



Introducing the Jubilee Initiative (Part 3)

Last week I wrote about the Economics of Compassion Initiative (ECI), and a little bit about the Neighborhood Economics Conference hosted by Xavier University and co-sponsored by Christ Church Cathedral.

One of the great parts about being involved in ECI is getting to know people I otherwise wouldn't get to know, like [Peter Block](#) and [Walter Brueggemann](#). I'd been reading Dr. Brueggemann's books since the mid-nineties, and had met him a few times before I moved to Cincinnati, but I still can't get over having him in my phone contacts!

Besides theological superstars like Dr. Brueggemann, I've also gotten to know people who are doing great work around Cincinnati and the world around economic justice and imagining alternative economics.

The second time I [spoke](#) at a Jubilee Dialogue, I met Thomas Hargis, the founder of [Jubilee Ministries](#), who has become a partner of Christ Church Cathedral and a good friend, and, while not a member of the Jubilee Initiative team, has certainly been an inspiration and a co-conspirator. [He](#) was one of many partners with whom I was able to spend time at the Neighborhood Economics Conference.

The night before the Neighborhood Economics Conference began, Dr. Nancy Bertaux of Xavier University invited me to have dinner with a group of people who were welcoming one of the speakers, [Mark Anielski](#), a Canadian economist and accountant, who wrote a book called [The Economics of Happiness](#). Mark and I talked over dinner about Jubilee and the theology of interest/usury (historically condemned by the Church), debt, and debt slavery. At the Neighborhood Economics conference he and I talked several times and at some point I asked him what he would do in terms of economic justice if he were part of the leadership of a congregation with a sizeable endowment. His answer was that he would want to explore creating an alternative lending institution that could invest in local neighborhoods without charging interest.

That idea excited not just me, but Rosa Lee Harden and Kevin Jones, co-founders of [SOCAP](#) (and good friends of Dean Greenwell), and their partner in crime in the Neighborhood Economics conference, and New Parish guru, Tim Soerens, who sat together with Mark, me, and a few others dreaming and brainstorming about what this might look like.

Next week – the Jubilee Initiative Idea.