

## ► on faith

# Housing instability is personal, real

By Marrton Dormish

When my wife breaks out her flower watering pot and starts asking me to fix things around the house I know it's about time for Pentecost, that private-dinner-turned-Holy-Fire-alarm-turned-proto-United-Nations-assembly that prompted early followers of Jesus to seem drunk before 9 a.m. Spurred by their encounter, Jesus' disciples sold their property and possessions for distribution "as anyone had need," as the Book of Acts puts it.

The phrase "as anyone had need" reminds me of the many Broomfield non-profits, government agencies, coalitions, advisory councils, faith communities and everyday residents who regularly help their neighbors. Of course, we as a community have many different "needs," but our biggest need is for affordable housing.

My colleagues at local service agencies and I have long noted the growing number of people seeking help with housing deposits and repairs and avoiding eviction. We routinely point (export?) those seeking immediate, temporary housing to Boulder and Denver, but for all the good those shelters do, more and more people, it seems, are choosing to stay in their vehicles or on the street.

Among them are entrepreneurs and veterans, retirees and survivors of domestic violence, and engineers. There's also no telling at this point how many of our neighbors find themselves "doubled or tripled up" with friends or family.

It's no wonder that two of the 15 priorities approved by Broomfield's city council ear-



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lier this year are to "Quantify and provide resources for mental health issues, opioid addiction and homelessness" and to "Expand housing opportunities."

Since 2010, housing prices have nearly doubled in some parts of the Front Range, as the Enterprise reported last month. New construction in Broomfield continues to lean heavily toward high-end properties. High fair market rents and low rental vacancy rates make it difficult for many to make their homes in Broomfield. At the same time, the 2,800 or so Broomfield residents who live under the federal poverty threshold and those living on fixed incomes find it difficult to stay.

No magic metric or infusion of federal Community Development Block Grant funds is going to make all these realities disappear, because our housing crisis isn't simply a math problem. Every person suffering from housing instability has a face, a name, a story and a unique set of circumstances that requires all kinds of support.

The inevitable questions of organizing, funding, staffing, and companioning leave us, like those early disciples of Jesus, in an "upper room" waiting for inspiration.

Tongues of fire, come, help us collaboratively, compassionately and creatively nurture a better Broomfield full of housing opportunities for all who would call our community "home."

*Marrton Dormish is minister of community outreach at The Refuge in Broomfield.*