

RECOMMENDATION TO SESSION
FROM THE NEW BEGINNINGS LEADERSHIP TEAM
Adopted May 12, 2015

INTRODUCTION

The New Beginnings process of discernment has reached a stage which permits the Leadership Team to submit a report of the community's needs together with a recommendation to the Session for implementation of the results of the discernment process in its strategic planning.

The New Beginnings process began with an assessment conducted by a team of outside reviewers who took an objective look at our congregation and community. Thereafter, we organized six small group meetings and involved more than 70 members of our congregation. The ensuing conversations helped us to see ourselves and our context for ministry with more clarity, especially in the area of being in relationship with our community. It also highlighted a need for a broader review of our community and its needs.

Next, Session authorized the New Beginnings team to facilitate further study and exploration of these issues through a study of the book, The Externally Focused Church, which was concluded last fall. The book focused on the relationships vital churches have with their communities, ultimately resulting in changed lives, both for the churches and the community. It made clear the difference between churches and other organizations, churches being those who bring good news WITH their good deeds.

Session then authorized small groups to go into the community to speak with community leaders in an attempt to discern the needs of our community and opportunities to work with our neighbors. In that regard, interviews were conducted with the Allegany County Health Department, the Human Resources Development Commission, the Department of Social Services, the Kensington and the Union Rescue Mission. Attached hereto are the reports of the New Beginnings interviews.

COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community organizations, both secular and faith based, uniformly point to poverty as the central issue facing our community. From poverty flows homelessness, substance abuse, abuse and neglect of children and the elderly, hunger, and a lack of a sense of self-worth. There are a number of community initiatives, in planning stages and/or underway, that are attempting to address these types of needs and are in need of volunteers. Many of them are detailed in the attached outreach interviews.

First Presbyterian Church is already involved locally in ministries such as the Summer Lunch Box Program. While it fulfills a vital need in our community, it isn't currently structured to allow for the development of relationships with those we serve, a necessary ingredient of our ministry if we are to continue to be a vital congregation.

RECOMMENDATION

Consistent with the Great Commission and First Presbyterian Church's long-standing commitment to mission work, it is the New Beginnings Leadership Team's recommendation that our congregation participate in building relationships with people in the community via partnerships with agencies that will allow us to help address community needs and change lives. We advocate participating in as many projects as our resources (both human and financial) allow, guided by the parameters detailed below. This effort would allow our congregation the opportunity to share their gifts with the community, as well as to participate in serving those without hope, the most powerful form of witnessing for the Lord and furthering the work of his kingdom.

While we recommend being open to numerous opportunities, (keeping in mind the "parking lot" of suggestions generated during the group meetings as additional ideas for service that can be considered) we believe that all proposals should be evaluated by the Mission Committee using parameters for determining if the project(s) will help us work toward the goal of changing lives.

Additionally, we believe that a plan outlining each project's mission, goals, outcome measurement tools, resources needed and ability to determine success should be developed prior to undertaking any such project(s). This plan should also be used in the review process at the conclusion of the project to determine if the goal(s) were achieved. The proposed parameters and project planning tool are outlined below.

PARAMETERS:

Based on our learning from *The Externally Focused Church*, we recommend using the following parameters to evaluate proposed projects:

- Does the opportunity put us in relationship with those we seek to serve or alongside others who are serving?
- Is this ministry or agency willing to work with us as a faith-based organization?
- Do we have people who are ready, willing and able to develop this ministry?
- Will this opportunity result in changed lives? (both ours and theirs)
- Do we have the necessary funding?

PROJECT PLAN:

The overarching goal of each mission opportunity for our congregation is to touch the lives of those we seek to serve which will touch our lives.

- Define Mission
- Set Goals
- Define and agree on the meaning of terms
- Define Measurement Tools
 - How can we measure the impact we will have on the lives we seek to serve and on our congregation as we have served in each project?

- Develop Leaders
 - Young Volunteers
 - Mentor, teach, evaluate and encourage
 - Delegate
 - Direct, coach, delegate (give them tools, turn them into teachers, solicit feedback and gain new leaders)
 - Perform evaluation potentially based on reporting changed lives, growing relationship, in addition to reviewing financial and time investments of our congregation.

