

# Report of the Urban Advocacy Directors

---

Dear Beloved WNY District Family,

Soon we will enter the 10th year of ministry through Urban Advocacy in Buffalo. From the start, this district has provided strong support. Thank you for your partnership with Urban Advocacy in many ways, through prayer, financial support, and actively participating with ministry in the city.

IN THE AFTERMATH OF 5/14 - May 14th, 2023 marked the one year anniversary of a racially motivated mass shooting at Tops grocery store in the heart of East Buffalo. This tragedy laid bare generations-old systems of racialized injustice and inequities. In response, churches and other organizations already present in East Buffalo, the heart of Black Buffalo, mobilized to care for and support the community. Many of you prayed for Buffalo. Some joined with those already on the ground providing services in the aftermath of the shooting. Throughout this year, a number of district leaders, pastors, and churches joined in hard, transformative conversations around racism, systemic injustice and white supremacy, and what it means to follow Jesus and work for wellbeing for all our neighbors.

Prayer Point: Please pray for spiritual renewal that stirs up love and breaks down walls that divide us, that Jesus might be our Peace.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM PARTNERS IN MINISTRY

- Grace Community Church – from Pastor Barbara Farrow and Minister of Music, Michael Farrow

Pastor Barbara reports that members are sharing their faith and inviting others to start relationships with God. This has led to eleven new people joining GCC.

Prayer Point: For safety and witnessing opportunities as we begin eight weeks of Summer Camp at Grace Community. Contact Information: bfarrow91@gmail.com; Cell number – (716) 983-2813

- Mission of Christ Church – from Pastor Yoshua Bashizi

Pastor Yoshua shares that in Spring of 2022, Global Bridge Impact resumed the after school program for 4th – 6th graders. As well, despite the lifting of Title 42, it remains difficult for refugees to enter the U.S. Yet, in the last four months, Mission of Christ has received three new families (18 people) who have been served by MoC. He invites volunteers to join the work of MoC, and come make friends with people who need it the most.

Prayer Point: For peace and protection for newcomers who face great challenges in their transition to life in the U.S. Contact Information: [biuma16@yahoo.com](mailto:biuma16@yahoo.com); Cell number – (716) 830-5635

HOUGHTON UNIVERSITY BUFFALO - Since 2014, Houghton University Buffalo has offered students wrap-around academic support to pursue a two-year associate degree in liberal arts, with the option of transferring to local SUNY schools to complete a four year degree. At first, most were multi-lingual, multicultural new American high school graduates. In 2017-2020 Houghton partnered with PeacePrints of WNY for students impacted by the justice system. In fall of 2019, under the leadership of Julian Cook, Houghton began a new program at the King Urban Life Center for students primarily from East Buffalo. With predominantly faculty of color, students find a safe space of support and flourishing with “teachers who look like me.” Many of these students are the first in their families to attend college. Houghton’s present program includes students of various ages and backgrounds –African American, Puerto Rican, Congolese, Tanzanian, Eritrean, Syrian, Burmese, Thai, Nepali, Bangladeshi and Vietnamese. Twenty-five students celebrated their graduation in May 2023.

Prayer Point: Pray for Houghton University Buffalo to support current students well and for clarity of vision for ongoing educational work in the city.

IN COLLABORATION WITH JERICHO ROAD COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER - Jesus, in Matthew 25:35, calls his disciples to welcome the stranger in their midst, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Throughout this last year, in collaboration with Jericho Road Community Health Center ([www.jrchc.org](http://www.jrchc.org)), our district mobilized to help welcome hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees coming to Buffalo – providing food, warm blankets, winter clothes, coats and boots, and personal care products. Jesus says that in caring for those in need, we are doing so for him!

Prayer Point: Please pray for Jericho Road staff and asylum seekers at the Vive shelter, who daily are stretched to capacity; and for expedited completion of renovations of a more hospitable, new location for Vive in the city of Buffalo (@1500 Main St.)

Many thanks for your ongoing partnership in ministry!

Steve and Ruth

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Steve Strand – [strandsc@gmail.com](mailto:strandsc@gmail.com); Cell number – (716) 640- 2238

Ruth Strand – [rewoolseystrand@gmail.com](mailto:rewoolseystrand@gmail.com); Cell number – (716) 640 -5306