

Reflections
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Director
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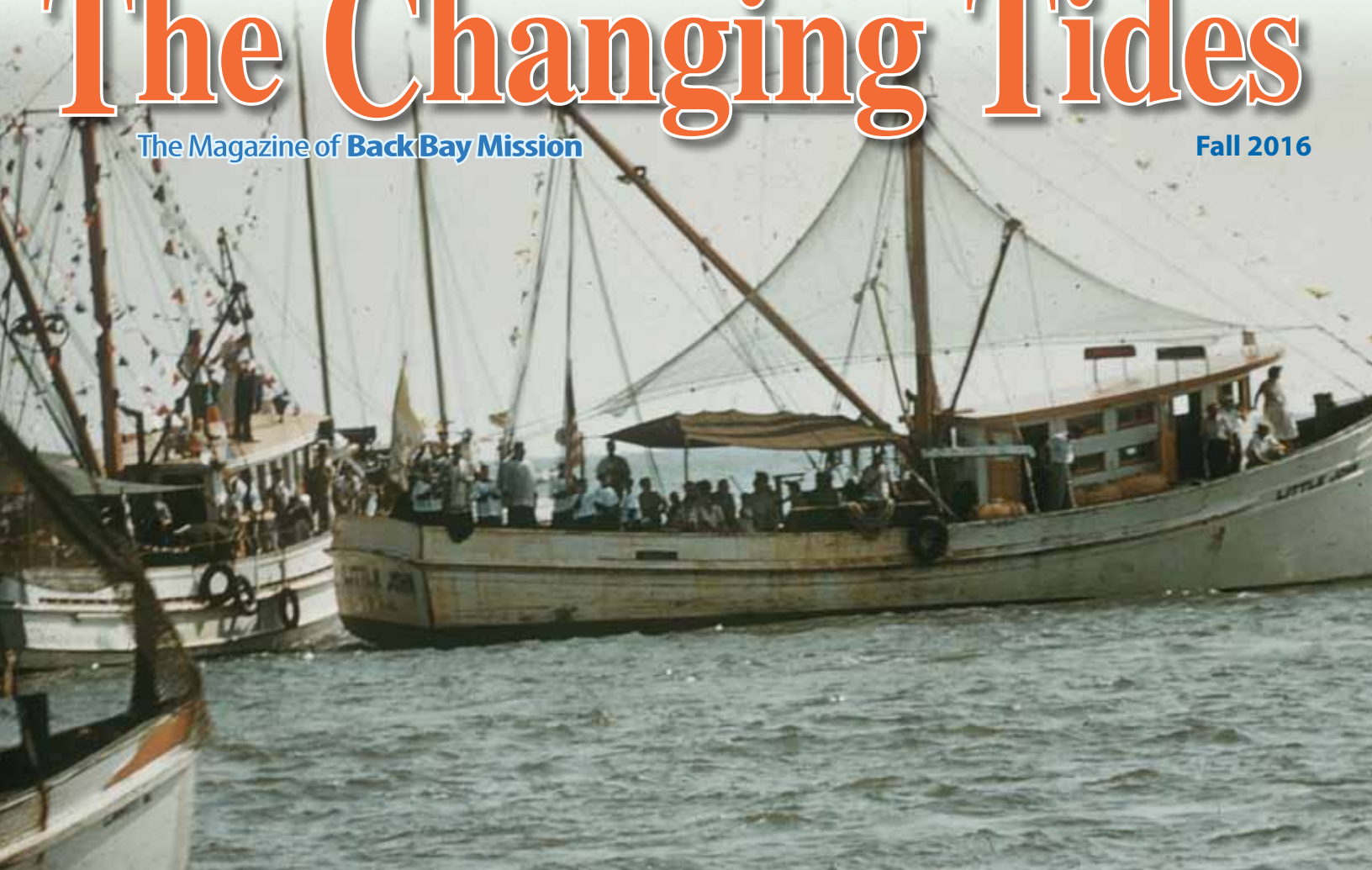
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The Changing Tides

The Magazine of **Back Bay Mission**

Fall 2016



BACK BAY MISSION FROM FISHER FOLK TO HOMELESS

Cover Story on page 4



STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Volunteer Corner

“What keeps me coming back to volunteer?”



