



ISAAC — DOING JUSTICE

*An interfaith organizing network of congregations and strategic partners
working together to build a more just community*

April 2009



ISAAC Listening Campaign:

The practice of building the sacred community

Training: Fri, April 17, 7 pm to Sat, April 18, 5 pm

SIGN

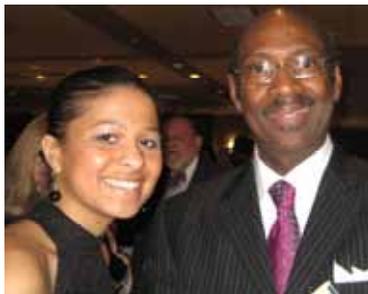
UP TODAY!

Email Rachael Tanner at
R.Ann.Tanner@gmail.com
or call ISAAC, 341-4213

Check-in at 6 pm. Gull Lake Ministries, www.gulllake.org
Overnight accommodations provided.
Optional Dinner 6 pm Friday
Breakfast and lunch provided on Saturday
See **LISTENING CAMPAIGN**, p 2



State Rep. Robert Jones, State Senator Tom George, Rev. Marty Newman, Tim Bartik & Rev. Milton Wells speak for restoration of Nurse-Family Partnership funds



ISAAC Director Rachael Tanner & Keynote Speaker Rev. Dr. Davis

ISAAC 2009 Banquet

*Season of Forgiveness:
Racial Reconciliation*

See **BANQUET**, p 2 & 3

VOTE YES May 5

On the Public Transportation Millage

- ◆ More than 3,000,000 trips were taken on our county's public transit system in '08
- ◆ Two-thirds of riders use public transit for work or school
- ◆ High-tech employers say that having a public transit system is "very important" for business location and relocation
- ◆ On average, more than 600 riders were on a bus during every hour of service in '08
- ◆ Fixed route bus service is available in Portage, Comstock, Parchment, Kalamazoo Township, Oshtemo and Texas Township/KVCC as well as the city of Kalamazoo
- ◆ Care-A-Van served every corner of the county in '08 providing over 65,000 trips
- ◆ The county-wide millage on the ballot May 5 is four-tenths of one mill, less than the levy that expired at the end of 2008 for out-county residents
- ◆ Residents of the city of Kalamazoo vote again in November on an additional sixth-tenths of a mill, bringing their total to 1 mill, the same as the levy approved by voters in 1998 and less than the levy approved 2006



ISAAC — DOING JUSTICE

*Interfaith Strategy
for Advocacy & Action
in the Community*

Gamaliel Foundation Affiliate

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www.isaackalamazoo.org

Listening Campaign from p 1

What is a Listening Campaign?

A Listening Campaign is a period of time where members of a congregation or organization commit to building intentional, deep relationships within the congregation/organization. Don't miss this opportunity to become a more relational human being dedicated to building community.

What's in it for my Congregation/Organization?

Relationships are essential to any dynamic, growing congregation/organization. By conducting a Listening Campaign, your congregation/organization will

- ◆ Gain leaders skilled in the art and practice of relationship building;
- ◆ Identify new leaders;

- ◆ Deepen the sense of community and connection;
- ◆ Identify those interested in existing or new ministries;
- ◆ Identify members interested in social justice;
- ◆ Understand the different reasons why members attend (or don't attend) the congregation/organization.

What's in it for Me?

You will learn valuable skills in the art and practice of cultivating relationships. These skills can be implemented in any area of life: work, play, personal!

In addition, you will be living out the call on your life to be connected to one another. If you believe that we are all connected, and that what affects one affects all, then this is an opportunity to learn how to make those beliefs real.

What Can I Expect?

You can expect an intense day and a half where you will be challenged to think about your public relationships in a serious way. As the schedule suggests, we will consider topics such as Power, Self-Interest, and, of course, Relationships. You will leave with new or deeper understanding of these key concepts. The sessions will be led by skilled community organizers.

In addition, your congregation/organization will develop a clear plan for executing a Listening Campaign.

SIGN UP TODAY!

Email Rachael Tanner at R.Ann.Tanner@gmail.com or call ISAAC, 341-4213



State Senator Tom George

State Rep. Robert Jones



Michelle Datema, Nurse-Family Partnership



KPS Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice and Laufet Morrison



Janice Brown, Kalamazoo Promise

State Rep. Robert Jones



Soloist Gwen'Alec Jordan

Pianist Phyllis Rappeport



Kalamazoo Children's Chorus Touring Choir



Rochelle Habeck, ISAAC Leader of the Year

ISAAC 2009 Banquet
Over 400 people, nearly \$30,000 raised!



