

**Interfaith Action of Evanston
Delegates Meeting
September 13, 2009, 3:00 pm
St. Mark's Church**

In attendance were representatives from **AI, Alice Millar, Church in the Chapel, First Congregational, FUMC, Garrett, Grace Lutheran, Northminster, Second Church of Christ, Scientist, St. Mark, St. Mary, St Paul, St. Nicholas, Trinity Lutheran, Unitarian Church, University Lutheran**

Minutes of Meeting

Diane Currano called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m., after one-half hour of fellowship and refreshments.

Diane thanked Liz Stout for the refreshments and the use of St. Mark's.

The delegates voted unanimously to approve the new board: Pastor Jessica Gregory (Northminster), Diane Currano (St. Mary), Carolyn Gifford (Alice Millar), Ralph Starenko (St. Paul), Nancy Bashook (Beth Emet), Rev. David Denoon (First Congregational), Claire Fisher (Second Church of Christ Scientist), Jackie Grinvalds (University Lutheran), Chris Isely (Unitarian Church), Suzanne La Belle (Trinity Lutheran), and Rev. Liz Stout (Interfaith Miister).

Diane presented the new officers: Pastor Jessica – president; Carolyn – vice president for administrative affairs; Diane – vice president for communications; Ralph – treasurer; and Nancy – secretary. Under the new officers, the office of the president of the board was eliminated because Pastor Jessica had agreed to combine that office with the presidency.

Diane and John Blegen will be improving the Website to include more links to the soup kitchen coordinators, the board, and the committee chairs. These changes are not up yet, but Diane encouraged delegates to consult the Web occasionally for new material. Indeed, these minutes will be there soon.

Finances. Ralph presented the financial report and explained that there is a total of \$18,500 in checking and savings. This is a dangerously low amount and less than was budgeted. Some relief will come from money due us from the city and possible grants. The appeal letter will go out early in hopes of raising more money. Sue also asked for donations of paper products because this was an item that increased drastically in the budget.

President's Report. Pastor Jessica presided during the duration of the meeting. She began her report with an explanation of the newest version of the committee sign-up sheet. She explained each committee and introduced the chair. She gave particular emphasis to fund raising, interfaith dialogue, and membership because these are committees in the formative state.

Pastor Jessica was pleased to announce that arrangements for the interfaith Thanksgiving service were formalized. The service will be held at JRC, on November 25, with Jennifer Nelson-Seals as the speaker.

The featured speaker of the meeting was Sue Murphy, whose presentation was on the hospitality of Interfaith's direct services. Sue's remarks were very well received. The entirety of her presentation and the flyer she passed out at the meeting are reproduced below.

Hospitality

Hospitality is defined as cordial reception...kindness in welcoming guests or strangers. To me hospitality is JOYFULLY opening year life to others. We all know the golden rule – put yourself in guests place and think about whether you would be comfortable in their situation. Interfaith Action provides hospitality in many ways through service to hungry and homeless people.

Soup Kitchens

Every day there is a meal provided to anyone who is hungry.

Sunday – St. Paul's Lutheran

Monday – Second Baptist

Thursday – First United Methodist

Friday – First Congregational and Sojourner Covenant

The other days, churches or synagogues that are part of Interfaith Action develop their own teams.

The number of hungry people is growing. The soup kitchens serve as many as 120 people each meal. The biggest change is the increase in the number of families attending. They have a place to live, but they simply cannot afford to feed their families.

Each of the soup kitchens has a coordinator who line up teams of people to serve. Each team plans the menu, buys the food, prepares the food, serves the food and cleans up after the meal.

The teams also greet the guests. They smile and make people feel comfortable. They have conversations. After serving a few times they get to know the people. They greet each other with smiles when they pass on the street.

This is Hospitality.

How can you be a part of the soup kitchen hospitality?

- Form a team (Friday lunch especially needs more teams)
- Become a regular
- Make a donation to help a student team

Warming Centers

From November through March six different churches open their doors each afternoon to anyone who is cold.

Monday – St. Paul’s Lutheran and First Presbyterian
Tuesday – Bethany Baptist
Wednesday – St. Mary’s Catholic
Thursday – First Congregational
Friday – Sojourner Covenant

The number of guests at the warming centers is also rising.

Volunteers provide a cheery, welcoming place for people. Each center is different. Each is run by volunteers who spend their afternoon with people they may not have met otherwise. They laugh, talk, share, and learn about each other.

This is Hospitality.

How can you be part of warming center hospitality?

- Become part of a warming center team (Thursday especially needs male volunteers)
- Provide snacks

Overnight Emergency Shelter

Interfaith Action, in partnership with the City of Evanston and Connections for the Homeless started an overnight emergency shelter in January of 2009. When the temperature is expected to go below 0 degrees, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church opens its doors to those who normally sleep outdoors or ride the trains. A staff person from Interfaith Action or Entry Point supervises and spends the night. Volunteers from the city arrive at 8 pm to set up cots with blankets in the church chapel. They make coffee, tea and hot chocolate. The doors are open between 9 and 10 pm to as many as 35 people. Guests may go right to bed in the chapel or chat with each other and the volunteers in the library. At 10 pm, lights go out in the chapel and volunteers leave. Guests who can’t sleep can sit in the library and read. At 6 am everyone begins getting up and heads out the doors at 7.

