

ASSET-BASED STRATEGIES FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES

A Community Building Workbook
from the
Asset-Based Community Development Institute
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DEDICATION

With love and respect, we dedicate this volume to the memory of Stan Hallett
Activist, Teacher, Visionary, and Pastor
Whose work brought us all closer to the Beautiful City

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

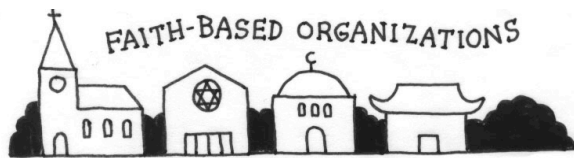
The authors extend their heartfelt thanks to the folks who made this book possible: all those who gave their time in interviews, including especially **Mike Mather** and **Tom Ray**; **Luther Snow** for his write-up of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's experience and **ELCA** for permission to use the report in this volume; **Deborah Puntteney** for her good humor and for asking all the right questions; and, most especially, **Jody Kretzmann** for the opportunity and the inspiration.

To all the willing contributors of materials for inclusion in the Appendices, much appreciation.

Special thanks to Dan Erlander for the wonderful drawings created especially for this volume.

INTRODUCTION

FAITH-BASED organizations have always played a central role in the formation and re-formation of North American communities. In recent years, however, interest in both the actual and potential community-building contributions of local congregations has intensified. As policy makers became frustrated with the limitations of large-scale, federally operated social welfare programs, for example, they turned their attention increasingly toward more locally defined and controlled approaches. The welfare reform legislation of the 1990s devolved significant responsibilities to states and to local



communities, and provided new impetus for faith-based organizations to engage with local communities in even more compelling and effective ways.

This workbook is both a reflection of that renewed interest in congregations as community builders and an effort to advance the effectiveness of this important work. It reports the stories of a variety of recent faith-based initiatives that have increased the well being of both congregations and their communities. While these stories cover a wide range of settings and strategies, they all share a common “inside out” orientation to community building. That is, they all reflect a deep belief that the gifts and skills of congregants and local residents, combined with all of the other resources and assets of both the congregation and the community, represent the critical components of successful revitalization.

Some of the initiatives featured in this workbook are explicitly based on the work of John Kretzmann and John McKnight, whose many years of research among grassroots organizations led them to identify a particular form of community work they called *asset-based community development*. Kretzmann and McKnight discovered — and wrote about in their book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out*¹ — that organizations and communities working within this framework concentrated primarily on what they had, not on what they didn’t have. Rather than focusing on deficits, these communities emphasized their assets by exploring and building on one or more of five categories of community resources: The skills

COMMUNITY BUILDING RESOURCES:

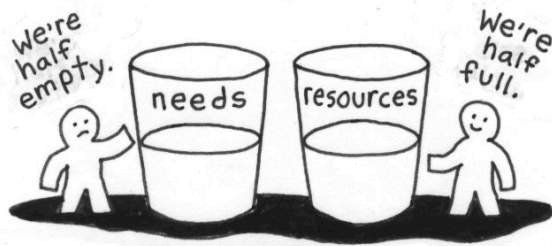
- THE SKILLS AND TALENTS OF LOCAL PEOPLE
- THE WEB OF LOCAL VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS
- THE STRENGTHS OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS – PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND NONPROFIT
- THE AVAILABLE LAND AND PHYSICAL PROPERTY
- THE LOCAL ECONOMY

¹ Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.

and talents of local people; the web of local voluntary associations; the strengths of local institutions – public, private, and nonprofit; the available land and physical property; and the local economy.

Each of these building blocks represents a component of what Kretzmann and McKnight came to think of as local *assets*. By mobilizing these assets in a variety of ways, the communities they studied managed to create new opportunities and to build strength from within. What made the efforts of these groups unique was their celebration of the positive things they discovered within their own communities and their commitment to mobilizing these positives toward increased well being. Over the years, Kretzmann and McKnight recognized that asset-based community development happens quite naturally in many communities, and for the people in these places, the concepts described in *Building Communities from the Inside Out* simply provide the language and framework for explaining how they do their work. For other communities, the ideas themselves are quite original, and represent a new way of looking at things and describe a new way of taking action.

A more traditional way of looking at communities — particularly for social service providers — has been to view community residents as clients defined by their deficiencies and needs. The logical outcome of this perspective is the provision of



services designed to reduce these problems. Churches and other faith-based organizations — with long traditions of charitable service — have sometimes approached working in their communities with a similar perspective. But in many cases, faith-based initiatives have moved beyond a charity orientation to one that

emphasizes building from within and uplifting the best things the community has to offer.

This workbook is written for faith communities looking for ways to ignite, engage, and support the community-building efforts of their neighbors. It is intended to inspire congregations to identify and mobilize the gifts of their own members as well as to encourage each congregation to take its place as one among many associations and institutions in its own local community. It does so by providing examples of institutional and denominational innovation and creativity, both within the church and within the community.

Faith-Based Organizations in the Community Context: A Unique Resource

Faith-based organizations — churches, synagogues, mosques, temples — are complex and dynamic entities. On one hand, as *Congregations*, they are the essence of voluntary association. “Wherever two or more are gathered...” identifies prayer groups, storefront churches, ministries of every size and stripe as well as huge, multi-faceted

religious institutions. Those called together by a common faith can adopt any number of structures, as long as the membership of the faithful is at the core.

At the same time, however, *Churches* (and Synagogues, Mosques and Temples) are community institutions. More often than not, they own property, maintain buildings, and share common space with other community institutions. The presence of a church in a local community can provide a gathering place, a public space, or a community anchor. In many communities, churches are the strongest and most visible institutions, and church members are the most mobilized and active members of the community at large.

In addition, many individual churches are part of a larger institution: for example, a denomination, diocese, or other regional or national administrative structure. Because their functions are different than those of a church, these larger institutions can sometimes seem to work at cross-purposes to the community-building efforts on the local level. As a result, local congregations often serve as agents of renewal within larger bureaucracies. The dynamic can also work in reverse: innovative practices at the institutional level can sometimes provide new energy to local congregations.

To be effective community-builders, congregations function on several levels. In particular, they are both “faith communities,” and “place-based communities.” As “a gathering of the faithful,” each congregation must come to understand and lift up the gifts and talents of its members for the benefit of each individual and for the good of the congregational community. As local institutions, churches must play a role alongside other entities within the specific neighborhood or place, discovering and engaging the valuable qualities — specifically the gifts and assets — of local community members and associations. And as parts of larger institutions and structures, local congregations must utilize the assets of church bureaucracies to benefit both constituencies — the community of faith and the community of place.

LOCAL CONGREGATIONS OFTEN
SERVE AS AGENTS OF RENEWAL
WITHIN
LARGER BUREAUCRACIES



These roles make congregations potentially powerful agents for change. The “calling” of faith provides a motivation for action and the institutional presence provides a base of operation. The history of community-based movements for social change is filled with reminders of the agency of congregations and religious leadership. This workbook shares current examples of this rich tradition.

Typical Roles for Faith-Based Organizations in Communities

As both association and institution, congregation and church, faith-based organizations can be fertile and fruitful builders of communities of faith and place. Two very different sets of activities define the typical roles for faith-based organizations in communities: one, the more traditional evangelization and service; and two, the more recent involvement in community organizing and development. While both sets of strategies have produced positive impacts within communities, these roles are also subject to certain limitations associated with how the work gets done.

Evangelization and Service

Evangelization seeks to enlarge the faith community, to grow the gathering of two or more. Evangelization focuses the energy of the congregation on growing itself; those outside the faith community have value as potential members. Although strengthening and expanding a faith community requires community-building skills and has a strong theological mandate in many traditions, the inward focus of evangelization sometimes causes congregations to fail to see the potential for meaningful relationships beyond their own faith traditions.

Service, while also a theological mandate, can create a different kind of distance between congregation and community.² While aiming to help “the least of these,”



service systems can also debilitate. As John McKnight argues in *The Careless Society*,³ service systems can disable communities in three ways. They divert resources from lower income people to those who are professional helpers; they teach people to focus first on their needs and deficiencies rather than on their resources and potentialities; and, finally, they tend to displace community-based citizens’ organizations and to disregard their power to solve local problems.

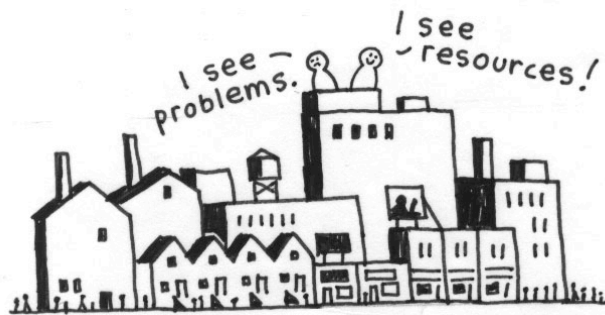
² Service is often termed “mission” or “outreach” in the Christian tradition.

³ McKnight, J. L. (1995). *The Careless Society: Community and its Counterparts*. New York: Basic Books.

Community Organizing and Community Development Strategies

In recent decades, many congregations surrounded by communities in distress have accepted the challenge to help rebuild those communities by exploring alternatives or additions to the mandates of evangelization and service. They have chosen to capitalize on their organizational and institutional strengths by involving themselves in congregation-based community organizing and community economic development.

While many congregations, particularly in the African-American community, boast long histories of social and political involvement, epitomized by their centrality to the Civil Rights Movement, what many think of as a congregation-based organizing began with Saul Alinsky, whose “people’s organizations” often had churches at the center of their structure. Today, four major organizing networks provide training and



professional support to churches involved in community organizing.⁴ These traditions teach that congregations draw on their associational strengths to contribute leaders and supporters to community efforts. They also use their institutional strengths to provide meeting and office space, lend moral authority to the community’s agenda, and donate dollars and other resources to build more powerful communities.

Involvement in organizing has prompted some congregations to join efforts to rebuild local economies. The growth of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) as extensions of such efforts has helped provide new job opportunities and affordable housing to areas where disinvestment once threatened community ruin. So strong has this movement become that the Christian Community Development Association, a major network of faith-based CDCs, regularly draws thousands to its annual convention.

But effective and necessary as community organizing and community economic development are for those congregations committed to community building, they can only be partial strategies. First of all, the success of each depends on the success of the other. Developing “bricks and mortar” solutions will not get too far without empowering the people who will dwell in the houses. And organizations of people facing economic adversity need to see tangible results — like housing or jobs — or they will abandon their efforts in despair.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND
COMMUNITY ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT CAN ONLY BE
PARTIAL STRATEGIES

⁴ The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), Gamaliel, Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO), and Direct Action Research and Training (DART).

Increasingly, however, community organizing and community economic development approaches are limited by their context. Many of the forces that exert control over local communities are now regional, national, or global in scope. This makes picking a target for an organizing campaign much harder, and victory tougher to achieve. The economic decisions that strip a community of jobs, or target it for gentrification, are often made in stock exchanges and boardrooms far removed from community influence. To change policy in these arenas will take time and persistent struggle. (Faith organizations around the world are learning how to address these macro-level forces, but their strategies are the topic of a different workbook.)



In addition, traditional community organizing and community economic development strategies are built on a common assumption. That assumption states that external forces cause most of the important problems faced by struggling communities and therefore control most of the solutions. Not only are the implications of this assumption paralyzing, they ignore the capacities of local residents and the assets of local communities. As congregations seek to build their communities and themselves, they are turning to new strategies that reintegrate the many assets found locally, in particular those that exist at the personal and interpersonal levels. In other words, they are exploring the approaches embodied in asset-based community development.

Asset-Based Community Development

Asset-based community development begins with the assumption that successful community building depends on rediscovering and mobilizing resources *already present* in any community. These resources include the skills and resources of individuals, the power of voluntary associations, the array of local institutions, the physical infrastructure, and the local economy. Another way of saying this is:

SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS ASSET BASED,
INTERNALLY FOCUSED, AND RELATIONSHIP DRIVEN

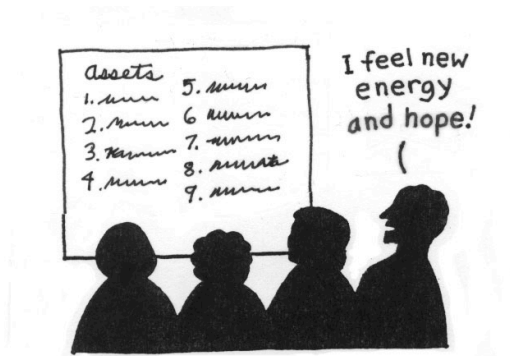
Although some resources from outside the community may be needed, the key to lasting solutions comes from within. The gifts and skills of residents and the assets of the physical community are always the starting place. No plan, solution, or organization from outside the community can duplicate what is already there. These assets need to be identified and mobilized. Over time, some simple but powerful tools

have been developed to aid this discovery and process, tools that have emerged from practical experience.

As we have already seen, congregations are in a unique position to identify and mobilize these resources and assets. All congregations are first composed of *individuals*, each of whom has gifts she or he brings to the group. The best and most creative congregations are aware of these gifts and provide opportunities for them to be given within the faith community. Finding ways to discover and inventory these gifts is at the heart of this process. Asset-based community development advocates the use of such tools as the individual *capacity inventory* as the initial step in any community building effort. The capacity inventory is a tool that is tailored to fit the specific needs of the community that wishes to use it. The inventory may be short or long, it may focus on employment, entrepreneurship, or any of the many issues on which a community wants to focus; it may simply provide the opportunity for people to share their dreams. In this workbook, we will see how different congregations, beginning with the use of a capacity inventory, have made changes both within the faith community and in the larger community of place to which the congregation belongs.

LASTING SOLUTIONS
COME FROM WITHIN

But simply discovering and inventorying individual gifts is not enough. Asset-based community development is about finding ways in which to create connections between gifted individuals. Making these connections, *building relationships*, is also familiar to



communities of faith. The development of multiple ministries within one congregation is an everyday example of this kind of connection being made within a church. Although some churches are much better at this kind of mutual leadership than others, building relationships is at the heart of building vital congregations. In this workbook, we will learn about some innovative strategies used by congregations to build relationships among their members as well as in their neighborhoods.

Individuals who share common interests and goals form *associations*. Garden clubs, fraternal organizations, bowling leagues, book clubs: all bring individuals into association. Faith communities are the strongest and most widespread example of association. Faith communities can also be the home base for dozens of associations that build on shared faith: choirs, women's and men's groups, or youth groups, for example. Shared religious faith creates solid bedrock for all congregational activity, as well as direction and guidance for that action.