We (Hulen & Will Brown) drive from New Braunfels, Texas. This is our fourth year, I think. My first time, I served for two months at the front desk in the Micah Center. I was terrified, confused but determined. Ms. Ethel and the guests helped me learn what to

do. Together, we got the job done each day. It was a trial by fire. By the end of my two months, I was hooked.

I became part of a team that helps people want to change their lives. Back Bay Mission provides hope and moves people forward to sustainability. I know this is working because there are folks I served four years ago that were homeless who are now living in apartments and working through their issues. I see Back Bay Mission networking with other organizations that provide services and resources. I am privileged to serve with this organization that helps people become self-sustaining. I go back home to my community and my church excited to tell them the good news about how Back Bay Mission has helped somebody that I met while I was there for two months.

I keep coming back to Back Bay Mission because I know we are helping to make a difference and our service is appreciated by the staff, the guests, the volunteers, and the Biloxi community.

Hulen Brown
Back Bay Mission Volunteer

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Pictured is the BBM Campus Peace Pole



Incubator for Nonprofits

Back Bay Mission’s history includes being an incubator for many organizations whose services are centered around the needs of the most vulnerable of the population. The most recent include:

- **Coastal Family Health Center:** promotes healthy communities by providing accessible, quality primary healthcare services to all persons regardless of economic status. We accomplish this with competent and caring staffs who work to meet and exceed expected standards for care and customer satisfaction.
- **Gulf Coast Women’s Center:** began its long history of providing shelter to victims of domestic violence. During the past 30 years, the Center has developed into a comprehensive array of services for adult and child victims of violence: domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, and family members of homicide victims.
- **South MS AIDS Task Force:** educates the public about the prevention and transmission of HIV/AIDS while providing services to those affected.
- **Loaves and Fishes:** community kitchen feeding the hungry and homeless.
- **Open Doors Homeless Coalition:** a coalition raising awareness by building bridges within the community and acting as a unified force dedicated to reducing and preventing homelessness.
- **Gulf Coast Housing Initiative (GCHI):** To provide affordable, safe and dignified housing opportunities and services to low and moderate income individuals and families on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.
- **Harrison County Head Start Program:** promotes the school readiness of children from birth to age five from low income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.



**The First Changing Tides
Produced: June 18, 1959.**

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Mission Statement

**Strengthening Neighborhoods,
Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives**

Reflections from the Executive Director



**Executive Director
Alice Graham, Ph.D.**

As you read through this issue of the Changing Tides you will read about the many historical threads of the rich tapestry that is Back Bay Mission. Feeding and clothing German immigrants, initiating the first Mississippi Head Start Program, actively working to address social injustice. Some of the threads continue today, some threads have been spun off to form other organizations and new threads have been added to strengthen the fabric of our work in coastal communities. Our new mission statement captures the threads of our history as well as reinforces our commitment to serve this present age. "Strengthening Neighborhoods, Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives". Back Bay Mission priorities as we look to the future are to increase our capacity to meet the emergency needs of the poor and marginalized as well as to actively partner with our clients in their efforts to become self-sustaining. Developing and supporting their

plans for long-term sustainability allows clients to realize their aspirations for their families as well as contribute to enriching the quality of life for all on the coast. We want to be able to share with our donors and the community the impact of our work through improved data collection that includes tracking the progress of our clients and following -up. We will continue to collaborate with our partnering agencies to offer evidenced based p educational programs that empower clients to move forward; or instance, homeowner education, financial literacy, and Bridges Out of Poverty.

It is very important that we share what we learn with others who have similar commitments. So we are excited about expanding our work to include being a learning community for UCC congregations as well as other denominations and groups that serve a similar constituency. We want Back Bay Mission to be a leader in developing robust programming that makes a significant difference in improving quality of life for marginalized and vulnerable communities

In order to continue to be on the cutting edge of moving people from poverty to long-term sustainability we need to increase our funding level, create space sufficient to meet training/ education needs, and invest in technology infrastructure necessary to realize these strategic priorities.

