



# BREAD Quarterly Newsletter

Building Responsibility, Equality, and Dignity

Columbus, Ohio Affiliate of the DART Center

A National Network of Congregation-Based Justice Organization

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Q4 ISSUE

DECEMBER 31, 2025

## **ANNUAL ASSEMBLY 2025** **BY MELONIE BULLER, BREAD Co-PRESIDENT**

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Over 400 network members gathered at St. Josephine Bakhita Catholic Church for the 2025 Annual Assembly to identify a new problem and to hear updates for active issue committees.

Powerful testimonies for three problem areas were presented. Laura Kubatko spoke about the inequities in the educational backgrounds of her university students. Betty Newland described losing her rental home when an out-of-state investor acquired the property. Mark Burke testified to the barriers he has encountered to obtain good employment with a livable wage after being exonerated for a murder he did not commit.

Treschelle Smith prepared network members for the congregational caucuses. By a large majority, the Assembly voted to work on the problem of **livable wages**.

Father Tony Davis opened the meeting with a message of BREAD's vision for doing justice. An update on "Trees Protect Us! We Protect trees!" was provided by tom Tichenor, and Julie Hart updated us on the City's progress toward passing an ordinance for a rental registry. Michele Disbro and Kristi Hildebrand exhorted us to own our Justice Ministry/Rodef Tzedek networks. Rabbi Josh Klein reported on the house meetings.

The following officers were elected: Melonie Buller, Co-President; Juana Hostin, Co-President; Cindy Flaherty, Vice President; Daisy Chamberlain, Treasurer; Leslie Bauknight, Recording Secretary; and Kristi Hildebrand, Corresponding Secretary. The Assembly also approved updated by-laws to govern BREAD's operations.

The evening concluded with prayer led by Juana Hostin.



MARK BURKE



## **2025 DART ALTI NEGOTIATION TRAINING**

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On November 20 BREAD Team members attended a 3-day DART ALTI Negotiation Training in Charleston

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## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

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**RALLY: APRIL 14, 2026**

Corinthian Baptist at 7:00 PM

**NEHEMIAH ACTION: MAY 12, 2026**

Celeste Center (Ohio State Fairgrounds); doors open at 6:00 PM

**ISSUE UPDATES****“STOP PREDATORY LANDLORDS! PROTECT RENTERS NOW!”**

At our May 13, 2025 Nehemiah Action, Council Member Nick Bankston promised to more than 1300 justice seekers to introduce legislation by the end of this year for a city-wide rental registry that would provide regular proactive rental inspections. BREAD pushed for proactive inspections to remove the burden on renters to report a Code Violation to the City to get action from the small percentage of landlords who were unresponsive to deplorable living conditions like non-functioning heat in the winter and lack of cooling in the summer. In House Meetings we heard stories of tenants who were fearful of calling Code Enforcement because their complaint might trigger an eviction notice or rent increase. In our research, we learned that Proactive Rental inspections, on at least some properties, were the only way to motivate the worst landlords to keep their properties safe and well-maintained.

Following the Nehemiah Action, we met monthly with Council Member Bankston and his staff to discuss details of the rental registry. He has now held two public hearings outlining a proposal for a new Rental Registry. We have had nearly 100 BREAD leaders at each hearing. The current proposal includes many of the criteria we suggested to take the burden off of renters for reporting unsafe conditions, but it does not provide for proactive inspections to identify problem properties that may not have been previously cited.

City Council wants to make the new Rental Registry accessible and less burdensome in the first years to encourage landlords to comply. The city wants to focus in the first years on the worst of the worst landlords, as we do, to prevent large scale vacancy orders due to unsafe conditions. They want to learn what's working as they build trust in the new system and then evaluate and make changes at a later date.

The BREAD Protect Renters Now Steering Committee decided that although the new proposal starts small, we can support it except for one important item. The new system is still dependent on complaints from renters to landlords or Code Enforcement, to get repairs on their apartments. Because renters fear rent increases or eviction, they may be reluctant to report unsafe conditions. So, while we are willing to provide BREAD support for the new proposal, at the next public hearing, we will call for a system of Proactive Rental Inspections on a percentage of all properties to **Protect Renters Now!**

**“TREES PROTECT US! WE PROTECT TREES!”**

Columbus City Council is failing to enact protections for trees on private property, which is essential to achieve the goal of 40% tree canopy by 2050. This was the promise made by the city in 2021 when they adopted the Urban Forestry Master Plan. The people who suffer the most from this lack of action suffer are those living in lower income neighborhoods where a growing number of children and seniors are experiencing respiratory problems because of exposure to mold from flooding and air pollution. At the December Research Kickoff, the Trees Protect Us! We Protect Trees! Committee laid out a plan to increase the heat on city leaders to honor that commitment. Over the next 4 months the committee will take steps to highlight the negative health impacts loss of tree canopy will have on our community. At the May 12 Nehemiah Action we will be calling on city leaders to honor its commitment and draft legislation to protect trees on private land that incorporates 70% of all existing tree canopy. If you would like to join the committee, please contact the BREAD office. Trees Protect Us! ...We Protect Trees!