Finally, all communities, no matter how disadvantaged, have within them a series of *institutions* that can support the community-building activities of the gifted individuals

and powerful associations found there. Asset-based community development involves local institutions in the process of community building. Parks, schools, libraries, businesses — all have a role to play. Congregations, regardless of their particular faith, are important community institutions. They can be involved with the local community as property owners, gathering centers, and incubators for community leadership. If a community has several congregations, as most do, these religious centers can work together for the good of the larger community outside each individual community of faith. This workbook shares stories of successful

CONGREGATIONS, REGARDLESS
OF THEIR PARTICULAR FAITH,
ARE IMPORTANT COMMUNITY
INSTITUTIONS

community action built on the role played by congregations; several of the stories involve the cooperation of several congregations.

Frequently, individual congregations are also members of denominational communities. Denominations, national or international religious bodies, and seminaries are examples of large faith institutions. Sometimes, these structures resist change. But this workbook contains stories of large church institutions that have found a way to promote change from within through the recognition and use of asset-based community development principles and strategies.

What follows is an organized group of stories — stories that contain important lessons. The stories tell of congregations that have found powerful ways to release the gifts of individual members to benefit the church and its community. They tell



Asset-based community development, finding ways to create connections between gifted individuals

of congregations that have become better neighbors and joined forces to create positive change in local communities. And they tell of institutional change within religious institutions brought about by belief in the giftedness of the faithful and in the powerful contribution of those faithful to the larger community.

Reading and Using This Book

Congregations, denominations, and their communities are almost infinitely variable, but some commonalities can be found among their unique approaches to asset-based development. The organizing principle for the stories presented here is the perspective taken by the congregation or institution.

- Some looked within to find and mobilize the individual capacities of its members.

- Some attempted to integrate and assist in the development of the assets found in the larger community.
- Some explored partnerships with other faith-based organizations.
- And, some used all of these strategies to change the way in which their religious institutions interact with the faithful and with local communities. Each story highlights some of the questions asked, methods used, and results attained by the faith-based organization in question.

But none of these stories should be seen as pointing to a “one-size-fits-all” method for congregations to follow. Instead, the stories should be read as sources of insight and challenge, as examples of the new perspective that can be gained by changing traditional understandings of church and community. For that reason, this book is divided into five sections of *Asset-Building Stories*, each emphasizing how the groups featured interpreted the task of identifying and mobilizing their assets.

- Discovering the Gifts of Individuals
- Expanding Assets
- Working Across Boundaries
- Changing Institutions
- Institutional Change Supports Community Change

Each of these stories is told in part by those individuals involved in the process of community transformation.



The stories are followed by a section called *Finding Inspiration in our Community's Assets*, which makes some general connections between these highly unique stories and the five elements of a healthy, functioning community. By making these connections, this guide presents a framework for the reader to use when considering the points of engagement between faith organizations and community, whether that community is local or internal.

At the end of the book, the reader will find *Appendices* that include an assortment of tools and resources used by the organizations in the stories. These tools and resources include capacity inventories and group process methods as well as some theological reflections and scriptural passages which leaders interpret to connect the idea of community to expressions of faith. This mixture of material is meant to reflect the wide variety of ways in which congregations can and do approach the work of community building. It also reflects the basic necessity of the connection of faith to action for those involved in faith-based work. These tools may be used or adapted by congregations and others to address their unique local situations and needs.

Finally, the book ends with an extensive *Resources* section. Names, addresses, phone numbers, and websites, as well as books and articles are included. All of the storytellers included in this publication are listed, as well as groups and organizations that can be contacted for further information. In addition, reflections are included which illustrate how pastors and others doing faith-based community work relate their activities to theology. Finally, some tools developed by community builders featured here are illustrated. All of this information is provided in the interest of promoting the sharing of community-building experiences. Sharing stories and information can build bridges between congregations and community, between congregation and congregation, and between institutions and the faithful. The authors hope this book will provide inspiration and practical information for those interested in the role of faith organizations in the creation of powerful and vital communities.

A Note About Works in Progress

Although there are stories included here that describe interfaith cooperation and specific work being done in Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist communities, most of the stories are about Christian churches. All of the theological references and reflections are based on Judeo-Christian theology and scripture. In no way is this intended to imply that Christian congregations, churches, or denominations are unique or special in terms of their community-building capacities, efforts, or successes. Writing within the Christian tradition will speak more directly to other Christians, but it is not meant as a private conversation. Although this exploration focuses on Christian churches, community building is also clearly taking place in mosques, synagogues, and temples in neighborhoods around the world.



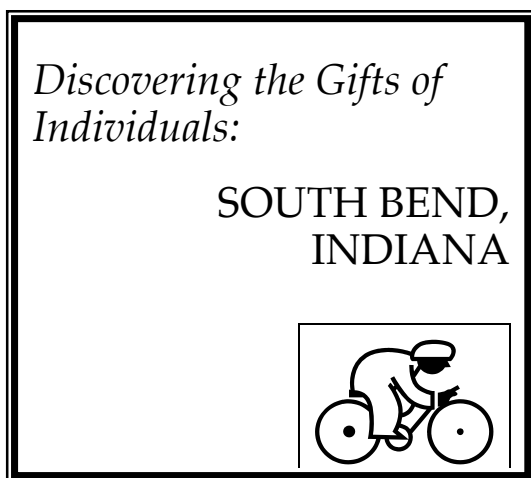
At the heart of asset-based community development is the belief that community change always comes from within, and that people in communities are the best experts on how to achieve that change. Long before this practice had a name, or acquired the capital letters that identify it, ABCD was about gathering stories from communities around the United States and the world that demonstrated how local people created change by mobilizing their own resources. As we continue to gather and share the lessons learned, we try to organize them in ways that make them useful. Quite simply, this workbook is part of a larger work in progress.

ASSET-BUILDING STORIES:
DISCOVERING THE GIFTS OF INDIVIDUALS

Each human being is a combination of talent and inability, strength and weakness. Despite this duality, we all try to work from our strengths, to show the world what we do best. Finding and mobilizing the gifts of individuals — their talents and strengths — and engaging them is critical to the success of any group endeavor, be it a block club, a community organization, or a local congregation.

What follows are the stories of two congregations that initiated their community-building work with simple surveys designed to identify the assets of their members and of people who participated in church activities and programs. Each congregation discovered untapped human potential in its midst and began to look for creative ways to engage these individuals and their gifts in activities that could benefit the congregation and the community. Providing opportunities for people to contribute their unique gifts became an essential part of their strategies for community building.

Broadway Christian Parish, United Methodist Church



Here, in some detail, is the story of a small congregation that understands “gifts” in a profound way. In South Bend, Indiana, at Broadway Christian Parish United Methodist Church, the story begins with a food pantry. The cheering throngs on their way to Notre Dame football games do not often see the Southeast side of South Bend. It is a low-income neighborhood, a place where many families struggle to put food on the table. Like many churches, Broadway supplies food to the needy, but, when local residents come to the church for food, something extraordinary happens.

First, each person is asked to complete a survey of his or her talents. At the end of the survey, each person is asked:

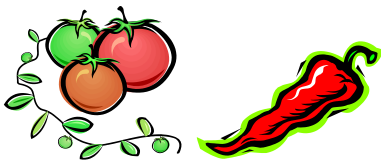
- WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU DO WELL ENOUGH TO TEACH TO SOMEONE ELSE?
- WHAT THREE THINGS DO YOU WANT TO LEARN?
- WHO BESIDES GOD AND ME IS TAKING THIS JOURNEY WITH YOU?

Investments Made

Pastor Mike Mather and the church staff, along with several members of the church's Mission Committee, review these surveys to see how the church and the community might invest in the giftedness of people. "We ask that last question because it is a central affirmation of the church — that we are never alone — yet people often feel that they are," he says.

Two of the committee's most exciting discoveries led to the development of two small business ventures — Adelita's Fajitas and the Major Taylor Bicycle Recycling Center and School.

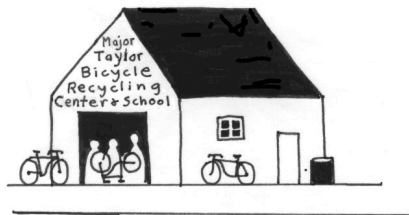
Adelita's Fajita's



Adele was one of the first residents to fill out the survey, and she claimed that she was a great cook. Challenged to prove it, she began cooking for the church staff. Her Tex-Mex specialties were so popular that Adele became the regular caterer for both church and community events. Broadway Christian quickly became a popular site for meetings, bringing many new customers to Adele's budding catering business. Today, Adelita's Fajitas and La Chaparita Catering generate economic support for Adele and other community members, and Adele finds herself in a very different situation from the one that prompted her to seek food from the church pantry.

Major Taylor Bicycle Recycling Center and School

A local teen was on a half-day suspension from school. At the church, he was told that every person in the neighborhood had gifts that were needed and that the community couldn't afford to waste. When asked what he could teach, he talked about how much he and a friend of his loved to repair bicycles. Mike Mather introduced them to a local teacher who also loved bicycles, then helped them



get a small loan to buy tools. In a local garage, the three opened the Major Taylor Bicycle Recycling Center

and School. The center, named for a famous African-American cyclist, both repairs bikes and teaches others how to do it. As word spread about the success of the center, a request came from another part of town to duplicate the effort. "Tell them to find kids in their own neighborhood," the boys replied.

But, because "we are never alone," the investment is also made in giving the gifts to others. Mike Mather and the Mission Committee agreed that if any person could identify three local people who wanted to take instruction from them, the committee would pay for the supplies. They called this gift-giving endeavor the School of the Spirit. Since it has started, classes have been offered and taken in subjects such as Mexican cooking, Basic Auto Repair, Bible Study, and Guitar Lessons, among other topics.

The Assets of Youth

We too seldom regard young people as gifted. We may use platitudes describing them as "leaders of tomorrow," but forget to consider them contributors of today. Left unchecked, the marginalizing of youth spins out to its logical conclusion with many young people entering the juvenile justice system. Congregations and communities must find ways to bring young people into the center of community life, to discover and celebrate their gifts and energies.

Broadway Christian made a positive decision to invest in the capacities of the young people in the community. Three high school students came to

the church looking for summer jobs, and they joined the church staff as "Animators of the Human Spirit."

Animators of the Human Spirit



Their job description was to "find the talents of other young people within a one-block radius of the church and invest those gifts for the benefit of the larger community."

The youth developed their own capacity inventory, asking:

- WHAT DO YOU LIKE HERE?
- HOW WOULD YOU MAKE IT BETTER?
- WHO WOULD HELP YOU MAKE IT BETTER?
- WHAT ARE YOU GOOD AT?
- WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

In no time, they found a girl who liked numbers, three boys who could teach basketball, many kids who loved art, one who loved to ride his bike, and a young man who wanted to learn carpentry. Armed with that information, the Animators did the following:

- They bought tools for the would-be carpenter, and connected him with a local man who was remodeling his house.

- They bought a mobile hoop for the three basketball teachers, and in return asked them to teach other local kids to play in a summer basketball day camp.



- The girl who liked math became registrar for the day camp.
- The boy who rode his bike distributed flyers made by the artists to advertise the day camp.

Animators of the Human Spirit has been so successful that the church received a grant from the United Methodist Church to hire a coordinator. This individual works with youth from throughout the neighborhood, providing small loans as they form businesses that engage their talents and teach others. Now, Lucy's Flowers provides Valentine's Day gifts, Rent-a-Teen cleans yards and shovels snow, and Beanie World has made entrepreneurs out of ten-year-old Beanie Babies fans.

One-to-One

Sometimes, re-engaging young people into the life of the community demands a one-to-one relationship. In October of 1992, a little boy by the name of Columbus Coleman was shot and killed while playing in his grandmother's front yard a block and a half from Broadway Christian. The next night there was a neighborhood meeting in the sanctuary; the place was packed. And, while there were many expressions of grief and anger at that meeting, there was also the beginning of the rebirth of a neighborhood organization.

Because of the shooting, the concerned parents of a 12-year-old named Aaron asked Pastor Mike Mather if he could find something productive for Aaron to do that summer. The Mission Committee hired a local college student named Joe to live with Aaron's family for the summer. Joe's job description was "to discover Aaron's talents and apply them for the benefit of the community."

RE-ENGAGING YOUNG
PEOPLE INTO THE LIFE
OF THE COMMUNITY
DEMANDS A ONE-TO-ONE
RELATIONSHIP

On a walk around the neighborhood, Aaron introduced Joe to his friends. Soon, Joe and Aaron had collected about fifty other kids. With this new-found army, Joe and Aaron organized a neighborhood clean-up effort. They

collected 163 pounds of broken glass and took it to the local recycling center, hoping to use it as a funding source for new activities. When they were offered only \$5 for the entire load, Joe and Aaron were convinced it was worth more than that and kept it, knowing they'd find some use for it. Meanwhile, Joe learned that Aaron liked computers and art. Aaron began teaching other kids how to use computers at the Boys and Girls Club, and he also started a drawing class. In that class, kids were asked to draw pictures of their community.

In the wake of the death of Columbus Coleman, terrible things were being written and said about the neighborhood — in the newspapers, on television, and in conversations with city officials. But these young people drew pictures that told a different story. They drew pictures of a boat on the St. Joseph River, of a car driving through the neighborhood, of a house. They drew pictures of Broadway Christian, and of the sun, and of flowers and birds. They drew a picture of the small building in the back yard of a senior citizen who sold candy and pop to the kids after school. They drew a picture of people singing at the Gospel Fest that was held in the neighborhood park that summer.



Then Aaron and Joe divided those 50 kids into three groups — two groups of 17 and one of 16 — and put them to work creating a mosaic. Sorting through the supply of glass they had collected, they saved the green and brown glass, and set aside

some of the clear glass. And then they spray painted the clear glass in red, and yellow, and blue. Over a period of 8 weeks, they labored over a piece of plywood 8 feet by 4 feet, until they had created a dazzling mosaic made out of broken glass swept up from the streets. And along the entire left side of the mosaic in big letters it said, "You are the light of the world."

This mosaic now sits on the front wall of the sanctuary at Broadway Christian. "It is a constant reminder to us of the creativity and the life and the perspective that is right there amidst the different story that the world will tell," says Mike Mather. "It is a reminder to the children of the beauty of their neighborhood, beauty they have had a chance to name. It is also a reminder that where others see trash, God sees great beauty."