Alice Graham

Executive Director

On behalf of Back Bay Mission and the Board of Trustees we announce our new mission statement:

*Strengthening Neighborhoods,
Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives*

Back Bay Mission: From Fisher Folk to Homeless

When it began in 1922, Back Bay Mission brought the children of the Back Bay's fisher folk to Sunday School. It sounds so simple but we all know that is just the start of the story. Back Bay Mission saw a need in the Back Bay community and met it. At first, we providing transportation to Sunday school for the children. Then we saw the need for shoes and clothing. We provided shoes and clothing. Did Back Bay Mission stop there? No, we opened our hearts to these children and their families. In 1925, the Mission rented a room on the Back Bay to start Sunday morning services and in 1926 two houses were purchased for use as chapels. In 1929, a room at one of the churches was converted to a clinic for the people of Back Bay. Back Bay Mission provided ministry, practical medicine, clothing, and hope for the fisher folk of the Back Bay.

Racial tensions were coming to a head in the 1960's and this had an impact on Back Bay Mission. In 1962, we were serving a growing and changing population and began conducting integrated activities. In 1963, Back Bay Mission staff participated in the Wade-In on the Biloxi Beach. The Wade-In was an attempt to integrate the beaches along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Seventy-one people were arrested and among them were three men from Back Bay Mission. Also in 1963, the Mission hosted the NAACP's 18th Annual Ministerial Banquet of the Mississippi State Conference. This led to people throwing things at the building and breaking a stained glass window. Four months later people were throwing rocks out of vehicles and a cross was burned on the property. This did not deter us from expanding our focus on poverty and social justice.

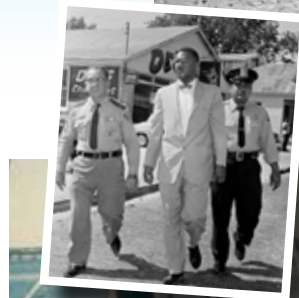
In 1969, Back Bay Mission Hurricane Camille forced us to change our focus. Back Bay Mission became a center for disaster relief. The Mission transported food and water to the emergency shelters, identified damaged homes so that residents could receive emergency aid, and started the housing rehabilitation program. The housing rehabilitation program helped seniors and low-income homeowners with painting and minor repairs. The long-term effects of Camille would be felt by the community, especially low-income families, for years. The tourist establishments and the jobs that came with them were devastated.

Hurricane relief has been a part of the Mission many times over the years since Camille: Hurricane Frederic in 1979, Hurricane Elena in 1985, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. With every hurricane is a recovery period and an increase in emergency assistance. Hurricane Katrina was the first storm to devastate Back Bay Mission. Even with the campus in shambles Back Bay Mission was able to reopen and start helping in trailers. This was also an opportunity to create new ministries like the Micah Day Center and the current housing rehabilitation program.

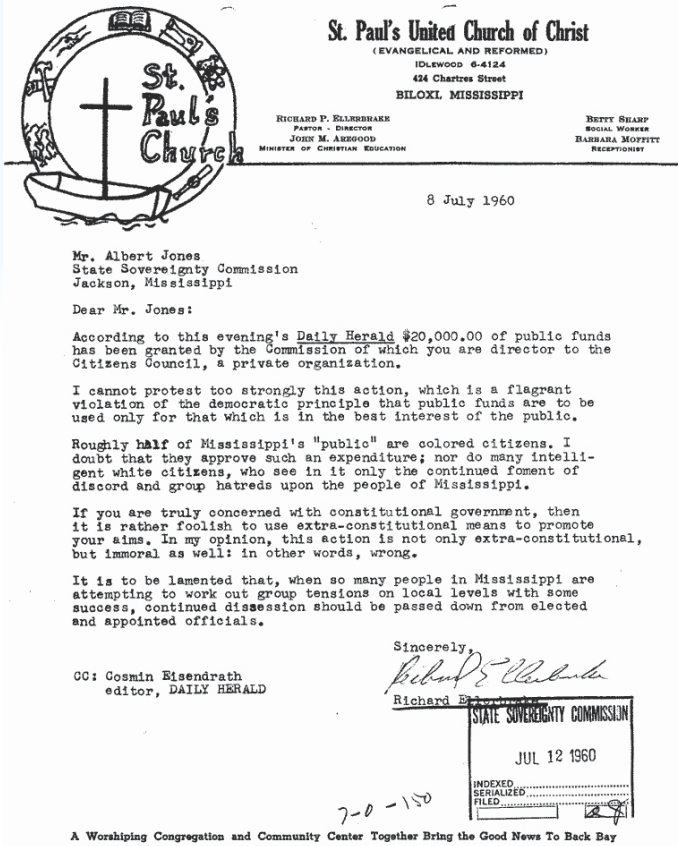
When dockside gambling came to Biloxi in 1993, the city wanted the Mission's property for a road to the casinos. In 1995, the Mission sold the property on the Back Bay to the Port Authority of Biloxi. We searched for the right home and found it at our current location on Division Street.