- Look at Results (the bottom line should be changed lives)

We recommend that the Mission Committee serve as a central source for aligning members with mission-based organizations in need of such services. We also recommend that Session adopt a goal of 100% participation by the congregation in some level of service to these organizations in the community. The specific ministry is left to the discretion and general interest of each congregation member. In this way, we believe that First Presbyterian Church will be of greater service to the community and by extension to the Lord.

New Beginnings Leadership Team:

Julie Courtney
Jeff Getty, chair
Pam Jan
Caroline Kelly, ex officio
Michael Levitas

NEW BEGINNINGS COMMUNITY MEETING REPORTS

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT MEETING

Tuesday, December 9, 2014

TEAM: Gary Hendrickson and Michael Levitas

Dr. Sue Raver, Health Officer, Ms. Janelle Mayer, Director of Community Health,
and Ms. Nancy Forlifer of the Western Maryland Health System.

Gary Hendrickson and Michael Levitas (Nancy Hodges was ill and could not attend) met at the Allegany County Health Department with Dr. Sue Raver, Health Officer, Ms. Janelle Mayer, Director of Community Health, and Ms. Nancy Forlifer of the Western Maryland Health System. They were very helpful in describing community needs for us. Below is a list of what we learned about. Gary and I felt that project #1 is our first choice.

1. **Bridges to Opportunity** – This community project is just getting off the ground and exists to combat poverty and the cycle of poverty. It was born out of a December 2013 Allegany County Community Health Needs Assessment carried out by the Western Maryland Health System and the Health Department. There is a steering committee and 5 work groups. The work is done by community volunteers and faith based organizations, the local government, local hospital and health department members. The Western Maryland Health System paid for the training of the trainers, but there is no definite ongoing funding at this point. So volunteerism will enable this to succeed. The training is based on the Ruby Payne model of breaking out of poverty. Rebecca Vardiman and Tormud Svensen are involved at leadership levels. The work groups are:
 - a) Facilitators to train people (of all ages) to break out of poverty
 - b) Mentoring
 - c) Youth engagement training
 - d) Resource building: 11 resources needed to improve one's lot in life, including finances and spirituality
 - e) Policy (governmental) changes

The work groups meet next in January, 2015. The steering committee meets next in February, 2015.

Nancy Forlifer would be our best contact for more information about this and to discuss how participants would be trained.

2. **Transportation** – There are two projects needing volunteers:
 - a) HRDC Senior Rides – Misty Van Meter directs this. This group seeks volunteer drivers age 55+ to help drive people age 60+ for medical care, shopping, and other needs.
 - b) American Cancer Society rides for medical care. Brittany Friend directs this.
3. **Domestic Violence** – There is a local campaign to educate the general community about this. Volunteers would be trained.
4. **Chronic Disease Management** – HRDC trains volunteers in chronic disease management to equip them to do home visitation of needy adults.
5. **Prevention of Falls in the Elderly** – Unmet need; big challenge. Possible training in Tai Chi. Currently this is carried out by community health workers at Health Right, the Area Health Education Center (AHEC), and the Western Maryland Health System. Volunteers could be trained to visit homes and perform assessments of fall risk and teach seniors how to make changes to decrease risks.

6. **Homelessness** – Nancy Forlifer mentioned that the community has a Homeless Resource Board coalition.
7. **Substance Abuse** – Dr. Raver states this is a huge problem here. There is an overdose prevention task force we could join to learn how to educate various community groups.
8. **Mental Health** – There is a training program for volunteers to learn “mental health first-aid” which could be taught to lay community members who may need to diffuse a potentially dangerous situation until professionals arrive. The train-the-trainer sessions are 8-hours in length.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (HRDC) MEETING

TEAM: Pam Jan, Shirley Giarritta, Carolyn Mathews
Courtney Thomas, Executive Director

Client demographics, please check all that apply to the organization you speak with:

Children Aged Homeless Poor Sick/Disabled Other

Assessing Current Needs: What are the current needs of clients the organization works with in regard to:

