

**Park Avenue Faith Community
Third Planning Meeting
March 6, 2008**

Attending:

1. Rev. Stephanie Ahlschwede, *United Methodist Ministries, Leavenworth Neighborhood Assn.*
2. Brenda Banks, *Angels on Wheels*
3. Jodi Cooper, *Mosaic Community Development*
4. Jodi Durbin, *King of Kings Lutheran congregation member & local bible study leader*
5. Gay Endicott, *First Baptist Church member*
6. Christian Gray, *Mosaic Community Development*
7. Brittany Hanson, *Mosaic Community Development*
8. Christine Krin, *St. John's parishioner, Leavenworth Neighborhood Association*
9. Kevin Marik, *Metropolitan Community Church member & deacon*
10. Pastor Kip Mickelson, *First Baptist Church*
11. Fr. Peter Papas, *St. John's Greek Orthodox Church*
12. Pastor Judith Rainforth, *First Lutheran Church*
13. Rev. Kate Rohde, *First Unitarian Church*
14. Heidi Sampson, *neighbor & local bible study leader*
15. Rev. Carlos Schneider, *Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church*
16. Wanda Selzer, *First Lutheran Church member*
17. Dr. Dick Skelley, *First Presbyterian Church*
18. Dr. Russell Smith, *University of Nebraska, Omaha*
19. Stephen Stout, *Good Neighbor Ministries*
20. Bob Toy, *King of Kings Lutheran Church member*
21. Mark White, *Angels on Wheels*

Overview

Members of the faith community in the Park Avenue area met on March 6, 2008. The purpose of the meeting was to hear back from the task forces developed during the previous meeting and continue collaboratively planning and accomplishing action steps.

The meeting was held at First Baptist Church from 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. The meeting was facilitated and notes were taken for reporting back to participants. Twenty-one people participated in the meeting and planning session (list attached).

The meeting opened with introductions. Several newcomers were present, and each participant shared their affiliation with the group; in addition, any new developments or exciting news in relation to participants' involvement in the neighborhood were announced.

Russ Smith went over the agenda (see attached agenda) and Brittany Hanson joined him in reviewing the previous meeting as participants looked over a summary of the meeting. Questions and concerns were discussed. The importance of being involved with area neighborhood associations in order to expand the scope of collaboration with dedicated and organized neighbors in the area was highlighted. The following neighborhood associations were identified as active in the area: Columbus Park, Ford Birthsite, Leavenworth, and Park East.

Task Force Reports

Both of the Community Events Task Force and the Community Meals Task Force met between February 14 and March 6 to continue developing ideas and begin determining logistical details. The task forces presented a summary of their work and ideas to the group for discussion.

Community Events Task Force

Participants: Brenda Banks, Jodi Durbin, Heidi Sampson

The group focused on two major ideas generated during the February 14 meeting: (a) murals and (b) public neighborhood events.

(a) Murals

Main Idea: artistic murals could be positioned on blank walls in the Park Avenue area.

- Colorful, uplifting, appealing to diverse population represented in area
- Desire to create a positive neighborhood culture
- Avoid in your face, churchy messages
- Identified several potential locations
- Possibility of several murals located throughout area with a continuity of message
- Identified a few potential funding sources
- Searching for local artists interested in participating

(b) Public Neighborhood Events

Main Idea: one community/relationship building event in the area each month (May – August)

- Food, activities for families and children, clothing giveaway, music, etc.
- Could potentially distribute Neighborhood Resource Guide
- Schedule in conjunction with area church and neighborhood association events
- Leading up to Community Meals launch in Fall 2008

Tentative Event Dates, Times, Locations:

- May 17, 2008, 11:00 - 3:00, 26th St. & St. Mary's Ave.
- June 14, 2008, 3:00 - 7:00, Leavenworth Park
- July 19, 2008, 11:00- 3:00, St. John's Greek Orthodox Church
- Aug. 9, 2008, 12:00 - 2:00, First Baptist Church

Community Meals Task Force

Participants: Rev. Kate Rohde, Pastor Kip Mickelson, Kevin Marik, Brittany Hanson

The group focused on three main areas in continuing to develop the idea of addressing both food insufficiency and relationship development in the Park Avenue area via a Community Meals Program: (a) defining the purpose, (b) basic logistics, and (c) gaining sustainable support.

