledge to:*

**Pray** regularly for greater justice and peace.

**Learn** more about Catholic social teaching and its call to protect human life stand with the poor, and care for creation.

**Reach** across boundaries of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and disabling conditions.

**Live** justly in family life, school, work, the marketplace, and the political arena.

**Serve** those who are poor and vulnerable, sharing more time and talent.

**Give** more generously to those in need at home and abroad.

**Advocate** for public policies that protect human life, promote human dignity, preserve God's creation, and build peace.

**Encourage** others to work for greater charity, justice and peace.

### Habitat for Humanity's Prayer for Shelter

Leader: Lord, on the night you were born, there was no room in the inn.

People: *May we remember those who do not have a safe place to sleep tonight.*

Leader: Jesus, you were born in a stable.

People: *May we be builders of decent homes.*

Leader: Lord, you wandered in the desert, fighting temptation.

People: *We seek your direction and your strength as we strive to do your will.*

Leader: Jesus, you ministered to all those who would hear you.

People: *May we work tirelessly for all those in need of decent housing.*

Leader: Jesus, you came that we might have life.

People: *We offer ourselves to be your hands and feet in our world.*

All: *God of all, give us the courage to speak out for those who have no voice. Help us remove the obstacles that stand in the way of all your children having a simple, decent place in which to live. Give us strength to take action. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

# JEWISH SOURCES

## The Parsha and Haftarah for February 12:

Terumah – Exodus 25:1-27:19; Kings I 5:26-6:13

The Torah reading for this week describes the construction of the Miskan – a place for worship in the wilderness – while the Haftarah discusses Solomon’s construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Both readings focus on Jews building a holy place to house the presence and teachings of God and therefore point to the importance of physical space in the life of a community. The sanctuary and the Temple are each a house of God, as Exodus 25:8 states, “And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them” and I Kings 5:31 uses the word “house” (bayit) to refer to the Temple. While many parts of Tanach discuss sacred time, this parsha emphasizes sacred space. The texts describe in excruciating detail how Jews should, or did, build two sacred locations, the sanctuary and the Temple, so that God would “dwell among them.” These sacred locations become physical centers for religious practice and metaphors for the spiritual centers of their communities.

This emphasis on the houses of God in the texts should make us especially aware of the importance of housing in our community today. We know that our congregation would suffer greatly, maybe even cease to exist, if it lost its house, our synagogue. Like a community, a family is situated in a place, their home. That place is the center of the family – where they find shelter and sustenance, as well as being the gathering place for their micro-community. It is our responsibility to work towards ensuring that everyone has a home. Today, we can do this by helping to preserve the affordability of housing in our neighborhoods, so that our neighbors are not thrown out of their homes and unable to participate in the life of the community.

## Other Sources about Housing

- A community which has no synagogue and no shelter for the poor must first provide for the poor. *Sefer Hasidim*
- In his own home, even a weaver is a ruler. *B. Talmud, Megilla 12 b*
- Do not let him slip down until he falls completely, for then it will be difficult to raise him; rather strengthen him as he begins to fall. To what is this comparable? To a burden upon an ass: while it is still on the ass, one person can hold it and set it in place; if it falls to the earth, even five people cannot set it back. Rashi
- Job protested his righteousness to God, saying “I made four doors to my house, that the poor might not be troubled to go round it to enter.” God replied, even so, you have not reached to half the measure of Abraham, for you sit in your house. But Abraham went forth, and when he found poor wayfarers, he brought them to his house...and all came and ate and drank and blessed God. *Avot de Rabbi Nathan 7:17*
- Let your house be open; let the poor be members of your household. *Pirke Avot 1:5*

# UNIVERSAL PRAYER FOR HOUSING & COMMUNITY

**Leader:** As we sit in this, our congregation's home, may God give us guidance to think carefully about the gift of a home. Let us recall the joyous moments held within our home and be thankful for its shelter. As we gather in our congregation's home today let us remember the members of our community who fear the loss of their home and imagine ourselves in their place.

On this Sabbath, we are linked with other churches, synagogues and temples in our neighborhood, as we join our voices together in this prayer. **Dear God, we ask Your guidance today as we gather to seek solutions to the problems of housing in our neighborhood. You who taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18), give us guidance on this special Sabbath.**

**People:** Open our eyes, Creator of the Universe, to the wondrous riches of our neighborhoods: its homey streets, its welcoming parks, its libraries and museums, its familiar stores, its lively schools, and its vibrant houses of worship.

**Leader:** Open our eyes that we may see the sick, the old, the poor and even the not-so-poor who are unable to afford to live in this place that we call home. So often, the people who are not materially wealthy provide us with great wealth in intangible ways.

**People:** Open our eyes that we may see the people evicted for the sake of greed, the small stores closed for the sake of chains, and the strong roots torn up for the sake of temporary pleasure.