1. Physical (health, body):
2. Social (activities in which people spend time talking or doing things together):
3. Emotional (mentoring, support groups):
4. Educational (teaching in school setting, courses/seminars on budgeting, GED):
5. Spiritual (relating to a person's spirit, religion, values and ideas): Other (needs that have not been defined above):
6. What excited you about the organization?
 - a. Pam – Upon leaving I felt like this agency may be the single most important agency Allegany County has! HRDC has 30 programs and reaches one out of every three people in the county – that's 24,000 people! AND, they work with faith based folks all the time.
 - b. Carolyn – I too was struck by the statistic quoted by Director Courtney Thomas of 1 of every 3 people of the population of this county is reached by a service or program offered by this non-profit community action organization.
 - c. Shirley – Agreed!
7. What challenged you about the organization?
 - a. Pam – I was overwhelmed as I listened to the opportunities available because it meant the need is greater than I imagined.
 - b. Carolyn – With our current situation of lack of economic vitality, this organization has successful programs, established partnerships and seemingly financial stability (private, non-profit organization) all of which work to fill a huge void in this region. There is a great need for volunteers in a number of their programs. Volunteerism anywhere requires background checks, commitment and dedication. “ It is HRDC's mission to eliminate social and economic barriers to promote individual and community stability through services, advocacy and collaboration.” That mission statement is quite a challenge for this tri-state area with great need for community stability.
 - c. Shirley – Yes, I think we may be able to get more people involved from our congregation.

From the beginning of our conversation it was clear that HRDC's clients have all the needs outlined in numbers one through five above and are all ages. They serve infants in the Early Head Start program, seniors with Adult Daycare and all ages in between.

Courtney explained that the biggest problems are income and criminal backgrounds. Many of their clients have criminal backgrounds. So, even though they've completed job training programs, employers won't hire them.

We asked for suggestions of ways First could help HRDC. She outlined the following:

1. Head Start -- Because many families are run by single moms, they are in need of males to help in Head Start classes. The Cumberland programs operate all day and the Seymour Street location operates year-round and has a waiting list.
2. Bridges to Opportunity (Formerly Bridges out of Poverty) – This program is just beginning to gain momentum in Cumberland. It was started by the hospital and two information/training sessions have transpired to date. Courtney's idea is for First to get involved in mentoring/coaching which could begin as early as April, 2015 when trainers complete the "train the trainers program".
3. Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) – Misty Van Meter, Coordinator
The Senior Center can always use help with arts, crafts, movie nights, etc.
4. HRDC & PNC Bank have developed a program, starting in January, which teaches basic finances to middle schools and a more advanced program for high schools. There is a possibility First could help with the program.
5. More and more homeless are presenting. There is currently a tent city above the Baltimore Street YMCA. They are always in need of personal hygiene products such as soap, shampoo, deodorant, etc. Such items can be dropped off at HRDC or Dan at Union Rescue.

KENSINGTON/ EVERGREEN ADULT DAY CARE MEETING

TEAM: Caroline Kelly, Rolfe Singerman, Kathy Dowell

Client demographics: please check all that apply to the organization you speak with:

Children Aged Homeless Poor Sick/Disabled Other

Assessing Current Needs: What are the current needs of clients the organization works with in regard to:

1. Physical (health, body): Clients of the Kensington Assisted Living facility provide residents with assistance with receiving medication, with receiving 3 healthy meals daily, with transportation to appointments and with assistance with activities of daily living (bathing, dressing). At the Evergreen Adult Day Care clients receive assistance with receiving medication, with receiving 2 healthy meals a day, with transportation to appointments and also direct supervision from staff.
2. Social (activities in which people spend time talking or doing things together): The Kensington and the Evergreen Adult Day Care have a monthly calendar of events that include field trips, in-house entertainment, celebration of special events and opportunities to socialize in a relaxed setting.
3. Emotional (mentoring, support groups): There is a dementia support group available the 2nd Tuesday of every month. The staff is always available to address any issue that may arise.
4. Educational (teaching in school setting, courses/seminars on budgeting, GED): The activity director provides opportunities for clients to not only interact but encourages learning at any level with trivia questions and word games. He also challenges the client's physical skills with computerized bowling, simple horseshoe games and table-top shuffleboard.
5. Spiritual (relating to a person's spirit, religion, values and ideas): The Kensington provides transportation to worship services of the client's choice. There is a bible study every Wednesday lead by Rev. Korn.
6. Other (needs that have not been defined above): None
7. What excited you about the organization? I was impressed by the goal to provide services in a friendly home-like atmosphere. The staff seemed professional and demonstrated genuine concern for the welfare of their clients.
8. What challenged you about the organization? Although all of the basic needs of the clients seem to be met, there are many opportunities to interact with clients. Clients seem to respond well when visited in their room, in the lobby, in the Adult Day Care area and volunteers are welcome, once cleared to work and oriented, no special skills required except a desire to help. Debarah added that there are 25,000 older folks in our community who need assisted living but can't afford to pay for it and must deplete their funds to qualify for Medicaid. Transportation also is sometimes a challenge for members in our community.

