



In the early 1990's, Trinity Lutheran Church, a 155 year old congregation near downtown Cleveland, began to minister to the many previously unchurched people moving into the neighborhood. God blessed this congregation with a renewal of its ministry with growth and expansion especially among Appalachians and Hispanic people.

Blessed by God in their efforts, the leadership at Trinity began to see a larger opportunity for outreach and renewal by all the Lutheran congregations in the city. God wanted the entire city as His own. They saw that God wanted all the congregations to be vibrant mission outposts. Thus, Building Hope in the City (BHITC) was born to accomplish this goal.

Under the leadership of Rev. Jeffrey Johnson, who previously served as a church planter and missionary in Africa and is now serving as Senior Pastor and executive director of BHITC, the organization began to accomplish its mission in two ways: first, by cross cultural mission and church planting and second, by helping to renew existing urban congregations through consulting, mentoring and supporting the development of new outreach programs.

To date, BHITC includes ministries such as the following:

- † Arabic Mission;
- † African Immigrant Mission;
- † Hispanic Ministry Renewal;
- † Equipping Urban Pastors for Urban Mission; and
- † Renewing Urban Congregations

BHITC has offered the following programs which have proved effective in serving the needs of the people whom God has brought to the cities and introducing many to the love of God in Jesus:

- † English as a Second Language Classes (ESL) led by members of the congregations;
- † Bible studies;
- † African cultural events;
- † Leadership development and outreach training;
- † Mentoring and leadership training for six new urban pastors in Cleveland, Youngstown and Cincinnati; and
- † Consultation and support for five urban congregations in Cleveland and Akron offering them assistance, volunteers, and financial support to launch new outreach programs.

With support from the LWML and others, BHITC is developing several "Urban Family Learning Centers" in congregations in Cleveland, Akron, Youngstown, and Cincinnati. Outreach programs such as the following are being established and/or expanded to reach many children for Jesus in these cities:

- † Saturday School that provides a year round weekly ministry of music, crafts and Scripture memorization plus a nourishing meal;
- † Academic Tutoring Sessions which begin and end with prayer;
- † ESL/ Computer Training for Immigrant Families; and
- † Sports Ministry for Immigrant Children.

May God continue to bless these efforts to His glory and for the good of His people.

*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Luke 18:16NIV)*