**Leader:** Open our eyes, O God, that we may envision new possibilities, that we may preserve a diverse community, that we may honor residents who have made our community strong, and that we may commit ourselves to caring for the vulnerable. What can we do?

**People:** Open our hands, O God. Let our hands be Your hands as we reach out to support the arm of a neighbor, as we sign a letter of protest, as we hold a placard, and as we open the door of a new home.

**Leader:** Enable our mouths, O God, to speak out at a meeting, to ask a question at a bank, to remind a realtor, to express our opinion to a friend. Let our voices be Your voice as we speak truth with compassion.

**People:** Let our feet be praying as we walk together to visit tenants. Let our feet be Your feet as we walk the streets of our beloved neighborhood, and vow with each step to keep its doors open to all who live here.

**Leader:** Set our eyes to seeing, our hands to working, our feet to praying, and our hearts to pumping hard. And give us strength, O God, to move forward together as we join with all our neighbors on this Sabbath of celebration and hope.

**People:** We are ready to move forward together.



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## **Show Your Faith**

Read the social principles of your congregation. Discuss how the principles are addressed on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis.

Encourage your governing body to authorize the establishment of a **Housing Ministry Committee** charged with investigating the housing needs of low income residents, developing ministry recommendations to the congregation, and educating in the congregations and community housing rights as articulated in the International Declaration on Human Rights.

Organize delegations to the City Council and Planning Commission advocating for policies encouraging housing for low income persons and renters. Periodically revisit and monitor the housing policies of the past year and their implementation.

Get informed. Share what you’ve learned with other places of worship. Local and State housing supporters can do many things with your help and your faith community. They can keep you informed about upcoming development issues and the impact on low income housing policies and supply.

Interfaith Communities United (ICU) must make it clear to governmental bodies that homelessness and foreclosures will not be tolerated. There will be “Housing for All” in our communities.

# **ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

**(From the Fifth Avenue Committee, [www.fifthave.org](http://www.fifthave.org))**

Young people are not immune from the problems in their communities, including our affordable housing crisis, but often aren't given tools with which to understand it. The following story and exercises are designed to educate young people about displacement, reinforce their appreciation for having a home and strengthen our shared values of diversity, fairness, respect for our neighbors and community stability.

*Note: This guide is written without a specific age group in mind. Please feel free to modify the activities to fit the needs of the young people you are teaching.*

## **Background Story**

During this past summer, two elderly sisters named Carmen and Feliza Soto, were being evicted (thrown out of their home) because their landlord (the owner of the building) wanted to get more money for rent than the two sisters could pay. Carmen and Feliza were each more than 80 years old and disabled. They had lived as neighbors in the same small apartment building for twenty years with only Social Security checks (a small amount of money from the government) to pay for their rent, food and everything else that they needed. Carmen and Feliza Soto had nowhere that they could go if they were kicked out of their home. A group of the Soto's neighbors knew that it was wrong to throw out elderly people without a good reason. They knew that older people should be respected and helped, not stomped in the race for more money. So the group decided that they had to do something to stop these unjust things from happening.

First, they talked to the landlord and asked him not to do such a terrible thing to Carmen and Feliza. When the landlord wouldn't listen, the group of neighbors organized a trip to the landlord's home to protest outside of it. Seventy people got on school buses and went to the landlord's home. They told the landlord's neighbors about how he was throwing out two elderly women from their home just to make a little more money. The landlord was embarrassed that his neighbors knew he was doing something immoral and agreed to a compromise. The sisters could keep their home if they moved in together. And so the group of neighbors saved the Soto sisters from homelessness.

The people who participated in the protest realized that the Soto sisters were not the only ones in their neighborhood who were being evicted because of greed. They knew that the amount of money it costs to buy a home or rent an apartment keeps going up each year. Some landlords do not care about the elderly and low-income families who live in their buildings. These people just want to make more money by charging higher rents for the apartments in their buildings. Many people who have been living in the neighborhood for a very long time are being forced out so that the landlords can raise rents really high.

The people who helped the Soto sisters decided that they could not just watch this happen but had to do something about it. They knew that everyone in the neighborhood shared certain values. These values are:

- Diversity: they like the fact that there are people of different races, ethnicities and income levels all living in community.

- **Affordability:** they want rents to be fair so that people can pay for a decent apartment without spending all of the money they make just on rent.
- **Stability:** they believe that the people who live in the neighborhood should be able to stay if they want to and participate in the neighborhood community.
- **Respect for Neighbors:** they know that everyone deserves respect.
- **Not Profiteering:** they believe that no one should make lots of money by taking it from their neighbors who have the least amount of money.

The group of neighbors realized that it was better to prevent their neighbors from being evicted for no good reason before it happened, rather than save them when they were about to be kicked out onto the street. So, they decided to organize a ‘No Foreclosure or Displacement Campaign so they could fight for their neighbors. The neighbors held a big meeting to tell everyone about the displacement-free zone and started putting up signs on the streets to mark the Zone. And the people who work at the congregation promised to help anyone who was being evicted unfairly.