SOCIAL SERVICES PHONE INTERVIEW

January 23, 2015

TEAM: Julie Courtney

Richard (Dick) Paulman, Director of Social Services

The Department of Social Services in Cumberland works with other local agencies like HRDC and Associated Charities, as well as churches in a variety of ways. Dick was very enthusiastic in describing the five main areas of influence in our community.

1) Environment Crisis Intervention deals with crises like utility shut off, eviction, medication, food, diapers, and itinerant travelers passing through the area.

- works with Associated Charities to get medications (usually children or seniors)
- coordinate Federal or State project \$\$ with Faith-based organizations
 - Special Ministries (FPC) has been a long-term partner
 - other churches with smaller pots of money also help
- employees screen applicants for those “working the system” and know the customer base.
- between 500-600 individuals or families are serviced each month

2) Family Investment Organization focuses on “need based” situations: helps with cash, food stamps (there is a different name for this now), medical assistance

- Temporary cash assistance: approx. 325 families and then help finding employment
- Food Stamp customers: over 7000 in our community and growing need
- Many of temp cash assistance are relatives caring for children
- Social Services has pretty deep penetration (about 90%) of reaching those folks in need in our community.

3) Child Support Enforcement (about 3000 cases in our county)

- work to find missing parent
- establish paternity
- court orders for collecting/dispersing child support (over \$7 million dispersed last year)

4) Seniors Assistance

- daily living assistance for adults who can't adequately care for themselves
- some staff who actually goes out to care (cost based on need/income)
- staff tries to match needs with resources from family/neighbors/churches and some private providers
- Adult Services also investigate abuse, neglect, and exploitation of seniors
 - works with HRDC to be legal guardian for adults (this is a growing need)

5) Child Welfare – investigating allegations of child abuse or neglect

- about 700 cases annually
- almost all cases are related to alcohol or drug abuse within family

- in-home services for dysfunctional families (attempting to prevent abuse) for at-risk children (this is part of knowing members of our community)
 - help with parenting skills
- Out-of-home care: foster care or kinship care (about 60-70 cases per year)
 - working to reduce stay to under 2 years
 - prefer to stay with parents, kin/guardians, even adoption

The most persistent need is for adequate, affordable housing in our county and city.

When asked if the opening of prisons have increased Social Services need, the results were surprisingly “no” – even to Social Services. The thought is that in Allegany County, our need-based community is pretty well observed (can’t fly under the radar like in the metropolitan areas) . For example, if they need money, they get helped, and then our agencies work to help them get employed. As families who want to just “work the system” find this out, the “grapevine” suggests: don’t move here.

Note from Julie Courtney: These transcribed notes were from our phone conversation today. I truly asked very little until the last question about prisons. Dick Paulman was passionate and informative about the good work being done by Social Services within the limits of funding available to them.

UNION RESCUE MISSION MEETING

January 22, 2015

TEAM: Jeffrey Getty and Bill McElvie
Reverend Taylor

On January 22, 2015 Jeffrey S. Getty and Bill McElvie interviewed Dan Taylor at the Union Rescue Mission as part of our New Beginnings Outreach Program. Reverend Taylor provided us with a virtual window to the world of Christian ministry to the poor and homeless.

1. Organizational Goal: The Union Rescue Mission is a ministry which aims to win souls to Christ. Specifically, the Mission seeks to witness through actions that address the concerns of people who otherwise have no one who cares or is concerned about them. “When people see Christians doing good things their opinions of Christians change.”

2. Background: The Union Rescue Mission started in 1963 when it purchased the original building adjacent to the railroad tracks at Union Street in Cumberland. It was started by Reverend Cecil Taylor and in 1986 Dan Taylor, his son, retired from the Army and went to work at the Mission. Services provided to members of the community come primarily from volunteers. There are only 6 paid staff members at the Union Rescue Mission.