WHERE OTHERS SEE TRASH,
GOD SEES GREAT BEAUTY

Art and Celebration

One of the teenage Animators, David, was a good artist. He went in search of other artists around the community and these young people painted a mural that depicted the neighborhood. Around the border of the picture they painted some of the evil that the neighborhood knows. They painted liquor bottles and hypodermic needles. They painted guns and words like "hate" and "violence."

But as the viewer's gaze moves in from the borders toward the center,

the painting becomes brighter. In the middle are three figures walking arm in arm into the future. There is a playground, and the words “que pasa” ask those who pass by how they are doing. Along the right side of the mural is a beautiful waterfall of stained glass representing the churches in the neighborhood.

The mural was installed on the side of the local Boys and Girls Club, where the congregation gathered and blessed it along with the young people who had made it.

“Standing next to me that morning was a young man whose brother had been murdered in this neighborhood a year before. I wondered what it was like for him to stand in front of this mural that acknowledged the power and presence of evil, but also announced the hope and the future of the neighborhood as well.” Mike Mather says the young man embraced him, and “The only answer I had was the baptism of his tears on my head.”

Recently, this creative celebration of young people and art took a different turn. The neighborhood had been experiencing a rash of “tagging” graffiti. Although Mike Mather had an idea who was responsible, he didn’t confront the young men. Instead, he enlisted the help of a neighborhood art college student.

The student, De’Amon, had training from School of the Art Institute in Chicago, but he also knew all the youth in the neighborhood. De’Amon got the taggers together. They compared technique; he gave them tips he’d learned in his studies. In time, he helped them open a small

graphics studio, which supported their preference to get paid to “tag” cards and ads. Later, the group held an art festival at the church.

A New Economy

The economic creativity displayed by the Animators of the Human Spirit and other young people has spread beyond local youth. In early 1999, Broadway Christian began a project called Women’s Pictures of Hope. Using a church darkroom and desktop publishing tools, women from the community are learning black-and-white photography and setting up a greeting card business. The impact of all of these new businesses can be seen during the summer at the Broadway Market. From May through September, an outdoor market is held at the church for people from the South East Side of South Bend to buy, sell, or trade their products. Bikes can be purchased from Major Taylor, many types of fruits and vegetables are available from the Neighborhood Youth Garden Project and the Broadway Kid’s Garden, and Origami boxes are sold by Kid’s Custom Crafts. Shoppers can also have one of Adelita’s fajitas.

WE LOVE TO PLANT SEEDS. WE ARE ALWAYS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING
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Broadway Christian is a congregation of eighty members. Its impact on the Southeast side of South Bend has been

growing “under the radar” until recently. As the entrepreneurial energies of community residents have made change visible, the congregation is faced with the challenge of whether to pursue more funding for larger projects. “No matter what happens, we are drawn to the small and immediate,” says Pastor Mike Mather.

We love to plant seeds. We are always in the process of becoming; we have never arrived at the point we are seeking. We are always moving toward perfection. But we are still not there. Our cultures, our art, our music, our culinary skills, our construction skills, our dramatic talents, our laughter, our magic, our writing all become avenues for us to share our stories and the story of Christ’s movement in our lives.



In the church, there are opportunities at every turn for these gifts to be used. We have wonderfully talented teachers in our congregation who every day lead young people into the unfolding of their God-given talents and passions. Our gift, as the church, is to know one another and what we have to offer — to look across the aisle and see someone who knows a story or knows how to do something that I want to learn.

In our communities we know that we cannot afford to waste one person.

Mike Mather, Pastor

*Broadway Christian Parish United
Methodist Church*

New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church



New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church is located in Over the Rhine, a community just outside downtown Cincinnati. A large congregation, New Prospect serves a mostly African-American population in a neighborhood that has been left behind in the city's rush to focus on downtown development. Many of Cincinnati's homeless live in Over the Rhine, and for many years New Prospect has attended to their nutritional needs through a soup kitchen in the church basement. Several years ago, a group of ministers and lay leaders in the New Prospect congregation decided to re-examine the church's relationship with the people it was "serving" in its soup kitchen. When congregants expressed the desire to bridge the gap between the church and the broader community, it became apparent that the soup kitchen was

failing to serve as a bridge, and people soon figured out why. "We were feeding folks, but we weren't getting to *know* them," explained one kitchen volunteer. "We knew nothing about their experiences, and especially about their skills and talents."

The Gift Interview

The congregation designed a "Gift Interview," to explore the unknown talents of the people coming to the soup kitchen. After working together to design the interview and refining the questions among themselves, the congregants initiated one-on-one interviews with the people they wanted to get to know. They asked questions about the gifts and abilities people were born with; they asked about skills and the things people liked to do. They also asked about dreams and provided an opportunity for each person to express what they would do if they "could snap their fingers and be doing anything."

WE WERE FEEDING FOLKS,
BUT WE WEREN'T GETTING
TO KNOW THEM

What they found astonished them: here were carpenters, plumbers, artists, musicians, teachers, and caregivers, all coming to the soup kitchen at New Prospect. Here were gifted and talented people, people

with dreams, people with things to share but who simply had not been asked about who they really were and how they would like to contribute to their community.

As the interviews proceeded, the volunteers from the congregation began to notice that one skill in particular was being reported more often than any other. In fact, more than fifty percent of the people interviewed cited *cooking* as one of their talents.

WE'RE NOT JUST RECIPIENTS.
WE WANT TO CROSS OVER TO THE
BLESSING SIDE OF THE TABLE

Gradually, the church leaders began to understand that what they were hearing was meant to convey a message to the congregation about its appropriation of the blessings available to those who give, and about the apparent lack of blessings for those who were on the receiving side of the table at the soup kitchen. As Pastor Damon Lynch put it, "Folks were telling us, 'We don't want to stay over here on the receiving side of the table. We're not just recipients. We want to cross over to your side of the table, the blessing side of the table. We want to cook and serve, too. We want to belong by contributing.'"

The Other Side of the Table

And so they crossed over. More and more, the original soup kitchen

recipients served the food and those congregants who had once been servers, accepted the role of recipient. When everyone involved in the soup kitchen could function as a server *and* a recipient of the gift of food, the power once associated with being the server began to disappear, and real, reciprocal relationships began to blossom. The soup kitchen's "Wall of Fame" — a large display highlighting the gifts, skills and dreams of people coming to the kitchen — was just one way of celebrating this reunification of people in the expanded community.



The Community Benefits

That reunification within the New Prospect church led to a strong alliance within the community that now faces larger issues than who receives the blessings associated with giving. The servers and diners from the soup kitchen have united in their determination to sit at another table, the table where decisions are made about the future of the Over the Rhine neighborhood. Over the Rhine, like many urban neighborhoods near city centers, is being targeted by developers for upscale housing development. New Prospect is leading

a community-based effort to take control of the planning process, and to produce a community plan built upon community input.

As part of this work, the church commissioned its development committee to create a physical inventory



of the Over the Rhine community. When the block-by-block inventory was completed and mapped out, the committee brainstormed about the possibilities represented in the physical assets identified. Through a process of examining the real and potential economic assets represented by vacant buildings, land for business development, transportation opportunities, the committee developed a vision for the community's future. The map and all the potential local assets comprised the raw materials for the community planning process led by New Prospect.



Says Damon Lynch, "We cooked and ate together, became friends and allies. Now we stand together for the future of our neighborhood."

NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH

Survey Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

My name is _____ What is your name?

Thank you for coming over. Did someone talk to you about what the "Gift Exchange" is all about? What do you understand it to be?

Basically, we believe that everyone has God-given talents and gifts that can be used to benefit the community. I'd like to spend a few minutes talking to you about your gifts.

Before we get started, let me give you a small gift.

GIFTS

Gifts are abilities that we are born with. We may develop them, but no one has to teach them to us.

1. What positive qualities do people say you have?
2. Who are the people in your life that you give to? How do you give to them?
3. When was the last time you shared with someone else? What was it?
4. What do you give that makes you feel good?

SKILLS

Sometimes we have talents that we've acquired in everyday life such as cooking and fixing things.

1. What do you enjoy doing?
2. If you could start a business, what would it be?
3. What do you like to do that people would pay you to do?
4. Have you ever made anything? Have you ever fixed anything?

DREAMS

Before you go, I want to take a minute and hear about your dreams — those goals you hope to accomplish.

1. What are your dreams?
2. If you could snap your fingers and be doing anything, what would it be?

CLOSING

First, I'd like to thank you. We're talking to as many people as we can and what we'd like to do is begin a Wall of Fame here in the Soup Kitchen highlighting the gifts, skills, and dreams of as many people as possible. The ultimate goal is to find a way to use those gifts in rebuilding the community.

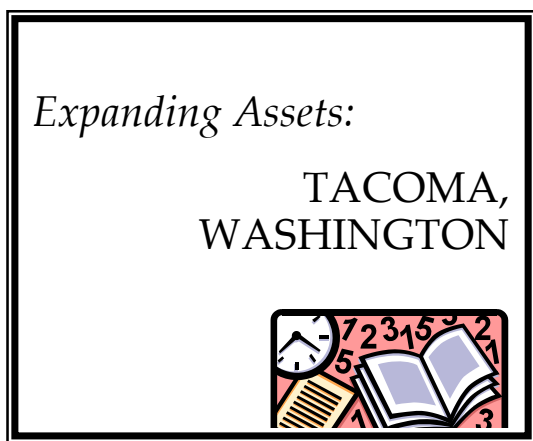
Before you go, can I get your full name? Address? Age?

ASSET-BUILDING STORIES:
EXPANDING ASSETS

Congregations are gatherings of individuals united by a common faith. But a congregation does not exist in a vacuum; it is surrounded by and is partly a product of a local community. As such, a congregation has a role to play in the life of its community.

The three stories that follow tell of congregations that had the vision and the commitment to see strength and creativity in communities that others saw as depleted and depressed. Each of these congregations developed unique strategies to call upon the gifts of its community. None of them confined its work to congregation members or fellow believers; all of them found formerly invisible assets to build upon, changing community life for the better.

The Salishan/Eastside Lutheran Mission



States have brought about the kinds of community challenges experienced in other disadvantaged urban neighborhoods.

Renaming

Since 1985, the Salishan/Eastside Lutheran Mission has served the residents of this community, guided by Pastor Ron Vignec. Actually, Ron refers to himself as both a pastor and a developer, called to build local leadership that will address the needs of the community and create a vision for its future. Similarly, the Mission sees itself as something more than a church. A mission has participants — rather than members — all focused on shared goals; a mission requires the talents and faith of everyone involved, regardless of their religion. In the case of the Salishan/Eastside Lutheran Mission, the shared goal is the

Salishan is a public housing development in Tacoma. Its 3,500 residents live in 855 units of public housing on 148 acres of land, the largest public housing development west of the Mississippi River. Many of Salishan’s residents are from Southeast Asia, and, although strong cultural bonds exist among them, the daily struggles of life in the United

betterment of the community, and everyone is welcome.

At Salishan/Eastside the active renaming process doesn't end with calling its congregation a "Mission." The Mission's participants think of their community as so rich in resources that it can function as a teacher, and so full of wisdom that it can share its knowledge with others living outside Salishan. So, Ron Vignec and the residents refer to the community as the *University of Salishan*. And within this university, all of the residents are students as well as teachers, sharing their abilities and capacities with one another. The idea of a community as a learning institution suggests a new way of thinking about the way that money is dedicated to it. Traditional university presidents raise funds based on the potential of their institutions, not their needs and deficiencies. Salishan follows this asset-based model and raises funds based on the gifts and capacities of the people who live there.

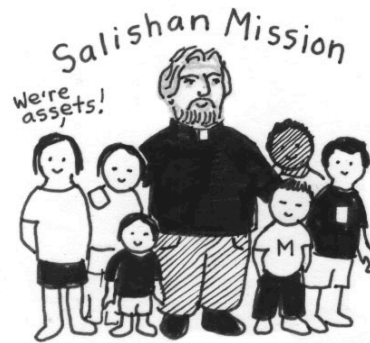
Assets on Display

In the view of Mission participants, investing in Salishan just makes good sense. They regularly escort government officials from human service agencies on guided community tours, displaying the physical and cultural assets of Salishan and providing opportunities for the visitors to engage in in-depth conversations with the residents. This kind of approach to community promotion has resulted in more than one agency rethinking how it interacts with residents. Some have decided that the hierarchical, needs-based programming that served

them well in the past doesn't work so well in communities that celebrate their assets.

Building Relationships

The heart of the work done by Pastor Ron Vignec and the Mission participants goes well beyond portraying the community in a different light. Building relationships is the key to all the work done in Salishan. Local officials, service organization administrators, city decision makers — all have an undeniable impact upon a community like Salishan. Without the solid foundation of real relationships in which agency representatives come to know the real people behind the poverty statistics and stereotypes, partnerships for change can never truly begin.



To build these relationships, Ron Vignec has undertaken a second calling, that of "pastor to institutions." Taking the message of the Mission to major institutions in Tacoma, he works to change negative assumptions and make beneficial connections for the community. Pastor Vignec also founded the Eastside Network, a regular, informal gathering of all the "providers" serving the residents of

Salishan. These monthly gatherings serve not only as a kind of clearinghouse for local activities, but also as a way for those who work in the community to come to know each other and to know the community and its residents.

Another way Pastor Vignec builds relationships is by joining with other faith groups on community events and activities. He connects with Cambodian and Vietnamese Buddhist monks in celebrating memorial services and other major community events; he directs the nonprofit organization funded by Holy Family of Jesus Cambodian Episcopal Church; he is a member of the Girl Scouts. Breaking down barriers among different faith groups creates connections that strengthen the community.

POWER SHARED = DIGNITY SPREAD

Finding Strength

These strong connections can be a saving grace when tragedy strikes. In 1998, one group of young local Southeast Asian men killed five others in a deadly shooting incident. Community-building work undertaken by local residents prior to the incident helped to ease the resulting grief and pain: the local Vietnamese Association, the Mission, and community members had worked together to purchase the first burial ground for Vietnamese — both Christian and Buddhist — and this shared cultural space provided some solace and reconciliation after the tragedy.

Later, the same alliance supported local youth in their attempt to resolve the incident by creating a photographic essay about their lives. Thirty young people worked together to publish *Photo Voice* and held a celebration of its release at the Vietnamese cemetery on the one-year anniversary of the killings. Although there is still pain in the community, the young people have honored the memories of those who died.

Today, like other public housing developments, Salishan is undergoing redevelopment, with HUD investing \$35 million through the Tacoma Housing Authority to improve the community. Unlike many other public housing redevelopment projects however, where residents are skeptical of the plans made by the developers, this project has the full support of the community. That's because it is the residents' own plan that will be implemented.

