Back Bay Mission
Established in 1922

BACK BAY MISSION
strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

THE CHANGING TIDES

The Magazine of Back Bay Mission

Winter 2022

Blessings this Holiday Season and all the New Year through

A PRECIOUS GIFT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON pg. 5

MORE IMPORTANT THINGS pg. 7

HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK pg. 5

Reflections STORY

Executive Director
Pastor James Pennington

"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver". – Maya Angelou

We are living into our 100th year of service to the Mississippi Gulf Coast and to the wider United Church of Christ this holiday season. And we are grateful for you our supporters and volunteers who have given so much to Back Bay Mission over this past century. You have been a part of Back Bay Mission's "Making Good Trouble" and a part of our story.

As I write this Winter Newsletter article, we just served a delicious Thanksgiving meal to our unsheltered friend's compliments of the good folks at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi. We are so grateful to our partners on the coast and beyond. As I watched the tables fill with over 175 people, including our volunteers from Pleasant Hill, Tennessee, I was overwhelmed with the many stories of our Thanksgiving meal guests. Many stories I have heard and many that I have yet to hear. Maya Angelou said: "There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." I always appreciate the moments each day when one of our guests or clients receiving our services takes a moment to share their journey with me or with our staff. These stories give me strength and hope to keep doing the work of serving the most vulnerable in our community that have little opportunities to share their story as they often are ignored and go "unseen".

We all have a story to be told. Our stories are our truth, our experience, our gift to one another. Telling stories is the best way to teach, persuade, and even understand ourselves and "the other". I encourage you share your journey with your family, friends, and those you meet this holiday season.

I have learned from+ my own experience that we often "live inside" stories, putting ourselves in the other person's shoes and feeling a sense of emotional connection. Hearing someone's story of their personal experiences that bring them to the "now" can indeed fill us with empathy and a sense of our common humanity and divinity. This is what happens for me and the staff of Back Bay Mission when we take the time to stop and listen to our clients and one another and realize that we are in this together. These moments help us to set aside our divisions helping us move toward a shared humanity.

Give the gift of your story and share your journey this holiday season. Share both stories of your pain and your joys! Your story is a greater gift than any beautifully wrapped or amazon delivered package.

If I have learned anything from my intensive study of Maya Angelou over the years, it has been that she was one of the best story tellers I know. She said: "When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed!"

Let's give the gift of ourselves this season. Sharing our story will break down walls, help us know what it may be like to be in someone else's shoes, and fill us with compassion and empathy for one another and "the other".

Executive Director
Pastor James Pennington

find us online

IN MEMORY OF
MARY SUE WILSON FAIRCHILD
WALKWAY

A beautiful brick walkway was started at Back Bay Mission with the first placed bricks to be in memory of Mary Sue Wilson Fairchild, past Back Bay Mission board member. The First Congregational Church of Houston worked with Back Bay Mission to find a way to honor Mary's generous spirit for helping others. The bricks are proudly displayed in a walkway starting in front of the Mission House and then will be expanded down the sidewalk. You can participate and support Back Bay Mission by buying a brick or two or three to honor someone, commemorate

n trip, leave an inspiring note, and so on. Help us pave a way to a stronger future nd provide opportunities for those we serve. Brick orders will be taken until Saturday, December 31, 2022. To place a brick order please go to our dedicated webpage at www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/backbaymission.

Thank you again, Mary Sue Wilson Fairchild, for your generous spirit and dedication to supporting causes that improved the lives of others.

2022 DONATION TRIBUTES FROM AUGUST 12 - NOVEMBER 18

IN HONOR OF

Alice Graham
Bruno and Linda Schroeder
Bruno Schroeder
Carl Schofield
Entire Staff of Back Bay Mission
Jason Earl Davis
Jeanette Tangeman
John and Pam Small
Karlyn Stephens
Pullman UCC Mission Trip 20 Years Ago
Rev. David Taylor
Rev. Shari Prestemon
Sam Schroeder
Scott and Mark
Sheryl Prestemon
The Volunteers at Back Bay Mission
Youth Ministry of St. Paul UCC