This is Hospitality.

How can you be part of the overnight shelter hospitality?

- Volunteer to set up and take down the cots
- Volunteer to wash the blankets
- Provide coffee, tea and hot chocolate
- Volunteer to stay awake with the staff member

Hospitality Center for the Homeless

Each morning at 7am for the last 18 years, the doors of St. Mark's Episcopal Church open to welcome people for a light breakfast. Each person either lives at Hilda's Place, which closes at 7 am or is part of the Entry Point program.

A volunteer at the door greets people.

A light breakfast is served provided by volunteers, who sometime stay and talk with the guests.

One day a week a volunteer helps guests make jewelry. Occasionally a volunteer provides a movie day. We are planning to start a book club.

There are laughs, there is conversation and there is friendship. There is respect and a listening ear.

Some people sleep on mats on the floor. They can feel safe to shut their eyes after a sleepless night outdoors. Some play games; we have had many heated Sorry games!

Some people use the clippers to get haircuts. We provide razors and toothbrushes and other hygiene items.

Our employment counselors arrive four mornings a week. Their clients receive help with their resumes and information about where to get more help in their job search. The counselors search for leads for them. They provide them with transportation to interviews. They provide haircut vouchers before an interview and practice interview skills. They help them obtain drivers licenses. Many employers expect people to have a license even if the job does not require driving. One counselor even takes people to a local cemetery and teaches them to drive. One gentleman got his license and then got a job at a local garage in Evanston two years ago. He is now the manager of the garage and self-sufficient. Another man got his commercial license and drives a truck cross-country. The counselors help people get special training (for example: English as a second language classes, Certified Nursing Assistants training, chef school, GED). We help with special needs for people when they are hired (for example: tools for a chef, steel toed boots, uniforms, dress shoes). The employment counselors also offer encouragement to people who are jobless during this difficult time. They help them to continue to apply for positions even when they get discouraged.

This is Hospitality.

How can you be part of the Hospitality Center hospitality?

- Volunteer to be a greeter
- Collect needed hygiene items
- Think of a project
- Provide healthy snacks
- Bring special snacks

What will you gain by joining our hospitality services?

You will meet great people!

You will watch interactions.

One woman is very mentally ill and resistant to the help offered to her by different agencies. The other guests watch over her. They make sure she sleeps in a safe place and dresses appropriately.

You will watch people fall in love and get married. We have had two weddings this summer.

You may become protective of people. When one woman was threatening another, a staff person had to force her to leave. That person must stay away from the Center for a period of time. Guests must follow the rules about being respectful.

You will experience sadness

One gentleman finally became housed after spending 30 years in prison and 5 years homeless. He died in his chair watching TV after only three weeks in his new apartment.

One gentleman was in and out of homelessness during the past 8 years due to depression. His was originally from Europe. He got cancer. He fought it valiantly. A local church helped him return to his country. He was able to meet with his children before he died.

The son of a woman was stabbed to death recently. We will all support her in her grief.

You will experience joy

One young man was having a very difficult time retaining employment because of a drug problem. He was from a North Shore family that finally had to resort to “tough love.” After many attempts to find him employment, our job counselor finally advised him to try the Army. Unfortunately, he couldn’t seem to provide a clean drug test and the Army wouldn’t take him! He was astonished that he couldn’t even get into the Army, and finally was able to stay away from drugs. He visited in September. He has been in the Army for four years. He would be able to get out in December but volunteered to go to Iraq for one more year. He does not do drugs and recently stopped drinking any alcohol. He has reconciled with his family. He will go to college when he finishes his service. He is 26 years old.

You will realize that anyone – even you – could be homeless.

One woman came to the Hospitality Center after losing her car. She had already lost her apartment. She was a psychotherapist with a PhD from Northwestern. She also had the beginning stages of Alheimers. She didn’t have a family. She was unable to care for herself, but she wasn’t aware of that. She began to live at Hilda’s Place and come to the Hospitality Center each morning. She was too young for social security. Over time her caseworker was able to get her into a neighborhood nursing home. Now a volunteer picks her up each morning and brings her to the Hospitality Center where she, also volunteers. Then someone takes her home. Another volunteer brings her to church each Sunday.

You will laugh and you will cry.

This is Hospitality.

What else can you do to help continue Hospitality?

- Spread the news of Interfaith Action to your faith community
- Support us financially
- Pursue grants that would help with expenses
- Provide paper goods

NOTICE – All these things take ACTION!

What you can do to provide hospitality?

Soup Kitchens

Form a team (Friday lunch especially needs more teams)
Become a regular
Make a donation to help student teams

Warming Centers

Become part of a team (Thursday especially needs male volunteers)
Provide snacks

Overnight Emergency Shelter

Volunteer to set up and take down cots
Volunteer to wash blankets

Hospitality Center

Volunteer to be a greeter
Collect hygiene items
Think of a project
Provide healthy snacks
Bring special snacks

What else can you do?

Support us financially
Pursue grants that would help with expenses Provide paper goods

Spread the news of what Interfaith Action does to your faith community

TAKE ACTION!