The Housing Authority has entered into partnership with the community as a result of the strong and long-standing relationships formed over the years. New homes will be built, new residents will move into the community to fill them, but Salishan will continue to be a place where power is shared, current residents remain, and dignity is spread.



Bethel Lutheran Church/Bethel New Life



Vision is what it takes to look into the heart of the city and see untapped potential, ingenuity, and capacity where others see only devastation and pathology. This vision is not defined by rose-colored lenses, but by the self-understanding of community residents when liberated from the negative images of themselves perpetuated by people from outside.

Vision sustained by faith is the heart and soul of the work being done in West Garfield Park, on Chicago's West Side, by an organization known as Bethel New Life. Bethel New Life is a faith-based, community development corporation that emerged more than 20 years ago from the community ministry of Bethel Lutheran Church. Faith is the factor that can make "a way out of no way" says Mary Nelson, Executive

Director of Bethel. Faith can lead a congregation to mortgage its church to invest in housing development when it knows nothing about housing except that it is needed. Faith sustains vision when there seem to be too many obstacles. Almost twenty-five years ago, the congregation bought its first building; today, Bethel has developed almost 1,000 units of housing and brought \$98 million to a credit-starved community. Bethel holds as its mission a faithful, holistic vision of the new city, one that is sustainable, just, and rooted in the capacities of the West Side and its residents.

Expanding Vision

The genesis of this vision was small and immediate: Bethel Lutheran Church realized that in order to build a congregation it must also address the lack of safe, affordable housing in its community. In 1979 — before the Community Reinvestment Act was a reality — the church was unable to obtain the necessary bank loan to



enable it to begin to invest in affordable housing without significant collateral. The congregation soon realized that its main asset was the church building, which was free of debt and owned outright by Bethel. The congregation came together and

voted to mortgage their church in order to purchase and rehabilitate a local building for affordable housing. The loans were made and the first major housing rehabilitation effort of Bethel New Life began. Over time, the church mortgaged its building four more times to collateralize other housing projects.

A FAITHFUL, HOLISTIC VISION OF THE NEW CITY, ONE THAT IS SUSTAINABLE, JUST, AND ROOTED IN THE CAPACITIES OF ITS RESIDENTS

But the congregation soon realized that clean safe housing means little without economic stability, so it expanded its efforts and launched a job training program. Then, seeing that training for jobs that didn't exist meant nothing, it began developing a job base within the community. These steps are not unusual; they are part of the stories of many community development corporations in cities around the country. Bethel New Life is different in that it has taken its vision in unique and inventive directions.



In the process of conducting a capacity inventory among Garfield Park residents, Bethel was struck by two emerging facts: many elderly, home-bound residents were living in

the neighborhood, and many neighborhood residents were gifted at caring for the elderly. Rather than simply connecting these two groups, Bethel created both job opportunities and improved health care provisions for the elderly. The caregivers were provided with the training necessary to become certified in home care, and a Bethel-run, state-licensed home care agency was developed to serve the needs of the home-bound elderly. As understanding of the many gifts of neighborhood residents has grown over the years since that first capacity inventory, so has Bethel's commitment to facilitating the giving of those gifts. In an ongoing process of community leadership development, neighbors come together to imagine the possibilities of West Garfield Park, to learn to advocate for needed change, and to plan for their future.

Making Connections

Well-intentioned people of faith can sometimes fail to see the intricate web of associations that exist outside their churches. To engage in community building, congregations need to find their place among the many gatherings in their community of place, rather than isolate themselves within their own smaller congregational spheres. With the help of community residents, Bethel New Life set out to connect the associations in East and West Garfield Parks and the neighboring community of Austin. To begin, Bethel convened more than 50 associations at a community luncheon at which they shared the idea of conducting a neighborhood survey of local resources. The plan was to develop a community resource guide for residents that presented each

service provider as a community asset; the hope was that residents would get to know their local resources better and become a more connected community as a result. After gaining the approval of local associations, Bethel surveyed the neighborhoods and conducted interviews, identifying and describing the many resources in the two communities. Using computer technology, Bethel mapped these providers, and then compiled the maps and the contact lists into a resource book called *Community Connections*.⁵ The book was then distributed throughout the West Garfield Park and Austin communities as a resource for local residents and associations.



Taking a step beyond the simple dissemination of the information, Bethel reconvened their local associations at a series of luncheons to share the resource book. Many of the groups that attended these events were unaware of each other, although they shared in the life of the community. At the luncheons, large versions of the maps were displayed on the walls, and representatives of nearby associations located each other in relationship to the resources identified and compared notes. These luncheons sparked renewed interest in what was happening in the neighborhoods and represented the

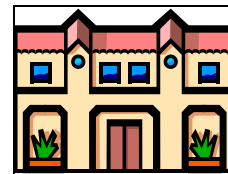
⁵ Bethel New Life (2000). *Community Connections*. Chicago: Bethel New Life.

beginning of many new connections; it is too soon to know exactly how many new collaborations will result from this effort in the long run, but the response to the Connections luncheons has been overwhelming.

Physical Assets

Maximizing the human resource potential of the community is not Bethel's only focus. An inventory of the physical assets of West Garfield Park, of its infrastructure and location, also yielded many possibilities for development. St. Anne's, a local hospital, was about to be closed by the Ancilla Domeni Order. With backing from the Order, which put up funds for collateral on the loan, Bethel was able to purchase the 9.2 acre hospital complex. A local newspaper proclaimed "it would take a miracle" to redevelop St. Anne's — just the challenge to fire Bethel's visioning capabilities.

Today, St. Anne's is the multi-million dollar Beth-Anne Life Center, and is alive with community activity. It contains housing units and services, and it has an assisted-living center for elders. The assisted-living center has allowed many of the older residents of the community to remain within the community even after their caregiving



needs exceed the capacity of home care services. To keep the residents integrated in community life, Bethel New Life opened a cultural center in

the midst of Beth-Anne, providing theater and art classes for local youth. The elders have shared their talents with the young people, and the young people have created intergenerational performance pieces.

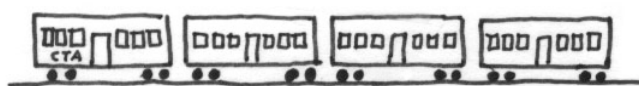
Reclaiming Resources

Taking a physical inventory also called attention to a large quantity of discarded resources in the neighborhood, what the less visionary call trash. Bethel saw opportunity in the trash, and began a recycling project, initially just a community buy-back center for “alley entrepreneurs.” But the center’s success led to the construction of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) that could process tons of recycling each day, provide dozens of jobs, and successfully bid on big recycling contracts from the waste industry. The subsequent success of the MRF led Bethel to consider a radical notion: What if the resources we are recovering could stay in the community and become the raw materials for more small businesses? How can we attract this kind of sustainable manufacturing to the West Side?

They looked around again, and once more saw resources and assets: dozens of commercial properties lying empty and abandoned; a transportation infrastructure that could not only bring workers to the sites via the Chicago Transit Authority’s (CTA) Green Line but also ship finished goods out of Amtrak and Conrail facilities.

The extensive problems associated with maximizing these assets were

obvious. The abandoned factories needed massive, expensive clean-up if they were ever to be used again. The Green Line station was falling down and was threatened with closure by the CTA. The rail yards carried only speeding commuter trains, hurrying through the West Side to the distant suburbs.



Once again, Bethel set out to address the obstacles they found in their path. They partnered in a project with the Argonne National Laboratory to reclaim the polluted industrial sites with new, less expensive, and less invasive methods of clean-up, and to train West Side residents in hazardous waste assessment and cleanup skills. With Argonne’s help, they hope to develop businesses that will add value to the recycled materials they already generate.



Community Assets

Community institutions have also benefited from Bethel’s transforming vision. No physical inventory of the West Garfield Park Community could overlook its namesake — the square mile of Garfield Park with its lagoons, its golden-domed field house, and its glass-enclosed conservatory. At the

time of Bethel's founding, the park and its structures had fallen into disrepair due to decades of neglect by the Chicago Park District. Local residents feared the park, but Bethel only saw the potential represented by its original reason for existence: it was one of the gems of Daniel Burnham's great plan for Chicago, and intended as a destination for visitors. Over the years, Bethel has been at the forefront of the development of restoration and revitalization plans for the park and the Golden Dome. And it helped found the Garfield Park Alliance, a citywide grass-roots organization that has turned the conservatory into a regional environmental education center and a place for the community to learn about gardening, botany, and wildlife.



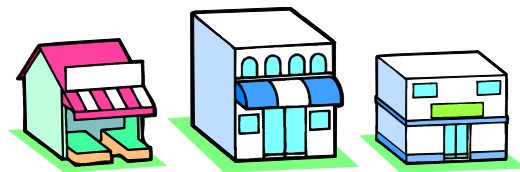
Similarly, the local library had been on the bottom of the City of Chicago's list for improvements for many years. Local residents, energized by the changes at Garfield Park, put pressure on the city to rebuild and update the library. Where the ceiling once leaked so badly the books were covered with plastic, there is now a state-of-the-art computer center for the use of neighborhood youth and families. Bethel New Life was an important part of both coalitions for community improvement.

A Destination

If Garfield Park were to once again become a destination, there had to be

a way for people to get there. The Chicago Transit Authority's Green Line, which served Garfield Park, was slated to be closed because its tracks had become too dangerous for trains to travel, and the CTA did not want to invest in rebuilding the line. The long, but successful fight to save the Green Line was led by many West Side residents and organizations, Bethel among them, but the renovated line and its stations were just the first major step to restoring the transportation infrastructure.

Building on this victory, Bethel brokered the construction of a retail transit center at the busiest of Garfield Park stops. Serving as a community hub, the center, or superstation, will house needed community services, including a bank, a daycare center, and other local small businesses. Such transit-oriented development (TOD) is now in vogue in the sustainable communities movement, but it was Bethel's commitment to the local transit center that prompted the coining of the term.



A Way Out of No Way

The Bethel vision reaches out in several other directions, like circles within circles spinning out from the center. Housing is still being developed, and the job service is still placing hundreds of workers each year. Bethel's broad vision of community health and wellness already includes several existing

holistic health clinics as well as the Beth-Anne Life Center. Capacities existing among community residents are being harnessed for community benefit. As the community increasingly takes charge of its own health and wellness, the circles continue to spin onward and outward.

BETHEL'S COMMITMENT TO A LOCAL TRANSIT CENTER PROMPTED THE TERM *TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT* A NEW STANDARD FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

At the center of all of this activity, behind a community development corporation that has 325 employees and a \$10 million budget, is a Lutheran congregation that draws most of its members from the community. But people come to Bethel Lutheran Church from outside the community as well. The national headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is in the Chicago area, and many denominational employees have chosen Bethel Lutheran Church as their home church. They are drawn by the energy that is driving the transformation of a neighborhood. The history of Bethel's 25 years is celebrated and retold among members old and new as part of the testimony of faith: finding "a way out of no way" toward the possibility of the new city.

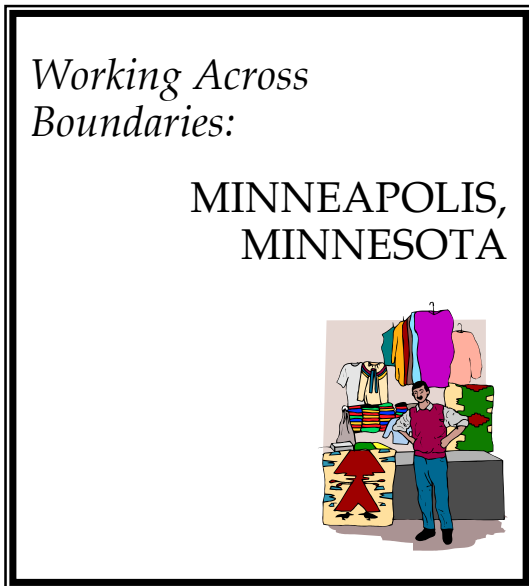


ASSET-BUILDING STORIES:
WORKING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

In the context of a local community, religious congregations represent just one of a variety of voluntary associations. While sometimes differing greatly from each other in doctrine and membership, congregations have much in common. Their members come together around a common faith or shared interest; they share the same physical community; and they negotiate the same challenges faced by other people in their community.

When addressing the many challenges to community building, congregations that band together can become a powerful force. One of the following stories tells how different congregations of the same faith and culture came together to work toward local economic development. Another tells of an alliance across denominations and faiths to combat intolerance and hate. A third shows how change can be made in the larger community if the associations of faith work together.

Interfaith Action



Interfaith Action is an organization comprised of 30 urban and suburban congregations and a “community” created to unite urban and suburban residents in rebuilding and strengthening the core communities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul and their inner-ring suburbs. Grounded in the tradition of congregation-based organizing promoted by the Gamaliel Foundation, Interfaith Action has identified and trained many community leaders in the Twin Cities Latino community.⁶

The Latino community is the fastest growing in the Twin Cities. Although the members of the Latino community come from twelve different countries,

⁶ The coalition changed its name to Isaiah in the late 1990s, but this story takes place prior to that when the group was still called Interfaith Action.

they share a similar cultural and religious heritage. Most are Roman Catholic, yet before 1994, there were no Roman Catholic churches in the community that ministered to the Latino faithful. Through Interfaith Action, Latinos organized a church and called it *Sagrado Corazon*, or Sacred Heart. The church was started with 800 people.

It was at *Sagrado Corazon* that Interfaith Action began its work identifying talents and assets within the Latino community. It developed the Hispanic Community Talent Inventory, an effort that would ultimately lead to a major economic development project. Eighty-five members of *Sagrado Corazon* were paired to interview each other about skills, talents, and ambitions. Astonishingly, a majority indicated a strong interest in starting a business, with nurses, tutors, mechanics, and computer technicians all expressing their entrepreneurial interests. When questioned further, these individuals stated that the greatest barrier to achieving their dreams was the lack of access to culturally specific training in small business operations.

A MAJORITY INDICATED A STRONG INTEREST IN STARTING A BUSINESS

Organizing and Training

Interfaith Action then implemented more traditional methods of community organizing, in particular, the one-on-one conversations that had the power to motivate community members to become involved in local campaigns. The first goal of the group was to create a useful training program, and soon one was designed and initiated that provided 14 weeks of business development training in Spanish. Program design allowed participants to obtain assistance with procuring a small business loan once they had completed the training.