IN MEMORY OF

Carol Pinckney
David Stephens
Edward & Alice Sorant
Frank and Esther Rocille
George M. Gibson
Janice A. Brino
Linda Ditzler
Marilyn Alexander
Marrella Ellis Upton
Nurse Mary Lou Miller from her Daughters
Patricia Grant
Rayfield and Esther Brown
'Rene' D. Hoyle III
Rev. Bob Bayler
Rev. Bob Bayler
Rev. J. Richard Coyle
Rev. Paul Baumer
Rev. Richard Plant
Rev. Richard Plant
Rev. Roger P. Felson
Rev. Stacy Weaver
Rev. William Homeister
Terry Tangeman

BACK BAY MISSION
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100 YEARS SINCE 1922
1012 Division St. Biloxi, MS 39530
P.O. Box 288 Biloxi, MS 39533
Phone (228) 432-0301 | Fax (228) 374-2922
www.thebackbaymission.org
Email: backbaymission@thebackbaymission.org

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HISTORY

As a continuation of Back Bay Mission's proud history of service on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in this issue of The Changing Tides you will see our history starting in 2000 to present.

2000s

The Mission begins repairing its relationship with the City of Biloxi and seeking funds from sources beyond the United Church of Christ. The Mission also identifies three key areas of work – the Center for Community Ministry, work camping opportunities (including international work camps), and homeless and housing initiatives – as well as emergency assistance. In this decade, the Mission will be integral in creating the Open Doors Homeless Coalition (2001) and the Interfaith Hospitality Network. The Mission also opens the Home At Last program (2002) and begins development on Bethel Estates (2009).

Hurricane Katrina: In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina decimated the Mississippi Gulf Coast, including the Mission. Six out of seven buildings were damaged beyond repair and the Mission was forced to operate out of Executive Director Shari Prestemon's home for a time. The Mission quickly obtains modular trailers and begins serving. The Mission reopens the administrative building in 2007 and dedicates the Micah Center and Mission House in 2009.

2010s

The Mission opened the Micah Day Center in 2010, providing a safe place for homeless and at-risk populations to enjoy fellowship and receive vital services, such as showers, laundry facilities, and clothing. In 2014, the Mission, through its subsidiary Gulf Coast Housing Initiative, opened HomePort I (a duplex), providing permanent supportive housing for veterans. HomePort II (a six-plex) opened in 2015, providing three times as much housing as HomePort I. In 2016, Back Bay Mission adds the EnergyWise Program in partnership with Gulf Coast Community Foundation and Mississippi Power. EnergyWise is a special program geared towards helping low-income Mississippi Power customers reduce their energy cost by providing weatherization improvements for homes that currently do not meet energy efficiency standards. In 2018, Back Bay Mission unveiled an updated BBM logo and revised BBM mission statement: Strengthening Neighborhoods, Seeking Justice, Transforming Lives!

BACK BAY MISSION
strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

2020s

In 2022, the Mission turns 100! This joyous accomplishment is celebrated and kicks off a $3.6 million Capital Campaign to move us forward into our next 100 years. November 2022, Back Bay Mission acquires Rebekah's House. Rebekah's House is a home used to house up to three unsheltered families with supportive surrounded services as they prepare for permanent housing.

A MOST PRECIOUS GIFT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON!

It Back Bay Mission received a generous gift this holiday season. A gift that will allow us to temporarily house three unsheltered families under a roof as they find their footing and prepare for permanent housing. The gift of Rebekah's House came from the Ocean Springs – Long Beach Interfaith Hospitality Network, who previously operated the house for families.

Back Bay Mission's staff members are elated with this gift of being able to provide temporary accommodations for families in the near future that would otherwise be homeless on the streets. This will allow us to house and case manage these families all in the comfort of their temporary home as we walk with them on their journey. Many families are one step away from joining the unsheltered population. Currently families make up 40% of the homeless population. Too many parents must face the unthinkable of not being able to provide shelter for their children. It could be due to loss of a job, injury, disaster, inability to find affordable housing, and many other reasons out of their control. Back Bay Mission will be sharing more information of this special gift, Rebekah's House, as we get closer to opening our doors to those families in need!

