

**Park Avenue Faith Community  
Collaborative Meeting  
June 26, 2008**

Attending:

1. Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, *United Methodist Ministries, Leavenworth Neighborhood Assn.*
2. Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*
3. Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*
4. Kevin Marik, *Metropolitan Community Church member & deacon*
5. Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*
6. Karla Oliver, *Metropolitan Community Church member & deacon*
7. Fr. Peter Pappas, *St. John's Greek Orthodox Church*
8. Pastor Judith Rainforth, *First Lutheran Church*
9. Rev. Carlos Schneider, *Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church*
10. Wanda Selzer, *First Lutheran Church member*
11. Stephen Stout, *Good Neighbor Ministries*
12. Eric VanEpps, *Mosaic Community Development*

**Overview**

Members of the faith community in the Park Avenue area met on June 26, 2008. The meeting continued the format of the May 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, with the first hour devoted to task force work and the second hour oriented toward updates, reports, larger group planning, and the discussion of a possible fundraising opportunity.

The meeting was held at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church from 11:00 - 1:00 p.m. The meeting was facilitated and notes were taken for reporting back to participants. Ten people participated in the meeting and planning session, with Rev. Ahlschwede and Rev. Schneider stopping by quickly to provide some information before returning to other work.

Copies of the previous meeting's summary (May 22, 2008) were available, as well as the summer schedule of collaborative Faith Leader Meetings. Additionally, there were copies of meeting agendas and flyers for Kountze Memorial's upcoming open house. A couple of newcomers were welcomed and the meeting began with the participants breaking off into task forces. Participants worked in task forces for 60-70 minutes before reconvening for more thorough introductions and reports.

Task force participants were as follows:

*Community Events:*           Brittany Hanson  
  Pr. Judith Rainforth  
  Wanda Selzer

*Community Meals:*           Christian Gray  
  Kevin Marik  
  Pr. Kip Mickelson  
  Karla Oliver  
  Fr. Peter Pappas

Stephen Stout  
Eric VanEpps

As participants reconvened in the larger group during the second hour, Brittany Hanson reviewed the agenda and there was a round of introductions.

## **Task Force Reports & Feedback**

### ***Community Events Task Force***

The task force confirmed that the upcoming block party will occur on Sunday, August 3 at Hanscom Park from 2:00 pm until 6:00 pm. The rest of the report focused on what is still needed to make this event a success.

Each church or organization involved in the collaboration will be invited to have a booth with information about their resources and opportunities, as well as provide some sort of family-friendly activity. The task force is hoping to recruit a “point person” from each church or organization to be in charge of this booth and help organize volunteers, resources, etc. for their respective congregation/organization.

The task force also reported on the development of an insert to be placed in church bulletins to build interest in the event and make contact with possible volunteers and donors within churches. The bulletin insert will be e-mailed to members of the collaboration for review and distribution.

The task force stated that the block party still has several needs, including a portable sound system, grills suitable for cooking hot dogs, tables and chairs, and volunteers willing to set up, cook, organize, run booths, and clean up.

### ***Community Meals Task Force***

The task force announced that First Baptist Church had a cabinet meeting recently and voted to host the community meals program at First Baptist beginning on September 13. The cabinet made one stipulation: the first six months will act as a probation period, and the issue will be revisited in March. If the program goes smoothly, the church will allow it to continue.

A brochure including information about the Park Avenue neighborhood, the nature of the faith leader collaboration, the community meals program, and how to contribute was prepared in advance of the meeting. The task force went through the brochure and made edits, and the more finalized version of the brochure will be emailed out to the task force members by Monday, June 30. At that time, members of the collaboration should submit final edits or changes before printing begins (by July 7). Fr. Peter Pappas of St. John’s Greek Orthodox suggested that his church should be able to print the first 200 copies of the brochure in color for initial distribution. Contact with other printing companies in Omaha, such as Kinkos, will be made in the upcoming week to get cost estimates for a larger-scale printing of the brochure (with the possibility of donated services).

The next conversation for the Community Meals task force will focus on the training process for volunteer teams, including proper procedures about the facilities at First Baptist Church. This conversation will also include specific guidelines that can be made into an information packet for possible volunteers.

## Possible Fundraiser - Contrado Community Book

Brittany Hanson presented a basic outline of a fundraising and advocacy opportunity that she and other members of the faith leader collaboration have been exploring over the past few weeks. An organization from Denver named Contrado approached Mosaic Community Development about the possibility of creating a coffee table book that would feature the Omaha community, both as a way to raise money for the Park Avenue initiative and as an outlet for continued advocacy for the collaboration. The majority of the profits would come from selling sponsorship spreads to local businesses and organizations, with additional profits coming from book sales.

To make this project work, a team of 5-10 people would be assembled. Prior to the June 26 meeting, 6 people had expressed interest in various roles, leaving a need for 2-3 people acting as salespeople by going to businesses and selling the sponsorships for the book. Once a team was in place, an application would be submitted to Contrado, and if accepted, Contrado would come in and train the entire team and help manage the project for the duration (about a 6 month process from start to finish).

In addition, the collaboration would need to place a down payment of \$7,000 or less (open to negotiation with Contrado) to secure the bid at the beginning. The entire project, as explained by Contrado, could raise about \$35,000 for the collaboration. The discussion of money brought up a few questions: How would the initial deposit be raised? Where will the money be housed during and after the project? How would the collaboration ultimately want to use the money?

After Brittany's initial description of the project, various questions and concerns were raised. When approaching possible sponsors or donors, there is the possibility that businesses might not want to financially support a faith-based organization such as this collaboration. The main objections revolved around the timing of this project. Because the faith leader collaboration has only been in existence for about 6 months, there might not be the trust among members yet to pursue a project of this size, especially when the community meals and community block party are happening soon. Pastor Judith Rainforth of First Lutheran expressed hesitation that the collaboration might be a hard sell to businesses, and that the collaboration needs a better structure before pursuing big projects and dealing with sizable sums of money. Pastor Kip Mickelson of First Baptist agreed and emphasized the importance of doing smaller events well and continuing the work and unity that has been started by the collaboration. The focus of this collaboration, at this moment, does not align with pursuing the Contrado fundraiser. However, members stated that discussions about the fundraiser can still be helpful by pushing the collaboration to make decisions regarding identity and long-term vision.

The general consensus was to not pursue the Contrado fundraiser as a faith leader collaboration.

## Wrap-Up

Time was running short, but specific action points for the task forces had already been divided up during the first hour. If interested in hosting a meeting at your location, please contact Brittany Hanson ([brittany@mosaiccd.org](mailto:brittany@mosaiccd.org)) for scheduling.

The next meeting is on Thursday, July 24, 2008 (11:00 am – 1:00 pm).