Over more than 90 years, we've created many of the organizations on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. These include Coastal Family Health Center and the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence. Please see the list of organization's we've created in this issue.

Back Bay Mission serves the immediate needs of our clients and opens the door to sustainability through compassion, listening, and education. You can learn more about the history of Back Bay Mission on our website: thebackbaymission.org.



It Began with a Letter



When we think of Back Bay Mission and the civil rights movement, we tend to remember the big episodes: the Wade-In, the broken glass, the cross burning. But the Mission was involved in the movement before then. The Mission's work for racial justice began with Rev. Richard Ellerbrake, the Pastor-Director of St. Paul's Church and Back Bay Mission from 1958 to 1962. While Rev. Ellerbrake was already a member of the Mississippi Advisory Committee to the Civil Rights Commission, our involvement with the civil rights movement began with a letter that Rev. Ellerbrake wrote.

In 1960, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission gave a grant of \$20,000 (about \$162,600 in 2016 dollars) to the White Citizens' Council. Both were white supremacist anti-integration groups: one public (the State Sovereignty Commission) and one private (the White Citizens' Council). Rev. Ellerbrake wrote a letter to the Daily Herald, as well as to the head of the Commission, protesting this grant, writing:

I cannot protest too strongly this action, which is a flagrant violation of the democratic principle that public funds are to be used only for that which is in the best interest of the public.

Roughly half of Mississippi's "public" are colored citizens. I doubt they approve such an expenditure; nor do many intelligent white citizens... [T]his action is not only extra-constitutional, but immoral as well: in other words, wrong.

The response that Rev. Ellerbrake received was immediate and blood-curdling. One letter from a "Red Blooded & All White"

citizen called him a "mongrel minded so called preacher" and a "spineless, yellow blooded preacher." Another, from "A dyed-in-the-wool Mississippian, living in Tennessee by misfortune," told him to "go back to wherever you came from - or maybe to Africa," and accused him of being "brainwashed by the communists." Finally, a letter from a member of the Commission accused him of having "leanings to nefarious Communistic Organizations" such as the NAACP. According to Rev. Ellerbrake, he received an equal number of letters praising his stand and "chewing [him] out."

Over the next several years, as a member of the Mississippi Advisory Committee, Rev. Ellerbrake attended meetings (always held on federal property). He was often accompanied by Rev. Jack Aregood, the Director of Christian Education (and later pastor) at St. Paul's Back Bay Church. And, of course, Rev. Ellerbrake's wife Johann was also involved. Threatening phone calls were a regular part of life, including calls threatening Johann and the Ellerbrakes' son. "The ringing of phone," recalls Johann "was a very, very threatening thing."

Rev. Ellerbrake's work included not only meetings with the Mississippi Advisory Committee and letters to the State Sovereignty Commission, but taking summer volunteers around the state to meet people, from Medgar Evers to sharecroppers, and hear their stories. Providing high school and college workers with an education about race in Mississippi was an important part of our mission. It also included the Mission's first integrated activities, partnering with Main Street Baptist Church to offer their young people cooking classes, a library, a wrestling club, and other activities. That made the Mission one of two non-governmental integrated organizations in Mississippi (the other being Tougaloo College).

This work that Rev. Ellerbrake began continued after he left in 1962. But the seed for the big stories we often tell began with a letter protesting the unfair and unjust action of the State Sovereignty Commission and the statement that their actions were "not only extraconstitutional, but immoral as well: in other words, wrong."

Mission Core Values

By: Bob Brautigam

The founders of Back Bay Mission forged core values from the day the doors were opened 94 years ago. The core values of service, compassion, hospitality, humility, justice, love, integrity, passion and respect for those we serve have remained the cornerstone of Back Bay's strategic being. The staff of the mission has worked diligently to remain true to these guiding principles ever since. The staff has instilled the value to listen and feel the needs of our clients. To never judge those that walk in our doors and at the same time clients are encouraged to make their thoughts known and expect other to hear them. Hospitality should be offered with no caveat nor should it be subject to preconditions. The environment where clients meet and learn should be uplifting and joyful. We must never forget to serve with humility not seeking notoriety.