Rev. Jill McAllister



Dr. J. Louis Felton



Rev. Matt Laney



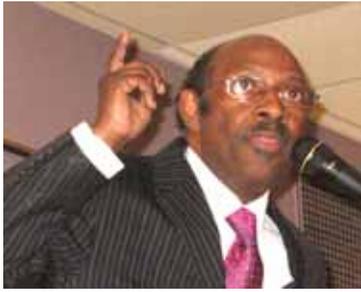
Rev. Gail Holman



Rev. Dr. Wayne Price

Elder Doug King

Photos: Amy Peterson, Holley Lantx
Newsletter edit & design: Tobi Hanna-Davies, Holley Lantx



Season of Forgiveness: Racial Reconciliation

*Excerpts from
Banquet keynote speech by
Rev. Dr. Ronald P. Davis, Sr.*

In 1957 my family left Birmingham Alabama, as many African Americans did, voting with their feet. I was about 5 years old. My family got on the bus, then had to get off. The bus left. A white lady opened her purse and gave me and my brother gum, and smiled. Many years later I learned that we had had to give up our seats to whites. But as a child what I learned was: Never judge a woman by the color of her skin, but by the content of her pocketbook, and her willingness to share her power!

Let this be our social justice spring season. The long cold winter of hate, discord and distrust we declare over. In this springtime all are forgiven and accepted, as card-carrying members of the flawed human race. We are forgiven. We must accept this gracious gift so we can be free to build racial reconciliation.

Abraham Maslow said “If the only tool that you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail.” You can be so used to victimization that everything looks like victimizing. For some, every black male looks like a threat. If the only tool you have is a hammer.... We need a new set of tools, for all races.

Race is not the problem. I have seen good people in all races and evil people in all races. The true cause of our predicament is selfishness and greed.

Is racial reconciliation desirable? The answer is yes for some and no for others. Some have tremendous advantage in the present arrangement. There’s a cartoon showing three fish, large, middle-size and small, all swimming toward each other. The large one is thinking, “The world is great.” The middle-size one, “Life isn’t so bad.” The small one, “Life is terrible.” Power concedes nothing without a demand. Never has and never will. Get ready for a struggle. Injustice and inequality have been held in place by those in power—so we need allies powerful enough to speak truth to power.

Is racial reconciliation achievable? There is a model that does work for those that desire it. When I moved to Syracuse, New York, the Gamaliel affiliate there, ACTS, had dwindled to only 7 congregations. ACTS (Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse) had diversity even though it was small. It looked like the world I wanted to create. We discovered almost by accident that diversity education serves as reconciliation. We began to look at others differently and ourselves differently. It was a humanizing experience. We learned we were more powerful as a group. We learned the joy of the journey. We learned we could love one another.

This is a marathon, not a sprint. Some will look for a quick fix, but we are dealing with 399 years of structures that have been put in place. Join the race to save humanity!

If the only tool that you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. We need a new set of tools, for all races.

President’s Message



Our banquet speaker, Rev. Dr. Davis, reminded us that, “*If the only tool that you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail. We need a new set of tools, for all races.*”

ISAAC has a whole toolbox full of tools to help us build a more just community.

Come—learn to use these tools! Invite others, from your own congregation and from non-member congregations and organizations.

The more of us who have these powerful tools, the more powerful we will be.

ISAAC Toolbox for 2009

Listening Campaign

Training, Gull Lake

6pm Fri 4/17-5pm Sat 4/18

National Clergy Caucus

Mundelein IL, April 21-23

Mini-Weeklong, Plymouth MI,

May 14-16

African American Leadership Commission

Kansas, June 11-12

ERAC/CE Anti-Racism

Training, Kalamazoo,

June 24-26

www.eracce.org

Weeklong, New York City

July 12-18

Weeklong, Techny IL

August 9-15

ISAAC pays for trainees from dues-paying congregations and organizations. Come!

Overseer Daniel Cunningham,
President of ISAAC

**THANK YOU
to our
major funders!**

Arcus Foundation
gay & lesbian fund

Kalamazoo
community foundation™

Building Power!

New ISAAC Staff

Lalitha Rajagopal, Bookkeeper & Office Manager

I come from the southern part of India, the city of Bangalore. I grew up speaking Tamil (my mother tongue), Kannada (the regional language), Hindi (the national language), and of course English, because the British colonized us. I came to the US in 2000 with my daughter Pavithra and son Gautam after my daughter finished 10th grade in India. My husband Rajagopal was here already and had a job with Pfizer in Lee's Summit, Missouri, then in Overland Park, Kansas. I learned to drive a car for the first time after we moved to the US!