The leaders of Interfaith Action and *Sagrado Corazon* introduced the talent inventory and Spanish-language training opportunity to other Latino congregations in the Twin Cities. Six other churches joined the initiative, four Catholic and two Lutheran, and over 4,000 Latino households are now involved in the inventory and training project.

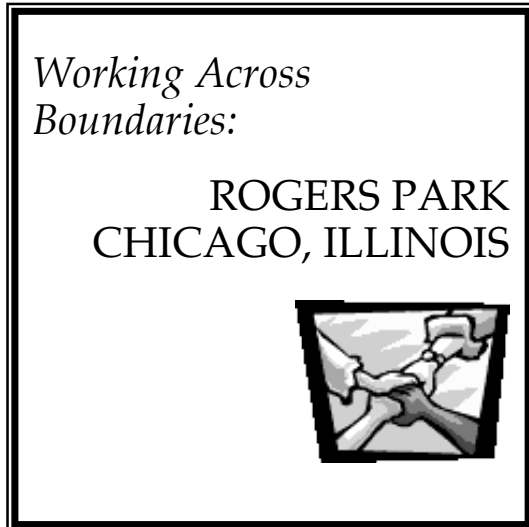
This organizing effort based on community talents led to the founding of a cooperative market in South Minneapolis, called *Mercado Central*. Seventeen entrepreneurs joined in the initial vision of the marketplace — when it opened, it contained 50 small businesses and expected to incubate

several more. Since it opened, a computer literacy center has been added, with those who reported computer skills teaching those who wished to learn about computers.

The Mercado Central will soon be featured in an ABCD workbook entirely devoted to Interfaith Action and its exciting development story. The brief story presented here highlights the skillful blending of church-based organizing with asset-based community development. The styles, practices, and tools of each are not mutually exclusive, and, in the case of Interfaith Action and Sagrado Corazon, can provide a useful model for the growing Latino communities of faith in every urban area.



Pathways to Peace, Rogers Park



East and West Rogers Park are communities on Chicago's North Side that are comprised of people from a dizzying array of cultures and religions. Dozens of languages are spoken in local schools, and ethnic restaurants abound. Both communities have expressed pride in their religious tolerance; not only is Rogers Park home to places of worship for all of the major world religions, but some of the smaller ones like the International Temple of Krishna Consciousness and the Unification Church, are based here as well.

The seemingly idyllic surface of this tolerance was shattered in 1999, when a young white supremacist drove through the community and an adjacent suburb, systematically shooting at Orthodox Jews and people of color, and murdering two. Uprisings in the Middle East in late

2000 raised tensions again, with shots being fired at a local Orthodox rabbi. The residents of Rogers Park were appalled. Because of their pride in the neighborhood's diversity, residents felt that the violence was an insult to the entire community, not just to the Jewish community.

Peace in Action

Rogers Park Interreligious Partners is an organization of churches, mosques, and temples situated in the community. In the wake of the violence, and in an expression of celebration and education as well as worship, it organized the Pathways to Peace gathering at a local Catholic girls' high school. In the gymnasium, prayers were offered in different languages and with different ceremonies for the benefit of all. But prayer was not the only object of the gathering. Organizers understood that achieving peace in the community would take action in addition to prayer.

ACHIEVING PEACE IN THE
COMMUNITY TAKES ACTION IN
ADDITION TO PRAYER

Workshops were held on conflict resolution, and discussions about cultural differences were convened. It was important to everyone not just to gloss over differences, but to highlight them in order to celebrate them. "Our

cultural and religious difference is our greatest community asset," said one organizer, "but we must be in constant dialogue to maintain understanding and avoid stereotypes." The celebration, with its sharing of food and art, culminated with prayers from all traditions, and the hard work of discussion and understanding helped to create a deeper meaning.

WE MUST BE IN CONSTANT
DIALOGUE
TO MAINTAIN UNDERSTANDING

There is a painful irony in the tragedies of this community. Those filled with hate knew where to find the diversity they so despised. But the organizing that began with Pathways to Peace will continue to build upon that great community gift. "If we form together in an alliance," said one resident, "we have better control over what can go down and what can't go down in our neighborhood."



Uniting Congregations for Youth Development
A Project of the Search Institute

*Working Across
Boundaries:*

CONGREGATIONAL
ALLIANCES IN SEVEN
COMMUNITIES



Youth programs abound in every community. Social service organizations, after-school programs, clubs and associations, and church youth groups all profess to have the interests of youth development at the heart of their work. But very little coordination of these projects takes place, especially across barriers of culture and faith. And the daily litany of the problems of “troubled youth” and “youth at risk” continues.

The Search Institute is an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization in Minneapolis, Minnesota, whose mission is to advance the well-being of children and youth. The institute initially sought to address two fundamental questions:

- What do young people need in order to grow up healthy, caring, principled, and productive?
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that young people have access to what they need?

The first question led the Search Institute to research and compile a list of 40 developmental assets, including experiences, opportunities, relationships, and personal qualities that could help provide a solid foundation for young people. The second question had an obvious but troubling answer: everyone is responsible and almost every aspect of community life has the power to impact the development of young people. So then another question emerged: How do communities build the necessary coalitions and provide access to the resources that can support the growth of these developmental assets?

HOW DO COMMUNITIES BUILD THE
CONDITIONS AND PROVIDE ACCESS
TO THE RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT
THE GROWTH OF YOUTH ASSETS?

The Search Institute sought to provide practical answers to these questions for one critical sector of community life, the faith community. Supported by a four-year grant from the DeWitt

Wallace-Readers Digest Foundation, Search Institute worked with organizations in seven pilot communities to discover the best ways to coordinate the youth development efforts of congregations. Called Uniting Congregations for Youth Development (UCYD), the initiative provided resources to volunteer teams of religious leaders in each community. These resources included training in asset-building and networking with others working on the same goals.

A Tool Kit

The best practices, useful tools, and personal stories that were identified in those seven communities were compiled in *Networking Congregations for Asset Building: A Tool Kit*, written by Ann Betz and Jolene L. Roehlkepartain and published by the Search Institute.⁷ This valuable handbook, though focused specifically on youth development, provides wonderful insights into the difficulties and victories possible in working across congregational barriers for the benefit of the whole community (see Resources section for more information on this publication).

Recognizing that the context for all networking must be *relationships*, the handbook provides ways for participants to cross faith boundaries with respect, and to build trust. Once relationships are established, *organizing* must occur and leadership teams must keep the network on

track. *Communicating* about asset building, *learning* more about asset building, and *acting* on that knowledge is the ongoing work of the network. Finally, to be *sustainable*, the network must be open to new members, new projects and new connections.

THE CONTEXT FOR ALL NETWORKING
MUST BE RELATIONSHIPS

The handbook has detailed tool kit chapters on each of these components. Each is based on the experience of congregational alliances in the seven UCYD communities: Albuquerque, NM; Bridgeport, CT; Columbus, GA; Durham, NC; Minneapolis (South Metro), MN; Santa Clara County, CA; and the Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods in Chicago, IL. In each case, networks to support and sustain youth development were established. Some were among congregations of the same faith; others crossed faith boundaries. All worked to overcome the barriers between faith communities in the interest of the development of assets for community youth.

The powerful results that communities can achieve when congregations work together are well-documented in *Networking Congregations for Asset Building*. Uniting Congregations for Youth Development proved that it can be done and demonstrated how it can be done.

⁷ Betz, Ann and Roehlkepartain, Jolene L. (2000). *Networking Congregations for Asset Building: A Tool Kit*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.

ASSET-BUILDING STORIES:
CHANGING INSTITUTIONS

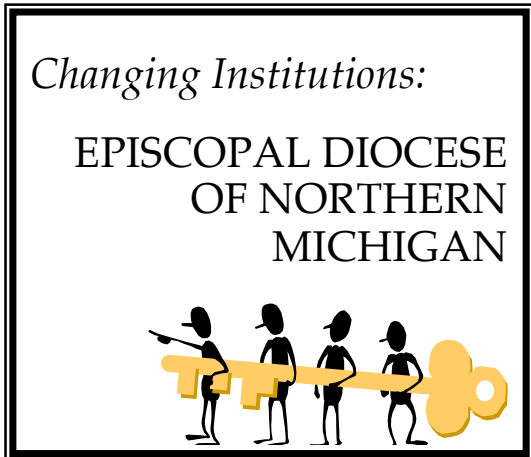
Like communities, congregations need strong institutions for support. Just as a viable community bank can provide credit for local homeowners and businesses, creative administrations in national denominations, seminaries, and regional hierarchies can give local congregations a context for change and growth.

Large institutions and bureaucracies, regardless of faith, sometimes resist change. Weighted by sheer size, tradition, or lack of input from the congregational level, religious institutions move slowly. Often, they move only when pressured to do so.

Several stories follow in which religious institutions respond to the pressure to change. In the first story, an administrator within the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan is pressured by members of two small, rural congregations to redefine the roles of the clergy and laity. In the second story, the United Methodist Church creates teams of individuals from within its congregations that come together to build their communities using the assets and capacities they find there. The teams are comprised of community members, not just church members, who work together to build a vision and manifest that vision in their neighborhood. In the third story, officials in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America implement a demonstration project to explore the ability of church members to build their congregations and their communities by focusing on local assets rather than on deficits and needs. No matter where the pressure to change originated, each of these stories demonstrates a way in which institutional renewal can build from the inside out.

INSTITUTIONAL RENEWAL CAN
BUILD FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Mutual Ministry



Not unlike a poor neighborhood, a small church must struggle to overcome the images of deficiency that accompany poverty. How can a gathering of 15 or 20 committed faithful ever hope to afford to hire a professional to take the responsibilities traditionally expected of clergy? And without this professional, what kind of congregation can it be? It is just a group of "laity," and not an affluent group at that.

In Michigan's Upper Peninsula, vast tracts of forest separate small towns. Snow falls in feet, not inches. Small Episcopalian churches there had tried for years to maintain the presence of priests by sharing expenses. On any given Sunday, one priest might have responsibilities at three distant churches. If bad weather, car trouble, or any family emergency intervened, the whole system would break down: local church members sat in pews, waiting; finally, they would go home, without partaking of the sacraments, without the challenge and education of preaching. And the priests, after experiencing enough of these disasters, were overwhelmed with the burden of failure and moved on to easier climes and larger churches. And the cycle repeated itself.



Being Church

Now these congregations have a slogan: "Stop attending Church; start being Church." They now call from among themselves those who can administer the sacraments, those who can preach, those who will serve the community as deacons, those who can teach, those who are stewards, and those who can interact with other faiths. They now see themselves as engaged in what they call "mutual ministry." How this radical transformation of the roles of clergy

and laity took place is a story about recognizing giftedness and envisioning possibility.

THEY NOW SEE THEMSELVES AS
ENGAGED IN WHAT THEY CALL
"MUTUAL MINISTRY,"
RECOGNIZING
GIFTEDNESS AND
ENVISIONING POSSIBILITY

When Tom Ray became Bishop in Northern Michigan in 1982, he found a piece of unfinished business on his desk. A letter signed by all the members of two small congregations urged the diocese to find a way to ordain their lay minister of 19 years so that he could give communion. To Bishop Ray, this letter presented two interesting questions: How could a call of this nature be honored? And, what could be done about the disabling of the church community that this letter implied?

The first question seemed to have a straightforward answer. If the diocese could find a way to prepare those called in a seminary-approved fashion, and then return them to their congregations, the endless cycle of poor churches and broken priests could be halted. But the second question called for a deeper understanding and critique.

That understanding goes back to the image of the faithful sitting in the pews waiting for the priest in the snowstorm. What does this say about the way the faithful have been incapacitated? How did the 19 years

of faithful service provided by the lay minister perpetuate the passivity of those two small churches? Here were people of commitment and strength, yet they still fell back on the need for clerical affirmation.

Commitment and Transformation

Over the next 17 years, through many trials and errors, the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan transformed itself. All members — clergy and laity — contributed to this transformation.

THE DIOCESE TRANSFORMED ITSELF

The process they settled on begins with each church community. The members must reach a consensus decision to commit their congregation to the process of transformation. Then, assisted by a seminary-trained missionary, the members choose from among themselves those who will become a Ministry Support Team, filling the roles outlined above. Those who agree become part of a Covenant Group, which meets twice a month for 18-24 months to complete a curriculum that leads to ordination and licensing. This process always takes place within the community. The missionary assists, but does not lead, as the process is not considered training, but formation.

Once ordained and licensed, the group is never given hierarchical stature. Its title reflects the philosophy of empowerment and giftedness at its heart: the Ministry Support team exists only to support the ministry of all the baptized. A

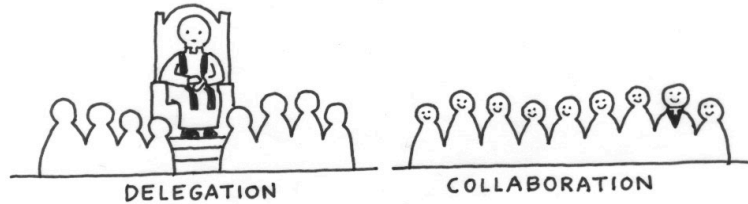
special liturgy has been designed in which the entire congregation renews its baptismal vows as the basis of the commissioning of the team. “All ministry is Christ’s,” they say. “Every baptized person is an active participant therein, each according to his gift. The main arena for ministry is in the midst of daily life.”

“The ideal would be that each community member completes this process, as in the early church,” says Tom Ray. “When the community has a need, it could say ‘OK, you and you.’ The professionalization of the church has taken this preparation out of Baptism and squeezed it into Ordination, as if this were something magical, mystical, and marvelous. It is so overburdening that it breaks those who are ordained and renders impotent the 99% of the people who are ‘only lay people.’ It’s a recipe for paralysis.”

New Roles

This is not a team ministry, in which the priest still sits at the hierarchical peak, but has a few specialized laity that assist him or her. Instead, mutual ministry is a circular, collaborative, non-hierarchical style of community. This style has also permeated the administrative structure of the diocese. “My leadership style became collaborative, not delegation,” says Tom Ray. “Collaboration is radically different than delegation — even my best ideas have been shaped or stretched or improved by collaboration. We have a saying in the diocese — how we can tell if something’s going to work is by how many fingerprints are on it.”

A small church of 30 active members might now have three priests and two deacons. They have been ordained just like anyone else, but they are not in charge. Nor are they hired. They have been chosen by their community according to their gifts.



liturgical study and planning, for local workshops on preaching, for help in meeting and resolving conflict, and for preparing persons for marriage, confirmation, or baptism. "This has liberated the seminary-trained from the exaggerated and isolating expectations which have often overburdened such men and now women and their families," says Tom Ray. "Now they are called upon for their academic and professional training."

