

## **The Nehemiah Project**

### **Making Racine Beautiful with Gardens**

*Presented by The Rev. William Thomkins, Pastor of the Fellowship of Christian Believers and Director of the Nehemiah Project.*

The Nehemiah Project began with the church asking the question, “If we left this place, what difference would we have made?” They started with the goal to set up 35 gardens in the four block area around their church. Instead, that same year, they planted 225 gardens of vegetables and flowers with the commitment to keep the gardens going for 5 years. Now they have 100 volunteers and 650 names of people who benefit from their gardens.

They have also enhanced the beauty and safety of *the city park nearby, the block between villa and Park and between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street*—with flowers, benches, trash bins, and regular clean-ups. It is now a safe place for families and friends to gather and enjoy the surroundings.

The program is based on collaboration between the church, the city government, local businesses, and especially the people themselves, who take very active ownership in the process. The program brings family together and promotes responsibility and pride in local residents. The church has a similar program that they sponsor in Haiti.

The Nehemiah Project has recently been given the task of beautifying Racine as part of the American Beautification program.

The Nehemiah Project is based on a biblical passage:

*When Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah heard of the destruction of his people and their Holy City Jerusalem, he wept and mourned for many days. So it came to pass that after many days of fasting and prayer, that the favor of the Lord the king fell upon Nehemiah to rebuild the Holy city Jerusalem and in turn restore its people. Paraphrased (Nehemiah 1)*

Nehemiah’s heart for the things of God, and his process of rebuilding Jerusalem, is the model for the works currently being done by the Nehemiah Project today. The Nehemiah Project was founded in 2003 by Pastor Bill Thompkins. It was the cry of his heart and his church, 'the Fellowship of Christian Believers' to see the destruction of their city repaired and its people’s lives restored, that birthed the Nehemiah Project.

Our next noisy offering will be June 15-16 and will be divided between the Nehemiah Project - Racine and the St. Andrew Community Garden.

For more information, see <http://www.racinegreencongregations.org/the-nehemiah-project>