

Planning a Fair Housing Awareness Religious Service

APRIL IS NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH. Fair housing means that individuals and families can rent or purchase homes regardless of race, religion, disability, presence of children, national origin, and other classes as protected by Federal, State, and Cook County law. Unfortunately, in the northern suburbs of Chicago, discrimination remains an everyday reality for a large number of home seekers — more than half. This is a social justice issue.

Pick a date. Ask your appropriate congregation committee or religious leaders for approval of a Fair Housing Sabbath/Service date.

Get help. Depending on the size of your congregation, you may want or need help in planning the Fair Housing Sabbath/Service. Social action, mission, or justice committees can help you plan a successful, educative sermon or event. The *Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs*, of which you are a member and supporter in carrying out *your* fair housing mission, is always available to you (847-501-5760 or www.interfaithhousingcenter.org).

Ask for volunteers. Try to involve as many people as possible. Make sure religious education leaders are aware of the Fair Housing Sabbath and encourage them to explore the topic in their classes.

Announce your upcoming Fair Housing Awareness Sabbath or Service.

Add fair housing information to your materials or newsletter. You can call the Interfaith Housing Center for such information. Other sources of information on fair housing include the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which has an extensive Internet site (www.hud.gov) and an information clearinghouse, the Illinois Department of Human Rights, and the Cook County Commission on Human Rights.



Responsive Reading: World Peace Prayer

RESPONSE: Lead us from death to life,
From falsehood to truth,
From despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead us from hate to love,
From war to peace,
Let peace fill our hearts,
Let peace fill our world,
Let peace fill our universe.

Reader: Still all the angry cries, still all the angry guns,
Still now your people die,
Earth's sons and daughters.
Let justice roll, let mercy pour down,
Come and teach us your way of compassion.

Congregation: Response

Reader: So many lonely hearts, so many broken lives,
Longing for love to break into their darkness.
Come, teach us love, come, teach us peace,
Come and teach us your way of compassion.

Congregation: Response

Reader: Let justice roll, let mercy fill the earth,
Let us begin to grow into your people.
We can be love, we can bring peace,
We can still be your way of compassion.

Congregation: Response

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Scripture Readings: Reflections on Social Justice

Isaiah 55: 3 - 7

- 55:3 Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.
- 55:4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples.
- 55:5 Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of God, the Holy One of Israel, for God has endowed you with splendor."
- 55:6 Seek the Eternal while God may be found; call on God while God is near.
- 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to God, and God will have mercy on him, for God will freely pardon.

Isaiah 58: 1, 5-12

- 58:1 "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins.
- 58:5 Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to God?
- 58:6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?
- 58:7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
- 58:8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Eternal will be your rear guard.
- 58:9 Then you will call, and God will answer; you will cry for help, and God will say: Here am I. "If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
- 58:10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.
- 58:11 The Eternal will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.
- 58:12 Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.



INTERFAITH HOUSING CENTER OF THE NORTHERN SUBURBS

CREATING A DIVERSE, WELCOMING, FAIR COMMUNITY

NEXT STEPS

1. Become an active member of the Interfaith Housing Center of the Northern Suburbs (IHCNS), through assigning a congregational/organizational representative to attend meetings and events regularly, and donating funds.
2. Volunteer to be a fair housing tester for Interfaith.
3. Organize a public, interfaith dialogue in your community on open housing.
4. Preach and encourage study by a social action or mission committee on the subject of housing needs in the northern suburbs, and the moral response.
5. “Adopt” a Section 8 certificate holder, senior or family, and assist in locating housing nearby (a landlord/property manager in the congregation might be solicited).
6. Ensure that congregation members know their fair housing rights and responsibilities as they consider selling, purchasing, or renting homes.
7. Encourage a community-wide day celebrating cultural differences of residents.
8. Identify bankers/funders and developers in congregations and engage their interest and support for affordable housing
9. Identify local employers in congregations and engage them in housing solutions for low-income employees who have long-distance commutes.
10. Get involved with (or establish) a human relations commission in your community to create a strong mechanism to deal with fair housing complaints and fair housing issues.
11. Encourage local governments to adopt and implement affordable housing plans.
12. Work toward establishing a Housing Commission in every community.
13. Work toward mandatory distribution by Realtors of fair housing information in every community (like Evanston and Wilmette).
14. Create and adopt a “Declaration of the Faithful” or declaratory statement on open housing.
15. Encourage letter-writing to local and city papers re moral imperative to address accommodating the housing needs of people with diverse economic, physical, and racial backgrounds.