So what is the role of the seminary-trained person in this model of community building? According to Tom Ray, the clergy have a new and ancient role: a 21st Century model of the early church and its itinerant mission. The Diocese is divided into four regions. Each region is served by a team of missionaries, funded in part by the congregations they serve with 40% of their congregational income. The rest of the support comes from the diocesan endowment income. No congregation in the diocese receives a subsidy; each makes an offering to the region in proportion to its overall resources.

HOW WE CAN TELL IF SOMETHING IS
GOING TO WORK IS BY HOW MANY
FINGERPRINTS ARE ON IT

The new role of the missionary is not to deliver ministry, but to help develop the ministry of the baptized. Missioners are available to each congregation in the region for

The Ministry of Daily Life

Depending on the giftedness of the community for the day-to-day activities associated with "being church" has transformed the faith life of those congregations engaged in Mutual Ministry. Each member shares in the responsibility and the calling of the ministry in the daily life of the community. The community can gather whenever it chooses to celebrate the Eucharist; it uses its own gifts and talents to support its needs for education through preaching and instruction in the faith. And the congregation nurtures itself as the daily calling of this ministry is answered. Tom Ray tells one simple and compelling story to illustrate the power of this nurturing.

"On days of liturgical importance, as bishop I attended different churches as a participant with the members of the congregation. Easter Eve is one of the most important and liturgically complex of these days — just conducting the liturgy requires a bit of rehearsal and preparation." A few

years ago, arriving early on Easter Eve at one small church, Tom Ray was distraught to find two members of the congregation instructing the deacon who was to lead the liturgy. They were explaining his part to him, as if for the first time. However, the deacon had been part of the Mutual Ministry team there from the very beginning. Another member of the team, serving as priest, came to Tom and said, "Tom, your job tonight is to make him look good."

"Only then did I come to understand that he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. Allowing him to fulfill his customary role was important to him, but it was just as important to the congregation. They just helped him. Now, if you go to that church, you will see him sitting in a pew with a 13 year-old girl holding his prayer book and showing him what's going on, even though he is not always sure where he is. But he is cared for, and he thrives on his participation."

People travel from around the world to the Upper Peninsula to experience the transformation of these congregations. So many have come that the diocese has set aside special "visitor weekends" to manage the requests. "While we were doing this, we didn't think of it as radical. And there is a danger that others might see it as another way to get stuff done on the cheap that they previously paid poorly for. That repeats the same old exploitation. Our danger is that we might say 'we finally got it right in Northern Michigan.' No, we must keep the life and faith living and growing."

In the early church, mutual ministry was at the heart of Christian faith. Today, it thrives in Northern Michigan.



The Communities of Shalom

A National Initiative of the United Methodist Church

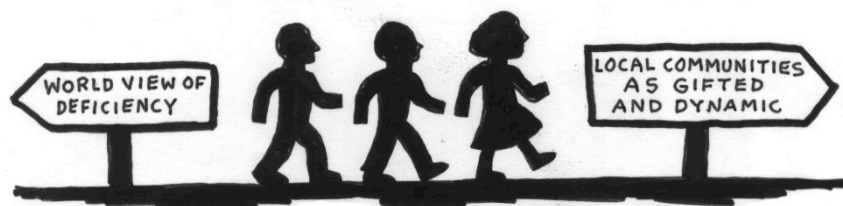


Shalom — an initiative of the United Methodist Church — is committed to systemic community change. The denomination provides seed money and money for training, and the local Methodist Church provides physical space and acts as a catalyst. Each Shalom team consists of individuals from every part of the community, and is often representative of several faith organizations. Teams come together to rally around common interests rather than a specific faith activity.

More than 400 Shalom communities exist throughout the United States, bringing community members together over a five-month training schedule to create a Shalom Plan.

Using asset-based community development methods, each team undertakes a visioning project, looking closely at an area of about four square blocks surrounding the church. Opportunities and assets are mapped in that area, including both the human and physical assets of the community. The teams then strategize ways to best capitalize on the assets of the community.

“This is about systemic change,” says Lynda Byrd, member of the General Board for Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.⁸ “Many times, people or churches want to write a check rather than get involved in hard work. We tell people in the training that not every church is a Shalom church, so please recognize if you are not a Shalom church, and not committed to the kind of ministry that truly effects systemic change.”



⁸ Lynda Byrd is the former Communities of Shalom Director for the denomination.

Projects: Large, Small, Urban, Rural

Several successful community-building projects have emerged from the Shalom initiative. In Tyler, Texas, Shalom churches have joined together to build a children’s health clinic and create a mobile health care service. In the tiny river town of Grand Tower, Illinois, people who were once considered outside the margins of the community now gather at the church weekly for support and discussions, and to share a meal.

At St. John’s Church in Houston, Texas, a Shalom community, a homeless ministry has been completely claimed by the homeless people it was meant to serve. The men and women of this ministry have started their own programs in hygiene, nutrition, and health care. The church is supporting this work by building a health clinic to deal with the high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the community, and the programs are run and staffed by many people from the community who were once clients. A near-dying church just eight years ago, St. John’s now has more than 3,700 members.

The Frankford Group Ministry: A Shalom Community

One of the oldest and most innovative of the Shalom sites is the Frankford Group Ministry in the Frankford neighborhood of Philadelphia. Long before the United States existed, Frankford was a town; it was annexed by Philadelphia before the Civil War. Today, Frankford has a diverse population, including recent immigrants from India, Africa, and Haiti. The Frankford Group Ministry

is a Shalom Community, a cooperative venture of four churches, including the United Methodist Church of Frankford. These churches elected to band together to address community concerns, and the four congregations together have achieved a level of capacity that is relatively independent of any of the individual churches.

SHALOM IS A MINISTRY THAT TRULY
EFFECTS SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Once a volunteer effort, the Frankford Group Ministry now employs 30 staff. In the early 1990s, the Frankford Group Ministry incubated a Community Development Corporation (CDC) whose primary focus is housing development. Twenty-four homes have been built and fifteen more are on the way, but this development is about more than just “bricks and mortar.” Instead, the work is neighborhood-envisioned and neighborhood-planned. Using the help of the Community Design Collaborative of the American Institute of Architecture, a focus group comprised of Frankford residents designed the homes that would be built, and the new neighborhood in which they expected to thrive.

The CDC has also been successful at redeveloping Frankford Avenue, the heart of the community’s original commercial district. Obtaining a shuttered building at a critical intersection, the CDC partnered with the Muslim Association of Frankford to develop the street-level space for rental to a hair salon owned by a

member of the Muslim Association. On the second floor, a mashid, or prayer room, was built. Once abandoned, the corner is now the center of Muslim activity and commerce in Frankford.

The Frankford Group Ministry targeted a 20-block area of Frankford an asset inventory and mapping project. Although originally intended to find sites for housing, the inventory grew to include the discovery of community sites that could provide open space and natural amenities. Many buildings in Frankford have side yards capable of providing food and beauty through gardening. There is a long-neglected creek running through the neighborhood that is now seen as an asset for recreation and education. The Frankford Group Ministry enlisted the help of students from the University of Pennsylvania to conduct a feasibility study for environmental cleanup of the creek and its banks and residents are busy envisioning its possible community uses. These sites and many others have been photographed and a community map is displayed at the Methodist Church, identifying these assets to visitors.

This visioning work has expanded into a community plan called Frankford 2000. The plan illustrates residents' commitment to identifying and mobilizing community assets and passions. "You build on the passions of people and connect people from different associations and backgrounds who care about the same thing. It's about getting together with others, building relationships, developing some clear guidelines about how to make things happen,

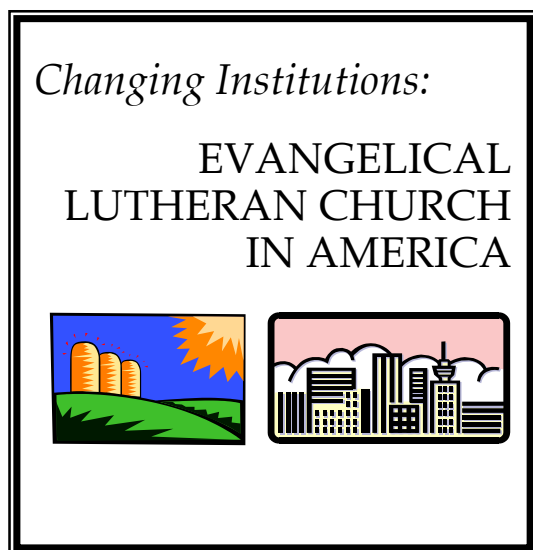
and coming to agreement on a strategy," says one pastor. "Look at your neighborhood, from its physical assets to its human resources, and start making those connections."

Through its sponsorship of Communities of Shalom, the United Methodist Church is taking a strong stand on the role of the denomination in community building. Shalom may not be for every church, as Lynda Byrd says, but the United Methodist Church recognizes the value of its many partnerships with churches across a variety of denominations and faith groups who are called to the very special ministry of Shalom.



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Getting Unstuck and Constantly Renewing Through Asset Mapping



During its Churchwide Assembly in 1997, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) outlined seven “Initiatives for a New Century.”⁹ One of the seven was the initiative to “Strengthen One Another in Mission.” As part of that initiative, a special task force was created to work on asset mapping within ELCA congregations. The task force’s charge from the Assembly read as follows:

Confident in the power of God’s grace to transform lives and institutions, the ELCA will explore new ways to respond to God’s call to ministry by ‘building our congregations and communities from within,’ *focusing on assets rather than on deficits or needs.*

⁹ Adapted by permission from Luther Snow’s (2001) *Congregational Asset Mapping: National Demonstration Project*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The ELCA task force decided to conduct a national demonstration project to apply and test asset mapping in practice. The goals of the project were to work with selected congregations to apply asset mapping to local church goals and to draw lessons from the experience for other congregations, the synods, and the denomination. Seven congregations were selected, representing a mix of urban, suburban, and rural locations and a range of congregational sizes and situations:

- St. John’s Lutheran Church in Farmersburg, Iowa
- First Lutheran Church in MacGregor, Iowa
- Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Seatac, Washington
- Pentecostal Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Divine Word Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Florist Avenue Lutheran Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- Living Waters Lutheran Church in Lino Lakes, Minnesota

The fundamental idea behind Congregational Asset Mapping is that *development means building new relationships between two or more assets.* Earlier, a collaborative of grassroots women’s organizations in Chicago, supported by the Chicago Foundation for Women, developed and tested a set of tools for organizational asset

mapping. The book, *A Guide to Building Sustainable Organizations from the Inside Out*, contains the asset-mapping tools that guided ELCA participants to discover organizational assets, individual assets, and strategies for organizational sustainability.¹⁰ The tools from this volume were subsequently adapted for congregations and formed the basis of the task force's asset-mapping methods.

DEVELOPMENT MEANS BUILDING NEW
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TWO
OR MORE ASSETS

Each congregation formed its own Asset Mapping team, including 4-10 lay leaders and one or more pastors. Task force consultants worked with these leaders on site at each church over one weekend and a Sunday service. The consultants oriented the leaders to asset-based development principles and to asset-mapping methods, practiced asset mapping using the tools and exercises with leaders, and trained the leaders to facilitate a similar process with groups of congregants.

A quick, simple approach that made the work accessible to busy congregants was designed. The consultants anticipated that in less than two hours, congregants could not only comprehend asset-based development concepts, but actually experience some of the power of asset mapping and begin to use it for their

own purposes. This was the toughest possible test of the approach, but it was critical for its widespread acceptance.

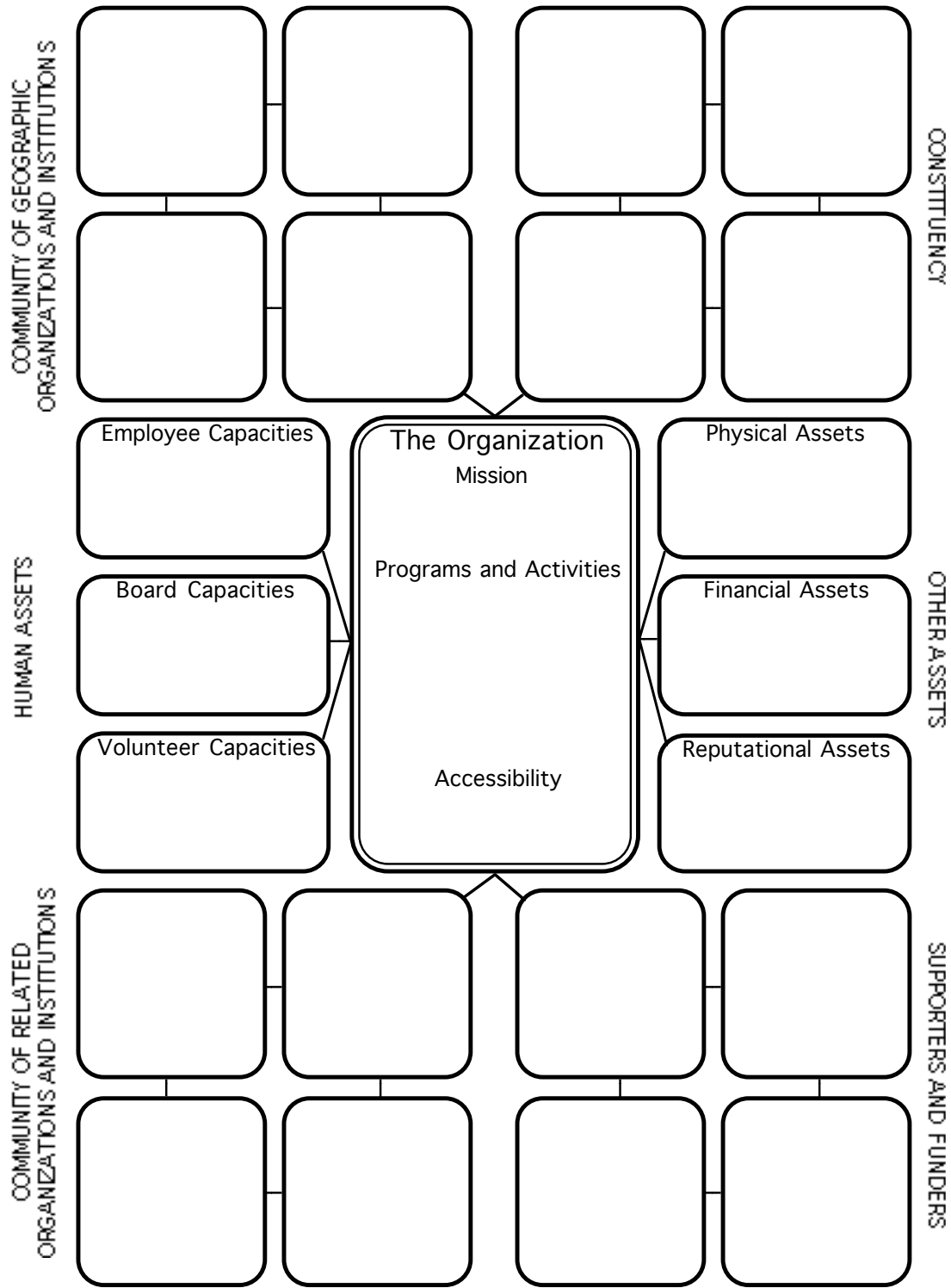
Drawn from *Building Sustainable Organizations from the Inside Out*, two particular tools were developed for use in the congregations. The organization tool focused attention on the assets of the congregation itself, and the individual tool focused on the talents and interests of each individual participant. Both tools are comprised of blank "maps" of possible asset categories that participants can fill in and discuss, categories ranging from tangible *physical assets* to less tangible assets like *reputation* or *relationships* to community organizations.

