

**Park Avenue Faith Community
Collaborative Meeting Notes
November 20, 2008**

Attending

1. Bruce Wallace, *First Presbyterian Church*
2. Jodi Cooper, *Mosaic Community Development*
3. Vicar Aaron Decker, *First Lutheran Church*
4. Kay Lynn Goldner, *First Unitarian Church*
5. Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*
6. Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*
7. Kevin Marik, *Metropolitan Community Church*
8. Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*
9. Rev. Kate Rohde, *First Unitarian Church*
10. Wanda Selzer, *First Lutheran Church*
11. Rev. Jonathan Sloan, *First Presbyterian Church*
12. Dr. Russ Smith, *University of Nebraska, Omaha*
13. Stephen Stout, *Good Neighbor Ministries*
14. Walt Zecchini, *Good Neighbor Ministries*

Overview

- Members of the Park Avenue faith community met on Nov. 20, 2008 at First Presbyterian church.
- The primary focus of the meeting was to share and discuss updates about current projects (Winter Clothing Drive and Community Meals), discuss results of “naming’ survey, and finally, determine a name for the collaboration.
- Meeting agendas (attached) were distributed, brief introductions were made, and the meeting was facilitated by Dr. Russ Smith.

Updates

Winter Clothing Drive

- Kevin Marik reported on the November 13, 2008 Winter Clothing Drive meeting held at First Presbyterian Church. The following conclusions were made at the Nov. 13 meeting:
 - Representatives from five parishes attended the meeting and brainstormed ideas about how to efficiently and effectively collect clothes within the collaboration churches and organizations.
 - There is a great need for winter clothes in the neighborhood, especially for children.
 - Clothes will be collected within churches and delivered to First Baptist Church by church members.
 - Clothes will be distributed via the Community Meals clothing closet every two weeks.
 - Unfortunately, this November and December (economy, end of year, etc.) are untimely for receiving donations from local retailers.
- The discussion about the Winter Clothes Drive continued during the Nov. 20 meeting. The following was concluded or discussed:

- Brittany Hanson will e-mail Winter Clothes Drive flyers and posters to all churches and organizations participating in the Faith Leader Collaboration; files will be in Word format so 'Donation Drop-off' information can be edited by each church.
- Sue Endicott (First Baptist Church member) currently organizes the Clothing Closet, and would like to have an evening gathering for people from all churches and organizations to organize the donated clothing while getting to know each other.
 - If interested, contact Sue Endicott:

Work Phone:	(402) 334-8887
Cell Phone:	(402) 650-9474
E-mail:	sue@omhcoxmail.com
- All additional Winter Clothing Drive details are included in the flyers and posters to be sent out by Brittany Hanson.

Community Meals

- Pr. Kip Mickelson reminded group of the need to highlight the 'house rules' to guests and neighbors each Saturday.
- The First Baptist Church gymnasium is available for use during the winter on Saturday mornings if neighbors arrive before 11:30.
 - One or two Relational Volunteers must be present in the gymnasium at all times when neighbors are waiting because there is an entrance that opens into the rest of the church.
- There may be a need for an additional commercial coffee pot. As it has getting colder, the coffee is frequently running out well before 1:00.
- A new 'Meal-time Serving Protocol' was determined.
 - Each week, depending on the group, the protocol for when firsts, seconds, and to-go containers are served; this is confusing and frustrating for both volunteers and neighbors.
 - Stephen Stout received some very constructive ideas from a few of his Meal Preparation & Service volunteers; the group unanimously adopted their suggested serving times, listed below:
 - 11:30 - 12:15 -- First Plate*
 - 12:15 - 12:45 -- Second Plate*
 - 12:45 - 1:00 -- To-Go Containers*
- Better tracking of Community Meal participants and demographics (both neighbors and volunteers) will be important for future grant and funding opportunities.
 - It is difficult to track neighbors, especially those who are homeless.
 - Often resistant to surveys.
 - Possible incentives?
 - Importance of framing the gathering of information (e.g. "knowing this information will help us better serve you.")
 - Qualitative and quantitative, convenient, unobtrusive strategies for collecting data from Community Meals participants will be researched by Brittany Hanson.
- Volunteers want and need additional training on how to relationally and conversationally engage neighbors.
 - The neighbors that participate in the Community Meals come from a variety of diverse backgrounds (homeless, immigrant, poor, etc.).

- Relating to those from backgrounds not our own, is often challenging, and can hinder the development of genuine relationships.
- Stephen Stout will begin developing a list of appropriate or relevant topics of conversation.
- A training session for current volunteers on this subject will be developed and offered.
- This new training component will also be folded into the manual and ongoing Training Session for new volunteers.
- There are many new volunteers, and the time for another Volunteer Training session is approaching.

Naming Discussion

- Handouts of the ‘Collaboration Naming Survey’ indicating the four most and least preferred options were handed out to meeting participants. Three options tied for fourth most preferred and were ruled out.
- The top three remaining choices were:
 1. Neighbors United
 2. Neighborhood Interfaith Action
 3. Beyond Our Walls
- After some discussion, the group decided to remove ‘Beyond Our Walls’ from the running as it was also one of the four least preferred options.
- Participants joined in discussion about the pros and cons of both ‘Neighbors United’ and Neighborhood Interfaith Action. Some discussion highlights are listed below:
 - Neighbors United implies a sense of togetherness, getting together to do the right thing.
 - Neighbors United is flexible for involving non-faith based community groups.
 - Does the group want the involvement of non-faith based groups?
 - There is a difference in participating in/supporting initiatives and providing leadership/making decisions for initiatives.
 - Neighborhood Interfaith Action keeps the group’s unique inter-faith identity central.
 - Neighborhood Interfaith Action demonstrates the group is inclusive and open to the involvement of the wider faith community.
 - A tagline could capture the components the name cannot (e.g. interfaith, neighbors, etc.).
- After much discussion, the group determined each participant present would vote by ballot. Dr. Russ Smith and Kay Lynn Goldner abstained from voting. Walt Zecchini left the meeting prior to the casting of ballots. The voting options were as follows:
 - A. Neighbors United
 - B. Neighborhood Interfaith Action
 - C. Postpone
 - Dr. Russ Smith collected the ballots, tallied the results and reported to the group.
 - **Neighbors United** won the vote and is now the official name of the group formerly referred to as the Faith Leader Collaboration. Votes were distributed as follows:
 - Neighbors United (7 votes)
 - Neighborhood Interfaith Action (4 votes)

- The group's tagline will be *"bringing the area interfaith community together in service to the local neighborhood"*.

Wrap Up

- There will be no Neighbors United meeting in December 2008.
- The next meeting will be January 22, 2009. All are strongly encouraged to attend as we will discuss the group's direction for 2009 and celebrate all that has been accomplished together in 2008; faith leaders are asked to mark their calendars now.
- Community Meal - Every Saturday, 11:30-1:00, First Baptist Church