



## **A GROWING MISSION PARTNER IN A TROUBLED URBAN SETTING**

Garden Homes Lutheran Church (2450 W. Roosevelt Drive-Milwaukee) began in 1927, taking its name from the Garden Homes neighborhood which it serves. Launched in the early 1920's, the Garden Homes neighborhood was the first and only socialist, cooperative housing project in America. The neighborhood, begun during Milwaukee's socialist mayor, Daniel Hone, has a national, state, and local historical designation because of its one-architect design, assembly-line construction, and purpose of providing Milwaukee families with affordable housing in a beautiful "garden-like" community. The center of the 100-home neighborhood is Garden Homes Park. This grand, socialist experiment was to be replicated throughout the country, but that never happened. As politics, economics, society, and priorities changed in America, they also changed in Milwaukee, impacting the Garden Homes neighborhood in dramatic and negative ways.



*Today, Garden Homes Lutheran Church and School (left) sit on the corner of the Garden Homes project (see arrow) shown above in partial development.*

Today, the Garden Homes development has about 90 functioning homes, the others having burned down, been torn down by the City of Milwaukee, or remain abandoned. This once "garden-like" community, as well as the neighborhoods around it, are now marked by poverty, unemployment, and crime. It is within this troubled, urban setting that our mission partner carries on its ministry.

## **GARDEN HOMES FIGHTS “WHITE FLIGHT” AND FIGHTS FOR ITS NEIGHBORHOOD**

Garden Homes Lutheran Church (GHLC) began as a predominantly white congregation. As the ethnicity of this Milwaukee neighborhood transitioned, so did GHLC. But instead of joining the “white flight” GHLC stood firm, and with God’s help has become a pillar of strength and hope in one of Milwaukee’s most impoverished and crime-riddled neighborhoods.



*Confirmation Class of 1938*



*Confirmation Class of 2016*

Average, monthly crime statistics for the Garden Homes neighborhood record 8 burglaries, 16 thefts, 27 assaults, 5 shootings, 7 incidents of vandalism, 6 arrests, 3 robberies, and 38 other situations where police are called. But under God’s gracious guidance, Garden Homes Lutheran Church and School are helping to turn Milwaukee’s inner city around by changing for all eternity the lives of the children and families God sends their way. In the past five years alone, Garden Homes Lutheran has seen 130 baptisms and 57 adult confirmations. 628 evangelism visits have been made. The GHLC food pantry serves over 80 families per month with food for body and soul. 100 families per year receive clothing.

Today, through God’s grace and blessing, and the solid faith of its members, Garden Homes Lutheran Church is an active, 300+ member congregation that is 70% African-American and 30% white. Its old school, across Roosevelt Drive from the church, is now the home of Lighthouse Youth Center-Garden Homes, a WELS affiliated, after school ministry for neighborhood 5<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders. A modern two-story school was completed in 2002, and now holds an enrollment of 245 students in 3K-Grade 8. 95% of these students are African-American and 82% receive free or reduced lunch. Garden Homes Lutheran School (GHLS) was the 2<sup>nd</sup> WELS school to enter the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 2000. Now, over a dozen Milwaukee area WELS elementary schools and Wisconsin Lutheran High School enroll Choice students. Every year, about 50% of GHLS graduates continue their Christian education at Wisconsin Lutheran.



## **LIGHTHOUSE – ANOTHER BEACON OF HOPE AND HELP**

Garden Homes Lutheran Church (GHLC), located at 24<sup>th</sup> and Roosevelt in Milwaukee’s “Inner City” has become a stabilizing force within a very troubled neighborhood. Rather than flee, the congregation adapted and served. Today, an active congregation supports a state of the art Lutheran elementary school that is recognized as one of the best urban schools in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program. In addition, GHLC distributes food and clothing to hundreds of community members each year. Best of all, Garden Homes Lutheran Church and School are a beacon of hope, sharing the amazing grace of God in Christ with neighborhood families who need help like few others.

But all of this was still not enough for the loving, serving souls that make up the Garden Homes Lutheran family. In April 2012, Lighthouse Youth Center opened its second location in Garden Homes Lutheran’s old school building, across Roosevelt Drive from the church. After the congregation completed its new school in 2002, they rented out their old school building (see below) to a Milwaukee Public Schools Montessori School for \$100,000 per year. In June of 2011, Garden Homes’ congregation voted to forgo this rental arrangement and instead donated the space to Lighthouse to open its second ministry location (the other location is 5641 N. 68<sup>th</sup> Street). After an extensive, year-long renovation, Lighthouse Youth Center at Garden Homes opened its doors and became an additional beacon of hope and help for the community.



Now, Lighthouse works with Garden Homes Lutheran to offer critical services to 50-70 neighborhood and member youth each day, providing a central location where children in grades 5-12 can gather safely for recreational activities, receive academic support, enjoy the positive influence of adult Christian mentors, and have opportunities to study and discuss the truths of God’s Word.

## **MISSION PARTNERS IN CHRIST**

St. Paul’s and Garden Homes hope to nurture their relationship and advance their partnership in the months ahead. If you’d like to see a list of needs that Garden Homes Lutheran Church and School and the Lighthouse Youth Center have, call Dr. Joel Nelson at 414-422-0320 ext. 145 or e-mail: [jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org](mailto:jnelson@stpaulmuskego.org).