3. Services Provided to the Community: The Ministry of the Union Rescue Mission provides a men’s shelter with a capacity of 22 beds and a separate shelter for women and children with a capacity of 37 beds and 5 cribs. In addition, there is a cold weather shelter operated at the Union Rescue Mission from January 2 until the weather breaks. The cold weather shelter accepts all people seeking shelter. The shelter is staffed to be open all night and have hired security guards to patrol throughout the nighttime hours, “because we take all people in need of shelter”.

The Union Rescue Mission provides free public meals, including breakfast, lunch and dinner and has a pantry which is open all year round. The pantry includes clothing and necessary items such as soap and toiletries together with baby products and food. At Christmas, the Mission provides 300 families in the area with a Christmas dinner. Although worship services are available to anyone availing themselves of the food service at the Union Rescue Mission, they are not required to attend as a condition of getting the meal. However, if someone is a resident at the Mission, they are required to go to services while they are there. The average stay for men at the Mission is 30 days and the average stay for women and children is 90 days. They have some residents at the Mission who have been there over 10 years.

The Mission also seeks to find jobs for people who have come to the Mission and “have cleaned themselves up”, including recovering from alcoholism or drug use. The Mission also maintains gift cards from Martin’s for people to access food who needs it.

4. Resources to Provide Services. The Mission operates on the basis of private donations from churches and businesses including donations from First Presbyterian Church and in the past, from the Baltimore Presbytery. It survives on the donations received from approximately 200 businesses, 3,000 individuals and includes donations received from the NFL. The individuals making donations predominantly are from out of town although they initially grew up in the area or have some local tie. Notably, the Mission does not accept government money because the government will not let recipients promote religion and that is an integral part of the Mission.

5. Community Needs. Dan Taylor believes that the community’s underlying problem is rooted in crushing poverty in the areas of downtown Cumberland. He indicated that when his father first started the Mission, the area surrounding it was predominantly middle-class with homeownership and intact families. The area now is predominantly rental housing with a population which has a high degree of drug use and dependence and alcoholism. Many of the families have virtually nothing. The Union Rescue Mission is focused on trying to address the fundamental needs like providing shelter to those who do not have any and to address hunger in both the users of the Mission and the people who live in the surrounding neighborhoods. He notes that there are a lot of children out there that are hurting and they try to help as

best they can. They attempt to have and distribute school supplies in order to support the children who otherwise would have none.

Reverend Taylor also advised that he is involved in ministry at the Union Rescue Mission at the Melvin United Methodist Church and the Fairview United Methodist Church. He indicated that Melvin, located at the top of Baltimore Avenue, is a church which is growing and getting younger. He describes his congregation as a combination of rich, poor, young and old who act like a church family. New members come from the neighborhood. This has come about as a result of organizing activities to involve the children in the neighborhood including movie nights, a block party in the summer and Vacation Bible School. They try and stress activities for children and mothers. Most of the new members to Melvin have come as a result of a good deed which was done for them by a member of the church. He stated the central theme of the church is to be welcoming. The capacity of the church is 200 people and they average 110 to 115 every week and at Christmas exceed their 200 person capacity. Reverend Taylor believes that people come to his church because they know they will be accepted.

In contrast, he stated that Fairview is financially secure but with a dwindling congregation. It has 45 members on the rolls and gets 11 people at Sunday worship. They have had 2 new members in the last 10 years. Reverend Taylor has urged them to use their money to witness for the Lord outside the church but they don't want to. He expects that when his time there is over, the church will close.

He also told us that a woman who works at the Union Rescue Mission (was brought to the Lord at the Union Rescue Mission), on one occasion, went to worship at First Presbyterian Church. At the conclusion of the service, one of the church members suggested to her that she find a different church because "we don't like tattoos and earrings". Notwithstanding this interaction, Reverend Taylor was very complimentary of First Presbyterian's efforts to be involved in the community in the past and for its support of the Union Rescue Mission related activities. He characterized the challenge of his church and our church as coming up with new ideas to grow our churches. One of the current needs he has identified and has been discussed in the past is an alternate cold weather shelter to provide shelter when the Union Rescue Mission is full.