## COLUMBUS SAFETY COLLECTIVE: NON-POLICE CRISIS RESPONSE BALLOT INITIATIVE BY HELEN ANNE SWEENEY

BREAD has advocated for a non-police mobile crisis team since 2019. The non-police crisis response issue has experienced some positive developments in the last three months which are as follows:

**Funding for Right Response Unit and a Non-Police Crisis Mobile Unit:** In November 2025, Mayor Ginther announced that he was including \$1.0 million in his 2026 Budget Request to City Council to expand Right Response operations and to create a non-police crisis response mobile unit pilot. Social workers staff the Right Response unit and handle non-violent crises, such as behavioral health issues, by interacting with callers on the telephone. Staff are not dispatched to handle the crisis in person. Currently, Right Response services are available Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. until midnight. Funding will also include a pilot to create two non-police mobile crisis units, which handle non-police emergencies by interacting with callers via telephone. The expanded funding would also include a pilot for non-police crisis mobile unit. The City is recommending that the non-police mobile crisis unit, which will be comprised of clinicians and peer supporters, handle low-acuity behavioral health calls rather than non-violent high and medium acuity calls which are considered first-responder calls.

**Alternative Crisis Community Advisory Board:** Mayor Ginther assigned staff from the Departments of Public Health Department and the Public Safety to form a permanent alternative crisis community advisory board. BREAD has championed the formation of this board for over six years. City staff would seek input from community representatives on various proposals related to the various alternative response programs, including Right Response, the co-responder mobile crisis unit (police and social workers), the proposed non-police crisis unit, REACT, and SPARC.

**Mission Critical Partners Report:** In December, Mission Critical Partners presented its initial findings at a City Council public hearing. Findings included an assessment of existing alternative response programs, the feasibility of a community advisory board, possible and public-private partnerships to boost crisis services within the community. Mission Critical Partners will release an additional report outlining the feasibility of non-police mobile crisis services.

### NETWORK MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: TOM TICHENOR

Tom Tichenor, a member of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbus, achieved GNAT status (Great Network Member All the Time) for the 2024/2025 BREAD year.

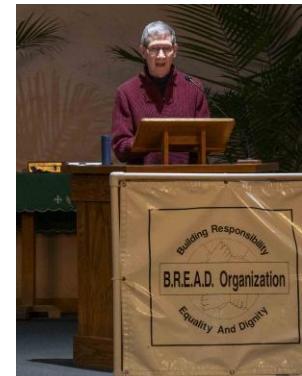
A GNAT is a Network Member who attends all 4 assemblies, brings at least 3 others with them to the Nehemiah Action, and invests financially in BREAD's work

Tom Tichenor, a retired I/T professional and lifelong Columbus resident, first connected with BREAD in 2022 after a one-on-one conversation at his church. A devoted runner and theatre enthusiast, Tom describes himself as a “builder” type—someone who thrives on contributing to community efforts.

He’s especially proud of the Environmental Justice Committee’s success in securing **public** property tree protection regulations, a win that will help reduce heat, flooding, and pollution across the city. Tom also recalls the 2025 Nehemiah Action, where Councilmember Nick Bankston committed to advancing rental registry legislation, as a standout moment.

Passionate about the “**Trees Protect Us! We Protect Trees!**” campaign, Tom believes BREAD’s strength lies in numbers: “The more congregations and people we have, the easier it will be to win social justice.” His hope for the upcoming Nehemiah Action is clear—2,250 attendees and solid commitments from city leaders.

His advice for newcomers? *Show up.* Whether it’s assemblies, rallies, or campaign meetings, Tom says enthusiasm grows when members support one another.



TOM TICHENOR SPEAKING AT  
THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY

ASSOCIATE ORGANIZERS ORLANDO ALSTON AND PHILLIP KIMBROUGH ARE BOTH MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE NEW PROBLEM: **LIVABLE WAGES**



Associate Organizer Orlando Alston presenting “Issue Criteria & Building People Power to Win” at the Research Kick-off on December 8<sup>th</sup>.



Associate Organizer Phillip Kimbrough presenting “Review of the Research Process” at the Research Kick-off on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

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## 2026 BREAD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Co-President:            | Melonie Buller (2024-2026) |
| Co-President:            | Juana Hostin (2025-2027)   |
| Vice President:          | Cindy Flaherty             |
| Recording Secretary:     | Leslie Bauknight           |
| Corresponding Secretary: | Kristi Hildebrand          |
| Treasurer:               | Daisy Chamberlain          |
| At Large:                | Rev. Charles Leister       |
| At Large:                | Betty Newland              |
| At Large:                | Rev. Michael Reeves        |

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## INVEST IN BREAD!

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The 2025 goal for BREAD’s network congregant investment drive was \$229,000. Network members invested \$155,000 in BREAD. Thank you to all who invested!

Please consider making an investment in BREAD in 2026.

You can choose your preferred payment method on the BREAD website:

<https://www.breadcolumbus.com/invest>

If you have any questions about investing, please contact the BREAD office at 614-220-9363 or via email to: [breadcolumbus@gmail.com](mailto:breadcolumbus@gmail.com)

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## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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BREAD wishes you a happy 2026 full of justice wins.

Thank you for all your support!

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## OUR MISSION

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“He has told you, O mortal, what is good and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your GOD?”  
– Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

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## CONTACT US

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