HUNGER & HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS WEEK

AT BACK BAY MISSION

It is great to be #1 in some things but heartbreaking to be #1 in the United States for other things such as HUNGER. It's true, Mississippi has the worst hunger problem in America. Almost 1 in 4 Mississippians don't have enough to eat. More than 1 in 4 children go to bed hungry most every night. More than half of Mississippi's seniors experience regular shortfalls in food. Hunger is a problem across America. But here it's practically an epidemic. Clearly, both poverty and hunger are intertwined, which you can see as Mississippi is also America's poorest state.

In Mississippi over 1,100 people are homeless on any given night with at least 200 of those individuals residing on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Back Bay Mission directly works with this population in many ways such as our Micah Day Center, Homeless Outreach, HomePort I & II, and the newly acquired Rebekah's House.

Back Bay Mission brought awareness to the Hunger & Homelessness epidemic through hosting two events. The first event was the Hunger & Homelessness Bike/Run/Walk that was held on November 12, 2022, the kick-off date for Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week. Back Bay Mission welcomed sponsors and in-person participants starting at 7:30 am Saturday morning. The bike, run, and walk started at 8:00 a.m. The second event was an early Thanksgiving Meal provided and served by Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi at Back Bay Mission. This was the 16th Annual Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Meal that Hard Rock Hotel & Casino has provided. This meal is meant to promote the awareness of those that are homeless and hungry. Hard Rock Hotel & Casino provided over 175 meals to everyone who came, to sit at our tables and share in a Thanksgiving feast. They not only received fellowship (all the tables were full in the Micah day Center) but also plenty to eat during the meal! Plus, they were even given to-go options so they could have a meal to take with them.

We would like to thank those that sponsored the Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Bike/Run/Walk: Biloxi Bicycle Works, Scarlet Pearl Casino Resort, Keesler Federal Credit Union, Knight Abbey, Keesler Spouses Club, Ocean Springs Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Humana, Martinis, and all those who participated! We also send a big thank you to Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Biloxi for providing the Hunger Homeless Meal again for the 16th year! We would also like to thank our local news stations, WLOX and WXXV25, for providing information and coverage for each of these events.

CONGRATULATIONS EVERETT LEWIS!

Everett Lewis will be enjoying retirement as of December 16, 2022. Everett came to Back Bay Mission (BBM) to start the Affordable Housing Program on July 19, 2006. BBM was expanding to provide affordable housing alongside of the housing rehabilitation. After hurricane Katrina the need for housing was at an all-time high because so many homes were destroyed. BBM needed to help fill these needs. Everett was the right person to get this program up and running. He had a background in banking and former nonprofit experience working with low-income families as they strive to become single-family homeowners.

In 2006 the work began to expand the single-family homeownership program into Gulf Coast Housing Initiative, Inc. (GCHI). The separate corporation was named in 2007 and received its 501c3 nonprofit status in 2009. BBM and GCHI moved forward together to provide opportunities for low-income homeowners. Once a home was acquired by GCHI a group of volunteers from BBM and the Housing Rehabilitation staff would work to get the home 100% sustainable and ready for a first-time low-income buyer. Out of all of the stories of new ownership, one story really sticks out to Everett during his years here. A story that speaks of the purpose for GCHI. During a closing for a new homeowner a young mother started talking and stated that she had been up since 3:00 am crying. She just could not believe she was able to afford as nice of home for her and her children. This was more than she could have wished for herself and her family, and she started to cry again. To this day this story gives him goosebumps for knowing what an impact this program makes in the lives of those we serve. Everett at that time knew he was living his purpose and was grounded to his work more than ever.

Everett takes great pride in the work GCHI is doing with former homeless veterans. Under his supervision and in collaboration with BBM HomePort I & II were built to house 8 homeless veterans directly from the street. These units are equipped with everything a person needs. These apartments have served many veterans over the years. Everett has been there for each and every one of the veterans as they are given the opportunity to move forward.

Everett is now looking forward to retirement and starting his morning walk at 7:00 am instead of 5:00 am. Everett said, "Life is busy and I never feel I have enough time; I look forward to being in control of how and where I spend my time. I will have no plans for at least the first six months of retirement."

Everett said that his years spent at BBM and GCHI has given him a different perspective of beliefs, things he was taught in young adulthood. His time here allowed him to be more open minded in terms of meeting people where they are. Not as judgmental and having a better understanding of grace because of the work we do. It has led to enriching his faith.