The multifaceted services the Mission has provided, on the other hand, have been perpetually refocused to meet the changing needs of the gulf coast population. The mission has successfully analyzed the ongoing needs of our clients and adapted the services. Several of the BBM service entities have been successfully spun off as viable and sustainable stand-alone gulf coast programs. No indicators are evident that would suggest we will not be asked to continue to be nimble and responsive to our clients changing needs. We will however, diligently strive to maintain our focus on these long established and instilled core values. We have an obligation to those mission founders and our client base to assure our commitment remains steadfast and true.

Compassion

We walk with the people we serve. We listen to, learn from, empathize with, and partner with the individuals, families, and communities who seek our assistance.



Hospitality

We offer an extravagant and authentic welcome to everyone who comes into contact with our ministries, regardless of their personal circumstances or needs.



Integrity

We strive to align our spoken values and intentions with our lived work and behavior. We honor our commitments and maintain high ethical standards.



Justice

We work to build communities where all of God's gifts are shared equitably and where all of God's children are given voice and opportunity.



Love

Jesus' commandment to love one another characterizes all of our interactions. We seek to build a communal reality of embodied and enduring love.



Passion

We bring a deep and joyful commitment to our work. We persevere amidst obstacles and challenges.



Respect

We recognize the inherent dignity of everyone with whom we work and treat each individual as a precious child of a loving God.



Service

We conduct our work in a spirit of humility. We find our highest purpose in working for the sake of the greater good rather than our own gain or notoriety.



Strengthening Neighborhoods, Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives In Action at Back Bay Mission



Not too long ago, Lisa's husband threw her and their four-year-old son, Cooper, out on the street. With nowhere else to go, Lisa had to move in with her mother. She was determined not to let this stop her from making a good home for her son. Lisa started a new job and was moving forward when another tragedy struck: her mother passed away suddenly. While dealing with the loss of her mother she had to find a new home. The current

house was a rental and Lisa and her son could not continue to stay there.

Lisa felt all alone. With no one to turn to, she struggled to find an apartment, scraped together the deposits, and moved in. After having to deal with all of these burdens it was not long until she was falling financially behind. What could she do? She heard that Back Bay Mission helped with utilities. She prayed that maybe somehow we could help her. Lisa called Back Bay Mission and was scheduled to come in for a utility assistance appointment. She did not mention any of the troubles she had recently endured, but she did mention her son and asked if she could bring him with her to the appointment. She was told, without hesitation, that she and her son were welcomed here.

Lisa came in with Cooper to discuss her utility needs. Jill Cartledge, Emergency Assistance Caseworker, noticed that Lisa seemed to be holding something back. Jill started asking questions and learned that Cooper was receiving speech therapy services and was being evaluated for Asperger Syndrome. Jill knew this mother's hands were full. Jill continued on with the conversation and learned about her husband kicking them out, her juggling a new job, and death of her mother.

Jill was amazed that Lisa dealt with all of this while struggling to make sure her child's needs were met. This family indeed needed a helping hand. Lisa asked for help with a utility bill. We responded by telling her that we would pay her rent for a month and her utility bills for three months. Lisa started to cry. Thanks to the people from across the country who support Back Bay Mission, Jill was able to help turn chaos into stability.

Recently Jill received a note from Lisa and she wrote, "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness and generosity. This is the first time in a long time that I feel like I can really make it."

Jill said, "Lisa and Cooper are doing great. What a wonderful blessing."

BACK BAY MISSION HAS BECOME A 5-2-1-0 LET'S GO! GULF COAST PROUD PARTNER



The 5-2-1-0 Partnership Challenge challenged Back Bay Mission to make positive changes in order to promote a healthier environment. Environments can highly influence and support behaviors around healthy eating and physical activity. By addressing the policies, practices, and environment that influence healthy lifestyle behaviors, Back Bay Mission is encouraging healthy eating and physical activity.

Make  Your Goal
EVERY DAY!

- 5** or more fruits & vegetables
- 2** hours or less recreational screen time*
- 1** hour or more of physical activity
- 0** sugary drinks, more water & low-fat milk

*Keep TV/Computer out of bedroom. No screen time under the age of 2.





Back Bay Mission

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