

WE HAVE A DREAM: A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM

DECEMBER, 2021 - How Did We Choose South Baltimore Community Land Trust?

We opened with prayer.

Last month, we reviewed the proposals of the organization(s) we considered, and which we would present to St. Vincent's for parish-wide support. We gave the weighted results and discussed the two with the most votes. This group was most passionate about supporting both a neighborhood and an education initiative.

We chose first to support South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT) and gave information on their efforts and how they came to our attention. We answered questions about the information we had sent to the group. SBCLT's work for development of affordable housing without displacement to stabilize their neighborhood drew us to them. Their interest in zero waste was also important to us because of the environmental impact pollution has on neighborhoods inhabited by people of color. Cherry Hill was historically an intentionally segregated neighborhood for African Americans. It is pushing against escalating prices (gentrification) because of Kevin Plank's project. The land trust will help residents build wealth in their "own" neighborhood. A further benefit is that one of our group is on the board of SBCLT.

St. Frances Academy (SFA) was the education initiative we decided to support. However, their Kirk Gaddy Fund, the focus of the initiative, was already established and would operate independently from We Have a Dream. Contributions would not go through our racial equity fund. We also referenced the school's connection to Mother Mary Lange, its founder.

We discussed how to ensure the integrity of our system for donations and distributions from our racial equity fund and the need for a team. We explored how to support SBCLT as they desired, other than financially, with problem solving and offering support from experts we have in the parish. To build a relationship between SBCLT and our parish community and to foster interest and understanding, we need to share stories of lived racism and the impact in their neighborhoods. To determine concrete next steps we saw the need for a brainstorming session with a smaller group, earmarked for 1/5/22.

In the future, we will reach out to other churches interested in joining our efforts. We will explore existing relationships with SBCLT and its neighbor parishes. We also reiterated the critical need for legislative action beginning in January to address a major source of systemic change and solicited help to track bills. We plan to ask Parish Council for a Town Meeting to share our journey and find out if we will proceed with our racial equity fund, our acknowledgement letter and support for SBCLT, as this working group or as a parish-wide effort.

We ended with prayer.