

## Members

*Allied Justice Seekers*  
*Bon Air Presbyterian*  
*Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Catholic*  
*Church of the Redeemer Catholic*  
*Congregation Or Ami*  
*East End Fellowship*  
*Ebenezer Baptist*  
*Faith Community Baptist*  
*First Congregational Christian Church of Christ*  
*First Presbyterian*  
*First Unitarian Universalist*  
*Mt. Carmel Baptist*  
*New Light Baptist*  
*Sacred Heart Catholic*  
*Second Baptist (Southside)*  
*Southminster Presbyterian*  
*St. Elizabeth Catholic*  
*St. John's Episcopal*  
*St. Paul's Episcopal*  
*Temple Beth El*  
*Third Street Bethel AME*  
*Three Chopt Presbyterian*  
*Union Presbyterian Seminary*  
*Unitarian Universalist Community*



## What is RISC?

RISC – Richmonders Involved to Strengthen Our Communities - is an organization made up of congregations from throughout Richmond, Henrico and Chesterfield. Founded in 2002, we use the power of large numbers of organized people to solve critical community problems. We are not a direct service provider, rather we are a grassroots, direct action, multi-issue organization.

## How does RISC work?

RISC follows a yearly process that focuses on building and strengthening a Justice Ministry (Rodef Tzedek) Network at each member congregation. In the Fall, Team Leaders host House Meetings to discuss community problems and engage participants as Network Members. From November through March, Issue Committees are formed to conduct research into the problems, and ultimately come up with specific, winnable solutions. The Nehemiah Action is held in the Spring, where thousands gather to ask public officials to implement these solutions. After the Nehemiah Action, leaders follow up on the commitments made at the Action, and Network Members are invited to invest in RISC.

### *Justice Ministry (Rodef Tzedek) Network Members Commit to the Following:*

- 1) Attend the 4 RISC Assemblies of the year –**  
The Community Problems Assembly (October 30, 2023)  
The Rally (February 27, 2024)  
The Nehemiah Action (March 19, 2024)  
The Justice Ministry Celebration (June 3, 2024)
- 2) Bring at least 3 people to the NEHEMIAH ACTION**
- 3) Consider an investment of \$200 or more in justice ministry**

## Our Vision for Justice Ministry

Micah 6:8 provides a clear list of requirements for God's people: to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

We believe that doing justice is a core part of our faith traditions, and yet one that is often overlooked. Our vision is to build up the Justice Ministries (Rodef Tzedek) within each congregation such that justice is an integral part of the culture.

In 2023, we turned out nearly 1,200 people to our Nehemiah Action. Through building the power of organized people, we believe we will transform the Richmond area, such that justice can and will be realized for all.

## What is RISC currently working on?

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We had a crisis in our city *before* COVID, and it has gotten worse. Half of all Richmond residents cannot afford their monthly rent. In 2014, RISC got the city to start putting money into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. However, not enough money was put in and it has not resulted in units for the households in the most need.

In 2021, we won passage of an ordinance that established a dedicated stream of funding for the Trust Fund. This dedicated stream was to start out at \$2.4 million, but was projected to grow to \$10 million (and beyond) within a few short years. However, the city administration refused to follow this Ordinance.

This past Spring, after continuing to cry out about the crisis, the city administration agreed to allocate an estimated \$10 million in bond revenue to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, for the next 5 years (for a total of \$50 million). This year, we are calling upon the city to allocate an additional \$10 million early in dedicated tax revenue, to even more meaningfully address this crisis.

### GUN VIOLENCE

Our city's gun violence crisis is only worsening; this year has seen a 12% increase in overall homicides.

Since June of 2020, we have been calling upon Mayor Stoney to bring a proven gun violence intervention program called Group Violence Intervention (GVI) to our city. GVI has been implemented in dozens of cities across the country, and has been proven to cut homicides in half or more. Last Summer, because of our persistence, one of our allies – REAL Life – received state and federal funding to implement GVI. However, this past February the city officially refused REAL Life's offer. REAL Life moved on to Hopewell, where GVI is now up and running and so far has resulted in a 67% reduction in shootings and homicides since June,.

While we remain prayerful that our current Richmond mayoral administration will implement this proven program, we have begun meeting with mayoral candidates to begin getting them on board with GVI. We are planning a Gun Violence Roundtable for May 20<sup>th</sup>, and a Mayoral Candidates' Forum for August 29<sup>th</sup>.

### HEALTHY HOMES

In the Fall of 2021, we identified another problem that is both a housing issue, and an environmental justice issue. 6,000 – 7,000 people are living in mobile homes that are in terrible states of disrepair. As a result, families are living in extreme heat in the summer, and extreme cold in the winter. Water leaking into these homes is also common, causing mold and causing walls, floors and roofs to deteriorate.

We identified a mobile home repair and replacement program as our solution. And, after we persisted for over a year, Richmond City Council allocated \$800,000 for this program this past Spring. We plan to ensure the funding is allocated, and that families' homes are repaired / replaced. We will also be working to ensure that a significantly greater amount of funding gets allocated this coming year.

---

## What has RISC accomplished in recent years?

- ✓ **935 units of affordable housing** were developed or preserved between 2015 and 2021, using funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund we got the City to fund.
- ✓ **Almost 3,000 families** have been able to stay in their homes, as the result of a **\$6 million allocation to emergency rental assistance** we were able to get Mayor Stoney to make in the summer of 2020.
- ✓ Approximately **500 families a year** receive financial assistance and counseling, and keep an eviction off their record, through the **Eviction Diversion Program** we won in 2019.
- ✓ **Hundreds** of low-income, job seekers have completed the **VCU Pathways Program** we won, that started in June of 2018. This is a pipeline to in demand healthcare careers with work readiness and mentorship components.