(a) Defining the purpose

- A (eventual) weekly meal focused on providing a venue for community and relationship building among residential neighbors in the Park Avenue area, in addition to addressing local hunger

(b) Basic logistics

- *Potential meeting location: First Baptist Church (dining hall)*
 - Pastor Kip will be speaking with leadership cabinet regarding the use of the space for community meals beginning in the fall
- *Meeting Day & Meal Time: Saturday lunches*
 - Is there a venue that could serve as an alternate location when space conflicts (weddings, funerals, etc.) arise?
- *Meal Preparation*
 - Volunteers from local congregations would be on a rotation schedule for preparing meals
 - First Baptist's kitchen could be used for food preparation

(c) Gaining sustainable support

- *Leaders and Churches*
 - Lay-person leadership necessary for building long-term sustainability
 - Five to ten volunteers needed from 12 congregations; one or two of these people would be point person for each congregation
 - Point people would commit to recruiting lay leaders and some to be on a Community Meals Steering Committee
 - Important to stress that meals are as much about relationship as they are about serving food
 - Would leaders commit to evaluating willingness and ability to join efforts as one of twelve dedicated churches/organizations through talking with laity and potential volunteers?

During the discussion of the ideas presented by this group, many identified the need for a 'marketing' strategy/packet. What are the essential details people will need to know in order to evaluate ability and willingness to participate? What is the best way to pitch this idea so that others will want to join the effort?

Others noted that hunger may be a symptom of larger or additional issues neighbors may be facing. A relational meal time could become an opportunity to identify underlying issues as a community—it would be a starting point, a listening forum. Also, Christine Krin noted that she has experience and knowledge of food prep standards and is willing to offer technical assistance in this area.

Task Force Action Planning

After hearing and discussing the Task Force reports participants broke off into the two groups according to interest and previous participation to continue action planning. The groups were directed to address the following questions: What next? How? Who? With what resources? When?

Each group then briefly reported back to the group as a whole.

Community Events Report

The need for a coordinated calendar of community, church, and neighborhood association events was identified. Many noted this would be beneficial for promoting the collective work and collaboration of area neighbors and leaders. It would be most useful if this calendar could be centrally located and accessible to both leaders and neighbors; groups could then put this virtual calendar on their websites.

Action Points:

- Develop coordinated calendar of community events to be centrally located and accessible
- Continue working on Neighborhood Resource Guide for potential distribution at community events
- Send an e-mail to faith leaders listing needed resources for community events; leaders or lay persons will then respond with resources they have available for event usage (Brenda Banks)

Other Notable Community Events:

- Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church, Neighborhood Gathering; June 22, 11:30 p.m.
- First Baptist Church, Carnival (introducing week of VBS); June 22, 5:00 p.m.
- First Lutheran Church, Project Embrace; June 3 – 26
- First Lutheran Church, VBS; July 21 – 25
- First Lutheran Church, Back to School Carnival; August 9, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Community Meals Report

The need for clear marketing was the key theme during this group's discussion. Participants expressed the importance of developing a clear presentation strategy and determined it was necessary for gaining congregational support throughout the Park Avenue area and the larger community. Churches and leaders will want to know what the specific 'buy-in' is before committing. Several participants articulated they would be willing to work on developing a presentation strategy.

Many leaders expressed they thought that several individuals in their churches or organizations would be willing to become involved in the Community Meals. It was noted that it will be crucial to continue building a "we're all in this together" attitude as the group progresses toward implementation of its ideas. Lastly, Fr. Peter Pappas and Pastor Kip Mickelson volunteered to co-chair this task force working to direct the group's momentum toward practical implementation.

Wrap-Up

As the meeting ended, time was running short and participants determined they would meet again in a month or so. It was agreed upon that Thursdays from 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. work for most people. Brittany Hanson will coordinate the next meeting.

A few sub-committees were developed to delegate tasks and focus on specific action steps; these groups and the larger task forces will meet again during the interim to continue working together. Each task force will again then report back to the group during the next meeting.