MAPPING TOOLS FOCUSING ON
BOTH INDIVIDUAL ASSETS AND
ORGANIZATIONAL ASSETS WERE
DEVELOPED FOR USE IN
THE CONGREGATIONS

Participants completed the asset maps and shared their responses, usually by posting them on notes taped to the wall. The resulting list of assets was the product of a group dynamic, and a big part of the benefit came from people participating in the process. The following are examples of the asset maps used in the process.

¹⁰ Puntenney, Deborah L. (2000). *A Guide to Building Sustainable Organizations from the Inside Out*. Chicago: Chicago Foundation for Women.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSET MAP



© Chicago Foundation for Women: Adapted for Use by the ELCA

INDIVIDUAL ASSET MAPS

Individual Asset Map — Looking Inward	
General Interests (motivations, passions)	General Skills (not necessarily within organization)
Specific Interests (activities you enjoy)	Specific Skills (in groups, community, household, job, etc.)
Organizational Activities: Experience: (What you have learned how to do)	Organizational Activities: Experience
Organizational Activities: Potential (what you could do to match your skills and interests, whether this is a new or existing activity within the organization)	Organizational Activities: Potential

Individual Asset Map — Looking Outward	
Connections with Other Groups and Associations:	Connections with Institutions and Professionals:
Connections with Constituencies, Families, and Individuals:	Other Community Connections:
Connections with Other Faith-Based Groups:	Connections with Businesses:
Connections with Government and Politics:	Other Personal Assets:

Once a set of assets was listed, the groups brainstormed ways to use these assets to accomplish congregational goals. They “connected the dots” between various assets, often by moving the notes on the wall around and grouping them in ways that made sense for action.

Getting Unstuck: Discovery and Strategy

In every case, participants reported that they felt new energy and hope from the asset-mapping process. This energy came from two general sources:

- *Energy from Discovery.* Mapping assets helped participants to dig deeper, and to discover things they might have taken for granted, overlooked, or undervalued. That’s like finding buried treasure.
- *Energy from Strategy.* Participants felt included and respected when they participated in the group brainstorming. When participants connected the dots, they saw that their own assets were matched and leveraged by the assets of others. They saw they could get more accomplished by combining assets, and relieve the pressure of trying to shoulder the whole burden alone.

Asset Thinking for Continuous Renewal

The quick-and-easy exercises were great for getting unstuck. But by itself, the quick process doesn’t always lead to in-depth planning. The long-term goal was to instill “asset thinking” in the congregation, so that

individuals and groups could build on assets and widen the circle to accomplish their mission in all its aspects.

THE LONG-TERM GOAL WAS TO
INSTILL “ASSET THINKING”
IN THE CONGREGATION

The congregations discovered many possible ways to address their unique situations. What follows is a partial list of lessons learned compiled by the ELCA Task Force. In particular, the group felt that it had learned that asset thinking can help renew its efforts by highlighting and supporting basic community principles such as:

- *Assets + Community = Development.* We have gifts and interests. Other people have gifts and interests that are similar to ours. Our job is to connect the dots.
- *Test questions.* We can check ourselves at various points by asking test questions such as, “Are we widening the circle?” and, “Are we really using our assets?”
- *Collaboration.* Asset mapping is about building relationships. Collaboration is key at every level, from individual peer-to-peer support to local church yoking to regional and churchwide group asset-mapping efforts. We get new energy by feeding off each other.
- *Storytelling.* Telling our story — our personal story, our church story — is a way we reflect what’s important to us, build bridges to others, and define our vision in a

way that others can understand. A good story is worth a thousand plans.

- *Worship and prayer.* Church worship gives us a powerful opportunity to renew and rededicate ourselves together, while prayer provides the same opportunity for individuals.
- *Reorganization.* Working from assets may reveal new priorities. Maybe the old committees or events or structures don't work because they aren't relevant. Maybe we can tap our assets better by reorganizing.
- *Participatory evaluation.* We can renew ourselves by choosing points at which to really evaluate our efforts.
- *Representation.* Leaders represent constituents by staying in touch with them, sharing their interests with the policymaking group, and by reporting back to constituents on issues before the policymakers.
- *Leadership development.* Everybody has a role in making this process work and happen. There are many leaders and participants. Circle widening and asset building develop our leadership skills.

OUR JOB IS TO CONNECT THE DOTS

The seven congregations involved in the project entered into the process with enthusiasm, and within a short time, produced their own community-building stories:



St. John's Lutheran Church in Farmersburg, Iowa and First Lutheran Church of MacGregor, Iowa

Two yoked congregations make one parish in rural Northeast Iowa. Historically German and Scandinavian farming communities, they are now facing the farm crisis and dwindling populations. The congregations have seen membership age and decline, but with the recent yoking and a dynamic pastor, Bruce Hanson, things seem to be turning around.

The two churches formed one Asset Mapping team, comprised as much of less active members and even non-members as church regulars. Hanson recruited high school youth, seniors, newcomers, and old timers to the group. Members of the team — led by the two high school youth — facilitated one large asset-mapping session at each church at a potluck lunch after Sunday worship. Groups of 30 and 40 showed up — great attendance for these small congregations.

- The biggest intangible outcome has been the successful yoking of the churches. Members got to know each other in a positive context, and now they are sharing programs, visiting back and forth, and managing parish logistics.

- Both churches decided that adult volunteering with youth at the church after school would best channel their assets toward their goals. They have built good relationships with the common school district and local governments, and are looking for funding for the autumn.
- Congregants formed a new diabetic support group and a grieving support group. The congregations are “chewing on” the implications of all this. The combined Asset Mapping team continues to meet. The stewardship committee has started fresh this year with “asset thinking.”



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Seatac, Washington

Prince of Peace is a church in Seatac, a well-established suburb between Seattle and Tacoma. The congregation includes a broad range of ages with many affluent and well-connected members from across the region. Pastor Steve Grumm organized the asset-mapping effort.

Twenty congregational leaders went through the asset-mapping training. Two lay leaders from this group led

the Organizational Asset Mapping process for the Vision Committee on a weekday evening. Then Pastor Grumm and a youth leader of the group led the Children and Family Ministry Team through the Individual Asset Mapping process. Finally, staff used assets thinking and the “mapping our stories” tool at a day-long staff retreat.

- From asset-based work started even before this project, the church created “Midweek at Prince of Peace” (MAPP), a wonderful hybrid of family programming and informal worship. MAPP draws over 100 area residents to the church every week for tutoring and recreation. Now Prince of Peace is seeking Synod funding to institutionalize MAPP and spread the idea of asset mapping.
- Asset mapping with the Children and Family Ministry Team determined that the volunteers were feeling burned out. This led to new circle-widening volunteer development and a Bible Study for the volunteers.
- The Children and Family Ministry Team also decided to work harder on programming with disabled children.
- Asset mapping has led to the discovery of hidden talents within the congregation: people with child care experience, corporate resource development experience, etc. And leaders do notice a change in approach, as people are thinking more about what they do have rather than what they lack.



Pentecost, Divine Word, and Florist Avenue Lutheran Churches of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Neither in the suburbs, nor in the innermost city areas, these three participating Milwaukee churches are in the “second ring” of integrated, middle-class urban neighborhoods. A trio of energetic pastors — Steve Wohlfiel, Kris Erdmann, and Cheri Johnson — led Pentecost, Divine Word, and Florist Avenue Lutheran Churches and collaborate under the citywide coalition formed by the Milwaukee Synod. All three churches are historically white but losing their traditional membership. Currently, they are trying to reestablish their relevance in their rapidly changing communities.

THE CHURCHES WERE LOSING
THEIR TRADITIONAL MEMBERSHIP
AND TRYING TO REESTABLISH
THEIR RELEVANCE IN RAPIDLY
CHANGING COMMUNITIES

Leaders from all three churches came together for the asset-mapping training, then facilitated processes at the individual churches among the congregants.

Pentecost Lutheran Church

Sixty congregants met after church for asset mapping with the Individual Assets tool and used sticky notes on the wall for a visual approach that participants found fun and energizing. They brainstormed ways to apply their assets to the church’s previously established goal to become a “Surround Force for Community Children.” Follow-up meetings were organized with subgroups of these participants, clustered by the assets and interests they reported.

- Neighborhood Minister Jessie Cone increased his “asset thinking” in working with community residents and has made this part of his whole approach. This work has led him to develop a SHARE Food outlet, a kind of local buying club, as contrasted with a food pantry.
- The church has sponsored “Saturday Surround” youth programs in which they do not just serve youth but instead try to recognize and uplift youth assets. So, for example, young people have been reading to area seniors and reinforcing that important connection to the church.
- Pentecost is engaged in productive conversations with a nearby church of another denomination about collaborating on community issues.

Divine Word Lutheran Church

A mix of 50 or 60 people attended asset-mapping activities after church sessions: light bulbs went off; energy

was generated. The congregants focused on brainstorming strategies to accomplish the “Safe Zone” goal that they had set for themselves. From strategies developed in the meetings, groups of interested congregants formed and got to work.

- Divine Word congregants are excited about a new ministry that builds on the musical talents of community youth. Starting from an existing school partnership and linking to their contacts in the music world, they are developing a model program that will form a band and link music education to church and community mission. They’ve received a lot of interest from funders, and have the volunteer energy necessary to get started with or without funding.
- The broader, less tangible asset-thinking outcome has been the advancement of the “Church Without Walls” concept. Members are rethinking what it means to do

MEMBERS ARE RETHINKING
WHAT IT MEANS TO DO MINISTRY,
AND WHAT IT MEANS
TO BE A CHURCH

ministry, and what it means to be a church.

- Congregants are revising priorities. Two Council members resigned to devote time to the music project and other are stepping forward to fill their places. New leaders are developing in many different ways.

- Divine Word has two partner congregations in the suburbs. They see asset mapping as an ideal way to organize partnerships around mutual strengths and interests, rather than around providing service.

Florist Avenue Lutheran Church

A mixed group of 40 or 50 congregants participated in at least one of two asset-mapping sessions held after church.

- By focusing on assets, members broke out of a negative pattern of thinking that included victimhood and hopelessness that had previously dominated church affairs. They got to know each other in new ways. And they planted the seeds for new initiatives.
- Pastor Cheri Johnson was feeling burned out and empty from shouldering the load of community and congregational change. Pastor Johnson says the asset mapping was “right on time.” It has enabled lay leadership to step forward with new focus and energy. The congregation is taking a hard look at what things people actually have energy for, rather than merely trying to find volunteers for the kinds of activities that have always been done.
- The tangible discussion ended up focusing on the hiring of a new music minister. Within weeks, the church had hired a new, nontraditional minister named Elvis, whom they never would

have found without asset thinking. And Elvis's organizing around music has got people excited.

- Florist Avenue also has mission partner congregations, and wants to use asset mapping to guide these relationships.



Finally, in addition to the individual congregational outcomes, the pastors from the three participating Milwaukee congregations are facilitating asset mapping among a group of 30 Milwaukee pastors who meet regularly.

Lessons for the ELCA

All in all, the demonstration project has led the ELCA Task Force to recommend further development of congregational asset mapping within the ELCA. Not only will the experiences of the seven pilot congregations be followed up on and other interested congregations and leaders included, but the entire denomination is being urged to create a home for asset-based thinking in the churchwide offices. This institutional office will focus on ways to use asset mapping in a variety of denominational initiatives.



Center for Community Transformation
Chicago Theological Seminary



Altering the church's relationship to community must begin with altering the way in which religious leaders are trained. Too often, seminary education reinforces the narrower focus on evangelization and service that obscures understanding of local communities as gifted and dynamic. If clergy are trained to a worldview of deficiency, in which the faithful "fill up" those they serve, then the patterns of ignoring the strengths of communities repeat themselves.

Entry, Accompany, Return

At Chicago Theological Seminary, an affiliate of the United Church of Christ (UCC), an innovative program is working to change the way clergy are educated. Supported by the Lilly Foundation, the Center for Community Transformation (CCT) is beginning with five Master of Divinity students and two faculty on a year-long cycle of *entry* into local

community, *accompanying* the work being done there, and *returning* to the question of seminary education and the way it has been altered through the wisdom of the community.

"This is not traditional field education experience," says Rev. Deborah Haffner, Director of the Center for Community Transformation. "We are there to listen, to identify the gifts and assets of the church and the community, and to aid in the work being done. We use the word 'accompany.'"

As the program expands to three sites, the hope is that every M. Div. student will take this journey during their second year of seminary study.

WE USE THE WORD, "ACCOMPANY"

Institutional Support

The original Lilly grant proposal was written by faculty, students, and trustees, providing an institutional buy-in for the project. "We got the participation of all parties up front," says Haffner. "We crossed the institutional bridge already, so we would be in the center, not on the fringe." The document they produced is powerfully worded, listing the following objectives for the Center for Community Transformation:

1. Increase the relevance of theological education to the goal of community transformation;

2. Participate in the process of forming healthier communities;
3. Train future leaders who can strengthen and increase the number of congregations committed to community health.

Teaching and Learning

The Center is committed to learning what the community teaches. “We may learn we need to include classes in housing development or community organizing in the seminary curriculum. Some of the faculty are a bit uncomfortable with the idea that we have no solid course syllabus for the class. We have one, but we change it as we go as we need to base it on what the community is teaching. There’s a fruitful inter-relationship here.” To paraphrase an old saying, how can I know what to teach until I see what I learn.

