
It's time for all to make investments in a hope-filled future

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Leaders of 60 congregations showing the way with Habitat effort.

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From the Mecklenburg Ministries Clergy Advisory Board:

In the sacred stories shared by Jews and Christians, there is an intriguing story about the prophet Jeremiah. At the very point at which his homeland was under siege, just when things seemed at their worst, Jeremiah decides to invest in land. While most others could see cause only for gloom and doom, Jeremiah looked beyond the immediate and made a concrete investment in a more hope-filled future.

Now our own region is besieged by daunting conditions. Where once investors clamored to contribute to our burgeoning skyline and suburbs, now we're more likely to hear of foreclosures, layoffs and businesses failing.

Many of us are now hesitant to make personal investments – in the stock market that remains unsteady, in home improvements that will not pay off in the current real estate climate and even in the small extras to which we once treated ourselves on a regular basis. In these times of crisis, facing a collectively uncertain future, it is also tempting for us to withdraw, to be cautious and self-protective, to resist investing as well in the common good.

As spiritual leaders, we've decided to follow the path of Jeremiah. Some of us are guided by the hope we find in these seasons of Easter and Passover; others of us by other sources of spiritual guidance which engender our sense of faith in the future. We think now is the time to live with the kind of courage that will, in fact, help shape a better future for our shared community. Collectively we begin today a concrete act of investment – of money, of time and of passion.

More than 100 of us, as religious leaders of 60 congregations, will begin work this morning on Mecklenburg Ministries' Second Interfaith Clergy Habitat for Humanity Build. We have contributed \$65,000 of our hard earned congregational funds in order to build this new home. We have committed to weeks of building together. We are not only building an affordable home for a hardworking and well-deserving family, we are also building relationships that will sustain us in the midst of the storms we confront as a community. And we are building hope and faith in our future as a city. Beyond the actual Habitat home that will provide shelter, this project symbolizes the unity of purpose of our diverse faith communities, and declares that the essence of faith is service.

We believe now is just the right time to invest – not in material frills for which we have no need. It is time for all of us to invest in our community. We need to invest our time by helping to improve neighborhoods that have fallen into disrepair. We need to invest our resources in projects, programs and personal efforts that will help contribute to the common good. We need to invest in our hopes for our region's better days ahead.

As spiritual leaders, representing nine of our community's religious traditions, we call each of our community's citizens to join us. Find a local project in which you can invest. If you don't have money to contribute, offer your time, your energy, your insight. Together our investments will help insure that our region's future will be more hopeful, and in the process we

will create the relationships and habits that will serve us well as we build that bright future together. For The Record offers commentaries from various sources. The views are the writer's, and not necessarily those of the Observer editorial board.