What does he see as the future for GCHI? Everett said, "We could look at affordable housing in a broader sense not just homeownership. Providing affordable rental housing can be a viable alternative to homeownership. When overall costs of renting are less than owning the extra funds can be used strategically, freeing up funds to invest and build resources."

Everett has always been a person people can go to for words of wisdom. He leaves us with a final thought of connectiveness. He said, "All things are interconnected. If you believe the creation story, how do we look at another human being as being less than if we truly believe what scriptures teach us about creation? How can we not value and treasure all of God's creation. The work we do at GCHI and BBM reminds others to not get complacent on how we view our fellowman and treating each other as fellow human beings."

We want to say thank you for Everett Lewis and for his 16 years spent at GCHI and BBM! We wish you all the best in your retirement adventures!!

2024 Mission Trip Calendar Opens on January 1

It's time to start thinking about your 2024 mission trip! Mission trips to Back Bay Mission are great opportunities for learning, service, and fellowship. These week-long immersive mission experiences teach participants about poverty on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and prepare groups to serve in their own communities. Our 2024 mission trip calendar opens at midnight, central time, on January 1, 2023!

Popular dates, especially during the summer and spring break season, fill up fast.

MORE IMPORTANT THINGS

By Vince Amlin

A woman named Martha welcomed Jesus into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks... The Lord answered her, "There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part." – Luke 10:38-42 (NRSV, abridged)

"Well, Mimi," he says, and launches us into another round of conversation. We had been trying to leave. Had already said goodbye. In his apartment. On his porch. Here on the sidewalk.

Now we're talking again.

I am supposed to be working. I'm on a mission trip at Back Bay* in Biloxi, spending the week rehabbing a house, staffing the day center, volunteering in the food pantry.

We came to this man's apartment to deliver a sofa and love seat. And we delivered them. Forty-five minutes ago! I'm feeling anxious, thinking there are more important things I should be doing.

But Mimi is not. She turns to listen to the man as if she has all the time in the world. As if she won't see him tomorrow. As if she hadn't seen him yesterday.

And she did.

Mimi is his caseworker. And yesterday she took pictures as, after ten years of being unhoused, this man turned the key to open his new apartment.

He has questions. He has plans. He has feelings. And she is here for all of it.

I take the cue, turn back, and listen. And I am reminded for the hundredth time this week that I am not here to move a sofa, or put down flooring, or stack cans. I am here for more important things.

Prayer

God, stop me in my tracks and turn me toward my neighbor.

****Back Bay Mission is a United Church of Christ mission doing incredible work on Mississippi's Gulf Coast. Since Covid-19, they have only a third of their usual church groups coming down to volunteer.***

About the Author

Vince Amlin is co-pastor of Bethany UCC, Chicago, and co-planter of Gilead Church Chicago, forming now

A Note on End of Year Gifts

As the end of the year approaches, you're probably thinking about your next gift to Back Bay Mission. We want to share some important information – especially important if you want to claim your gift on your taxes for this year – about the end of year gifts to the Mission.

If you're mailing your gift to Back Bay Mission, it must be postmarked by December 31, 2022. Gifts postmarked after that date will be counted for 2023. Please mail your gifts to Back Bay Mission, PO Box 288, Biloxi, MS 39533.

If you're making your gift on our website or APP, you must make the gift by 11:59 pm central time on December 31, 2022. You can make your gift at thebackbaymission.org/give.

Thank you for strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, and transforming lives through your gifts to Back Bay Mission!

Alternative Gift Ideas for the Holidays

- *Gift a Brick in Someone's Honor (https://www.bricksrus.com/donorsite/backbaymission)*
- *Gift a Ticket to the Making Good Trouble Conference (https://give.classy.org/trouble)*
- *Make a Tribute Donation in Someone's Honor or Memory (https://thebackbaymission.org/give/#give-now)*
- *Gift an Item from BBM's Making Good Trouble Logo Wear (https://www.bonfire.com/backbaymission/)*

STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS, SEEKING JUSTICE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

BACK BAY MISSION

strengthening neighborhoods, seeking justice, transforming lives

100 YEARS — SINCE 1922

1012 Division Street
Biloxi, Mississippi 39530