We moved to Portage in 2004 when Pfizer closed the office in Kansas. I had worked in India as a stenographer for the government, and in Kansas as an office assistant at a community college. In Michigan I worked at WMU and took classes in at KVCC, where I'm graduating this spring semester with my Associate's degree in Accounting. Last August I started working for ISAAC part-time. I love the nature of the work, accounting and office management, and the diversity of the work keeps me motivated all the time. **I'm amazed at the amount of time and energy volunteers give for ISAAC. I'm touched by the team spirit here.** Whenever I'm swamped with a time-consuming project, volunteers flock to the office to help me complete it!

My son is a freshman at Portage Central HS. My daughter did two years of high school in Kansas, then a double Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering & English at the University of Kansas at Lawrence, then a Master's in International & Comparative Education at the University of Indiana at Bloomington. She just moved back to India in January. She's planning to stay there, to serve the people of India, and will get married there this summer. I'll be taking a leave of absence for the summer so my family can be together in India.

Jomil Wells, Organizer

I grew up outside Chicago until 9th grade when my family moved to Oshtemo and my dad became pastor of Open Door Ministries COGIC. At Kalamazoo Central I was editor of the school newspaper and won Queen of Winterfest Court, but mostly I focused on studies. I always loved to write, so at WMU I majored in Organizational Communications, with a minor in Business. I began really enjoying college when I joined You Beautiful Black Woman, Christian Black Collegiate, and the Gospel Choirs. I was a Resident Assistant in the dorm, on call all night. I pledged Delta Sigma Theta, a wonderful sisterhood that has taught me a lot about dealing with stress and overcoming obstacles.



In 2006 I took Don Cooney's Social Work class. It opened me up to understanding that there are systems in our country that are oppressive. When Proposal 2 got on the ballot, ending affirmative action, I decided to organize! It was important to prove to myself that I wasn't one of those people who talk a lot and do nothing. In only 3 weeks, I got a bus, filled it up, and raised \$3500 so we could join the march in DC! It was an exhilarating triumph for me. As spokesperson for our group, I stood on the same steps as MLK and Rosa Parks. I read the words on the Lincoln Monument and cried, because those words weren't meant for me. **I didn't know what organizing was at that point, but I knew I had a calling.**

My dad introduced me to Rachael Tanner (ISAAC Director). She did a 1-on-1 with me and encouraged me to apply to the Harriet Tubman Center for Recruitment & Development of Organizers. Rachael requested my placement at ISAAC for my internship. As a WMU senior, I was an ISAAC intern and organizer. After graduation in 12/08, I became full-time.

I organized the Eastside Public Meeting in August, with Open Door Ministries and Rock of Revelation Apostolic Church. I thought a lot about what I stood for—growing God's kingdom. Faith is a big part of who I am. I started building relationships and really looked at myself, who I want to become and what's standing in my way. Working for ISAAC has been pivotal in my personal self-development. It has challenged me to take risks. It's fulfilling and nourishing for my spirituality and growth.

Nathan Dannison, Organizer

I graduate from seminary in April, getting my M.Div. from Chicago Theological Seminary, which has a focus on "ministry for the real world." My concentrations are contemporary urban outreach ministry and Liberation studies.

Before I began working for ISAAC & the Hispanic American Council in January, I was Director of Outreach Ministries at Park Congregational Church, UCC, in Grand Rapids. Under the guidance of the Senior Minister, I conceived and coordinated a weekly winter day shelter serving 340 guests a week, developed and staffed two monthly Mobile Food Pantry events, developed a successful campaign to bring public restroom facilities to the Heartside Neighborhood, and organized and staffed a summer day-camp program for over 260 disadvantaged children. I also served as the primary liturgist on Sundays and oversaw the Monday night *Taize* prayer service.



Last summer I went to Wyoming for the National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Emergency Medical Technician program. From there I went to Bethlehem, Palestine and built a playground and community center with Playgrounds for Palestine while I worked as an ambulance medic with the Red Crescent Society.

I grew up in Caledonia, Michigan, and received my BA from WMU in 2005. My majors were Political Science and Comparative Religion, and my minor was Ethics. I also studied Spanish language and Mexican culture for three months in Cuernavaca, Mexico. In my spare time I work as a blacksmith/educator and play fiddle in a bluegrass band.

As a new organizer working jointly for ISAAC and the Hispanic American Council, I am doing a long list of one-on-ones each week. My objective is to build relationships with Edison neighborhood residents and leaders. We're looking at initiatives on youth violence prevention, childhood obesity reduction, and Hispanic business development.

To me, as an aspiring United Church of Christ pastor, community organizing is essential to the Kingdom of God!