

March 1, 2010

A missionary team from Amity United Methodist Church spent Thanksgiving week 2009 renovating a building that provides clean and safe drinking water to a neighborhood in the Dominican Republic. Of course, we are saddened, but not surprised by, third-world sanitation conditions in a third-world country.

Little did we know that third-world-like conditions exist in a neighborhood in our own backyard – in Chapel Hill – one of North Carolina’s most affluent cities – in the United States of America!

How ironic. While we were helping provide clean and safe drinking water thirteen hundred miles away, brothers and sisters a mere four miles from our doorstep have been crying thirty-seven years for the same opportunity.

We heard their story on Sunday, February 28, at one of our Lenten forums designed to educate Amity’s congregation on social issues important to our community. They assured us that this Saturday, March 6, as we begin work on a United Methodist Habitat for Humanity home, we will smell the stench from a landfill long-promised to close, and see the buzzards it attracts. Lured by the trash, they congregate on power lines because their own habitat has been destroyed. They further contaminate the streams in which area children play and the mud puddles where they wait for school buses on heavily traveled roads that lack sidewalks or paved bus stops.

We have been invited into Rogers/Eubanks Roads homes, but may not find the brown tap water appealing to drink. Rightly so – its levels of contamination exceed safe drinking water standards by a multiple of seven. Questions remain as to the source. Is it the landfill . . . the buzzards . . . seepage from community septic tanks? Does it really matter?

Sewer and water lines run right by, and sometimes through, the streets and yards of this historic community. Yet the residents, despite years of broken promises, still cannot hook up to them. Even if they were allowed to connect, many would find it financially prohibitive to do so.

We, as a church, support the [Rogers-Eubanks Coalition](#) in their quest to bring 20th century technology to our neighbors living in 21st century Chapel Hill-Carrboro. They deserve to enjoy the benefits that they have **so long been promised but denied** – benefits the rest of us take for granted: safe, clean, assessable drinking water and a sanitary means of waste disposal.

We entreat - we urge you – not to miss upcoming deadlines for block grant programs to improve air and water quality to the Rogers/Eubanks community. The time for apologies and excuses is past. The time for action is now.

Sincerely,

Amity United Methodist Church