The neighbors also knew that they needed to educate everyone else about what was happening. They planned this Housing Sabbath as one way to let people know about it and find people to help them. In churches and synagogues all over the area, people are observing this special Sabbath with you.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Do you think that what the landlord was doing to Carmen and Feliza Soto was fair?
2. Do you think that the group of neighbors did the right thing by protesting?
3. What would you do if your elderly neighbor was being evicted for an unjust reason?
4. Why do you think that these values are important?

Diversity  
Affordability  
Stability  
Respect for Neighbors  
Not profiteering

5. Can you think of stories from the bible that teach that these values are important?

# ACTIVITIES

## 1. Mapping Your Home

Have young people each draw a map of their home. Ask them to draw a heart in their favorite place in the house and think about why it is their favorite place. Then, ask them to draw a diamond in a place where they can be private and think about what is important about having privacy. Next, ask them to draw a place where they have fun with other members of their family (parents, siblings, grandparents, cousins) and think about the fun things that they do together. Have the young people share their drawings with each other, either all together or in pairs. Then ask them what it would feel like to lose their home and not have their favorite place, or a place to be private or hang out with their family.

## 2. Community Street Skits

Divide the young people into groups of four. Tell the young people that each group represents the people who live in the community. Give each kid one of the following parts:

- A single parent with three kids and a full time job as a kitchen worker at a local school.
- An elderly person who survives on a little money from the government each month.
- A married person who is a part-time carpenter and has a husband/wife who is very sick.
- A young artist who makes a little money selling his/her paintings.

Tell the young people that over the last few years that many new people are moving onto the block so rents are going way up and their friends are being forced to move out. Now, the building owner wants to take his/her family on a cruise to Disneyland and needs more money for the trip. The owner tells the tenants that one of them must move out of the building so a new person can take the apartment that will pay the owner more rent money. What do the residents decide to do? Each group of four should come to a conclusion about what to do. The teacher should guide the young people towards thinking about collective action, rather than deciding who should move out. Bring the whole group back together and have each group of four share their decision with everyone else. Discuss whether the owner has a right to throw people out of the house so he/she can take his/her family on a cruise to Disneyland. Discuss where there are some people (elderly, sick or poor (?) people) who need special protection.

## 3. Tenants and Evictors

Clear the area of all furniture and set up enough “houses” (cones, paper taped to the floor or anything else to mark spots) for everyone. Mark one small corner of the area the “empty lot” and the opposite large corner the “evictor’s mansion.” Tell the young people that they all live together in a neighborhood called “friend slope” where there are just enough homes for everyone right now. Ask one kid to be the “evictor” and tell everyone else that they are “tenants.” The rules are:

- Only one tenant can be in a house at a time.

- When the activity leader says “your lease is up,” each of the tenants has to find a new house.
- If a tenant doesn’t find a home, he/she has to go to the empty lot.
- The evictor’s job is to take away one house every time that the leader says “your lease is up” and put the house in his/her mansion.

When there are only one or two residents left with houses (everyone else is in the empty lot), end the game. Discuss what happened to the neighborhood during the game and whether the young people think that it was fair. Ask the evictor if he/she wants to invite the neighborhood residents in the empty lot to come to the mansion and take back a house.

### **Follow-up Projects**

- Write a group letter to one of your elected officials asking him/her to help your neighbors and support affordable housing.
- Poster the blocks surrounding the church/synagogue with posters.
- Talk to your parents about what you learned today and ask them how your family can help. Can you go with them to a demonstration, write letters or hang up posters?



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### Taking Action Exercise

#### Letter-Writing

- Letters from home can make all the difference in swaying a Congressman or Congresswoman, Senator, Mayor or Supervisor.
- Letters should be brief and to the point. Include a personal experience or observation or local information to strengthen your letter.
- Set up a Letter-Writing Table  
Have available:
  1. A large type sample letter
  2. Name and address of your U.S. Representative and Senator
  3. Background information on local housing crisis, personal experiences
  4. Envelopes
  5. Stamps
  6. Pens
- Collect letters and deliver or send them yourself. Everyone will get a personal response if their return address is clear.

#### **Sample Letter**

Representative (First and last name)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20---  
Or  
Senator (First and last name)

Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Greetings in a Spirit of Justice and Peace!

Many local congregations are trying to address the expanding housing crisis in (city or county). With increasing foreclosures and jobs disappearing, numerous families are becoming homeless and food feeding centers are being overwhelmed.

I am deeply worried about my neighbors and friends,

What is Congress doing for low income workers and families because of foreclosures and joblessness?

Please let me know.

Sincerely,  
Name and Address

#### Sign Petitions

- Organize a petition drive for a local housing policy
- Gather petitions from other congregations, temples, mosques
- Select delegation from community to deliver petitions to the appropriate leaders