

HOLY GROUND

By Rabbi Randy Fleisher

From the bush that was on fire without being consumed, Moses heard these words: "The place on which you stand is holy ground!" Religious congregations have long taken these words to heart. Each understands that it has the potential to make a positive impact not only on its own members, but on the neighborhood-the holy ground-where it stands. For example, within just a few blocks, CRC runs a food pantry and clothing closet, Trinity Episcopal operates a soup kitchen and Cornerstone Baptist maintains a youth center. Every urban congregation that I know of makes some effort to help bring quality of life, healing, compassion and equity to its neighbors regardless of whether they are members of that congregation. For over a year now, thanks in large part to the organizing efforts of Carole Zimbrott, a number of congregations in our Central West End neighborhood (CRC, 1st Unitarian, St. John's Methodist, Trinity Episcopal, and Cornerstone Baptist) have been meeting and doing projects together. We figured, that by working together, we would not only be able to combine the talents and resources within our memberships in order to make a further difference to our holy ground, but we would build connections and make friendships across denominational and racial boundaries.

Two days before Lag B'Omer, the 33rd day in between Passover and Shavuot which is traditionally celebrated by picnics and bar-b-que, we will gather with members of the Holy Ground congregations and our neighbors. There will be street tree planting, a community art project, and a trash pick-up on the area around our five congregations. And we will cook, eat, and get to know one another better on the green space just south of Cornerstone Baptist Church (accessible off Delmar heading East, turning right on Walton). We hope that we will be able to find out from our neighbors who attend other ways we can make a difference in their lives. We ask only that you bring yourself, your families and friends...chips and a desert too.

All of the congregations that are part of this Holy Ground effort are much like CRC in that those members who actually live in our immediate neighborhood are a minority. However, each of us who lives outside the city made a conscious decision to play an active role in a city neighborhood when we joined an urban congregation. We are very excited to be devoting some of our social responsibility efforts to the very ground upon which CRC blessedly stands. When we work together, it will undoubtedly remain ground that is holy.