THE CENTER IS COMMITTED TO
LEARNING
WHAT THE COMMUNITY TEACHES

During its first year, the program took place with the assistance of a congregation in the community of Kenwood, a neighbor to the seminary, and the home of Rev. Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow PUSH organization. Kenwood United Church of Christ and Rainbow PUSH provided experience and knowledge for the seminarians.

The process of *entry, accompany, and return* took the students on a journey through the history and experience of Kenwood and the larger African-American community of Bronzeville.

Through partnerships with Kenwood UCC and its connections with Kenwood community organizations, the students spent 12 to 15 hours a week engaged in the issues and work of Kenwood throughout the academic year, while they also reflected on their experiences and the relationship of those experiences to their theological education.

Among the several required readings facilitating this reflection were texts on asset-based community development, writings about the history of Chicago and its community movements, and congregational studies. One prominent text was Gary Gunderson’s *Deeply Woven Roots: Improving the Quality of Life in Your Community*.¹² At the conclusion of the first year of the program, Gunderson joined the seminarians, faculty, and community members to reflect on the lessons of the year.



Amid stories told by the participants of struggles and victories, Gary Gunderson offered the following insights:

¹² Gunderson, Gary (1997). *Deeply Woven Roots: Improving the Quality of Life in Your Community*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

I am no scholar of New Testament Greek, but the man who taught me what little Greek I do know claims that the better way to translate what John meant is “you shall know the truth and it will make you odd.” Sounds more like the Bible, to me, at least. And it is not hard to imagine why I think this is a better translation for the purposes of the CCT. It is odd behavior to lean into awkward situations and create uncomfortable combinations of people and traditions and hopes and fears. It is not normal to seek out that which you know you will not understand and ask your questions right out loud, right in front of your neighbors, board members, students, friends and faculty. It is not normal, for that matter, to get close to people who are poor and on the margins without even the thin veil of a professional service to protect you from seeing what they see. Odd behavior, indeed, this CCT. (Text of remarks, 5/19/01)

Learning from the gifts and skills of the community and then applying that knowledge to the development of ministry is an odd undertaking. As such, the vision of the Center for Community Transformation is nothing less than the revitalization of the church. Quoting once again from the Lilly proposal’s Executive Summary:

Our research has shown that quality candidates for ministry come from “seed” churches where ministry and mission are rooted in a strong sense of God’s presence in individual lives and in

community. Currently, the malaise of many mainstream Protestant churches makes them incapable of producing strong candidates for the ministry....We believe the seminary is positioned to become a partner with those local churches who are providing vital ministry and mission, and then taking our learning to those that are struggling. We hope our venture will transform not only seminary education but also the future of the mainstream church in all its manifestations.

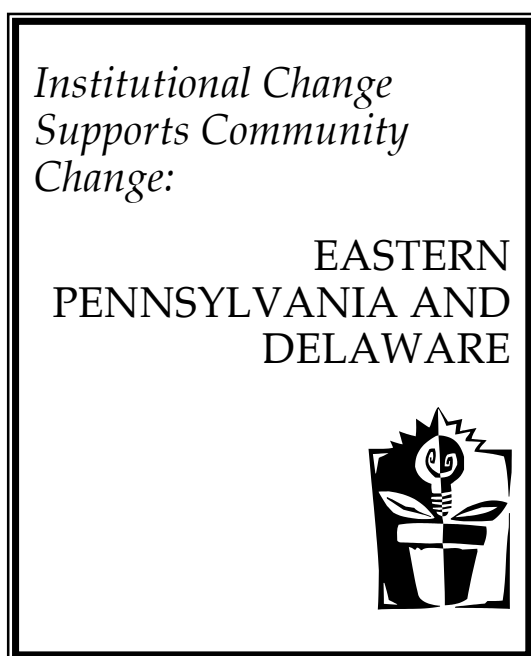


ASSET-BUILDING STORIES

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE SUPPORTS COMMUNITY CHANGE

The Salvation Army is the largest charitable and social service organization in the United States. Its history and visibility make it part of our national landscape, and most of us think of bands and bells and kettles at Christmas when we think of the Army. But it is an enormous faith-based institution. It has an elaborate, highly organized command structure, with hundreds of service centers, group homes, and emergency shelters in the US and throughout the world. Salvation Army corps undertake ministries in communities of all sizes.

The Salvation Army



Community Capacity Building is about changing our philosophy of how we work within the context of community. It involves moving out of our “comfort zone,” not trying to do everything ourselves, but rather involving others to the point where they feel ownership of our ministry, programs and services. This requires adapting our highly-structured environment to include flexibility. This kind of shift in the way we think about our ministry does not happen overnight. Instead, it is a journey over time, but one which we must take if we are to continue to be relevant in the communities in which we minister.

When some voices within the Salvation Army call for a change in the institution’s relationship to the communities it serves, it is news. In the July/August 2000 issue of the Salvation Army’s Canadian magazine *Horizons*, an article on Community Capacity Building contained the following quote:

The ways in which this “journey over time” is taking place within the Army are both internally focused and involved in local communities. It is a multifaceted effort that contains elements from each of the categories that have been outlined in this workbook, and as such is a complex and interesting case study.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING IS
ABOUT CHANGING OUR PHILOSOPHY
OF HOW WE WORK IN THE
COMMUNITY

Education and Training

William and Catherine Booth College in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a training institution for Salvation Army officers and employees. As part of its Christian Ministry and Social Work Programs, a class in Community Capacity Building is offered. Based on the book *Building Communities From the Inside Out*, the class provides experience with ABCD methods and insights into community building. To date, over 160 students have taken the course, and have returned to areas throughout Canada to incorporate community capacity building into their work and ministry.

Kevin Tomson-Hooper, co-instructor and designer of the class, refers to Community Capacity Building as a process that “enables us to rediscover our place within community life, provides an entry point to build on the unique resources of local neighborhoods, and allows us to come alongside others in the community as equal partners.” Incorporating this perspective into the training of Salvation Army officers represents a huge step toward changing its traditional view of community.

Along with his wife and co-instructor Sara Tomson-Hooper, Kevin is adapting the content of the course into shorter, in-service training seminars

for Salvation Army officers and employees in the Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware Division of the Army. All divisional officers, staff, and volunteers are invited to these seminars which are free to participants. Focusing on the development of a “Community Building Toolbox,” the seminars provide the skills needed to do Capacity Inventories and to map community assets. The goal is to provide this training to 120 people within the division representing Army ministries in the major metropolitan areas of Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware, including Philadelphia.

These seminars are sponsored by the Divisional Command, and this sponsorship represents an important buy-in from the leadership of the Army. In an organization with a hierarchical chain of command, nothing can happen without that buy-in. And, because of this support, new projects and alliances are starting up in the region that are changing the nature of the Salvation Army’s relationship to local community.

The Hope Alliance

In West Philadelphia, nearly 40% of households have incomes below \$15,000, and only slightly more than 44% of the population older than 16 are employed. An ambitious collaboration between the Salvation Army and the University of Pennsylvania’s Fels Center for Government hopes to create change in partnership with one West Philadelphia neighborhood through the Hope Alliance for Faith-Based Community Transformation.

SUCH AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT
CALLS FOR INCLUSION OF ALL
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

The Hope Alliance is founded on two basic premises:

- There is a relationship between spiritual transformation and socio-economic empowerment;
- Regardless of socioeconomic conditions, communities are made up of individuals, associations, and institutions with diverse strengths, gifts, and assets that can be mobilized for community renewal.

The Alliance plans to engage all facets of the community in this mobilization. A block-by-block mobilization of community members as well as engagement of existing community organizations, other faith-based organizations, government, academia, foundations, and private enterprise is planned. Already, the Alliance has received \$1 million from the Department of Justice to launch the project, which will include a Gifts Center for job training and development.

The ultimate goal of the Hope Alliance is to build a community-led planning process that will encompass specific areas of community life: crime reduction, employment, education health and wellness, the enhancement of faith connections, and the expansion of existing civic structures. Citizen Advisory Committees will lead the development and measurement of these initiatives.

Such an ambitious project calls for inclusion of all community members, associations, and institutions. It cannot be a top-down, hierarchical proclamation. For the local Division of the Salvation Army to engage in such a partnership requires an institutional commitment to cooperation outside of the Army's traditional ministries.

Facilitation Teams

The door-to-door component of the Hope Alliance is based in the Salvation Army's understanding of Community Capacity Development (CCD) as a unique form of ministry. In this emerging model, institutions such as Salvation Army corps, hospitals, and social service facilities are linked to the community through facilitation teams. These teams consist of staff from Army institutions, but they also include community members and people from government and other agencies. The facilitation team meets with members of the community in their homes, and attempts to gain an understanding of the community through the perspective of its members. Questions asked in these visits are open-ended, attempt to reveal individual and family capacities, and focus those capacities on the concerns voiced. The team "should be open to mutual learning. True change in attitudes, behavior and environment happens through facilitation, not imposition. The result will be relationships that can be sustained."¹³

¹³ More than Just a Handout. *Horizons Christian Leadership Magazine*, July/August 2000, pg. 11. Toronto: The Salvation Army.

These meetings are then expanded into what the Army calls Community Conversations. Members of the community and the facilitation team reflect as a group on the characteristics, hopes, and concerns of the community and begin to plan action to make change. Agreement on action must be reached, and indicators for realization of hopes are set. These conversations are seen as ongoing and action-oriented, and ownership of the action resides in the community.

The strengths and assets of individuals and communities form a foundation for growth and change. Because individuals, families, and communities all possess resources, wisdom, and knowledge that are not immediately evident, the processes of Community Capacity Development incorporate opportunities for people to share their stories and make their hopes a reality.¹⁴

ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS ARE
EXPANDED
INTO COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

A Different Kind of Soup Kitchen

In another Philadelphia project, the Army has turned its old mission on its head. Instead of offering “soup and salvation” at its Eliza Shirley Center, it is making soup with its “Soup’s On” project. The project brings former soup kitchen clients who like to cook into the kitchen to receive training in the culinary arts, and to make a line of soups which are sold through Chef

and Restaurant Associations of the Delaware Valley. The project has moved from the pilot stage to sustainability achieved through soup sales. A chef oversees the training and product development, and the trainees work in a state-of-the-art catering kitchen designed and funded by food service giant ARAMARK.



This project is of particular interest because of the combination of skills it represents. The Salvation Army’s role as a major social services player in the Philadelphia area brings in other large players like the restaurant association and ARAMARK. But it is the gifts of individuals that form the core of the project, the potential cooks who once came to the soup kitchen for food. Turning the stereotype of Salvation Army services around, Soup’s On represents a change in Army perspective.

That change in perspective, though not yet institutionalized throughout the Army’s operations worldwide, has brought new insight to those working in and with the Salvation Army in Canada and on the East Coast. By including Community Capacity Building in its training programs, change is occurring in the Salvation Army from the inside out. By putting Community Capacity Building into Salvation Army programs in Philadelphia, community change that builds on the gifts of its residents is being facilitated by the Salvation Army and its partners outside the faith-based realm.

¹⁴ Ibid.

FINDING INSPIRATION IN OUR COMMUNITY'S ASSETS

Each of the stories just told is unique, and the actions taken in them are completely related to the particular realities of the congregation, community, or institution involved. But that does not mean that some general lessons cannot be drawn from them. In fact, their very particularity is the first and greatest lesson: to build community, congregations must begin with what they have and work with what is already there.

Returning to the insights of asset-based community development, what is there in any community usually falls into five categories. They are:

- The skills and talents of local people
- The web of local voluntary associations
- The strengths of local institutions — public, private, and nonprofit
- The available land and physical property
- The local economy

A review of the particulars of each story with these categories in mind will highlight the successful strategies used to mobilize these assets.

Individual Assets: Welcoming the Stranger

A commitment to building vital communities must also be a commitment to inclusion, to providing opportunities for every person's gifts to be recognized and given. In an inclusive community, all members can truly say, "there are no strangers here."

Every religious tradition holds this idea as a virtue: welcoming the stranger, sheltering the pilgrim, meeting the Buddha at the crossroads. But modern life has created many strangers in our midst, and it has become difficult for a community to overcome fear and stereotypes in order to include the marginalized. Young people, older people, people with disabilities, people of different races, homeless people, people of different faiths: the list of "strangers" can become lengthy.

New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church found a way to bring the strangers to the blessing side of the serving table, and so strengthened the entire community. Broadway Christian Parish United Methodist Church did the same. As we have seen, the use of the capacity inventory, the tool that simply asks folks about their gifts and talents, changed the focus of everyone involved. Strangers became Magi, wonderful pilgrims bearing gifts meant to be opened and included in the richness of community life.

But the discovery of giftedness is only half the equation. Gifts have to be given, and finding ways for those gifts to benefit all can only be done by building relationships. When Bethel New Life's capacity inventory found both elderly neighbors who needed a bit of help to stay in the community, and many community members who had experience in caring for their elderly relatives, informal and formal connections were made. Neighbors helping neighbors became job opportunities as well. Broadway Christian's Animators of the Human Spirit built the same kind of formal and informal relationships with community youth.



In Salishan, the Mission used the strength of relationships to respond to community tragedy. A similar story comes from Chicago, where young people themselves worked to build relationships following a violent community incident. After the brutal beating of a young African-American man was committed by white Catholic high school students, other students formed an organization called Catholic Schools Opposing Racism (COR). COR draws its racially diverse membership from over 20 Chicago-area Catholic high schools, and, with the assistance of committed teachers, the young people plan quarterly gatherings in which they grapple with issues of racism in their homes, their schools, their churches, and their communities. In the first year, COR chose "Setting the Welcome Table" as its theme. After each gathering to examine cultural differences, the students shared a meal. Now in its third year, COR has a growing attendance of hundreds of young people who learn to challenge racism where they find it, to celebrate their differences, and to provide a new model of activism for their peers.



To use COR's phrase, these stories show that every time the welcome table is set, the community as a whole is better off. Discovering gifts and building relationships to provide ways for those gifts to be given is at the core of any asset-based community. But as individuals form relationships, they also form associations. And associations are often untapped sources of community strength.

Associational Assets: Gatherings of Two or More

Many say that the hectic pace of modern life has taken a toll on networks and associations of all kinds. The assumption is also made that poor communities have lost these kinds of connections. But if dire predictions and assumptions are put aside, it isn't hard to find powerful associations in every community and on every level.

Churches are familiar with the idea of association, and are often themselves home to sports leagues and book clubs as well as choirs and prayer groups. But often, the possibilities inherent in gatherings like these can be overlooked and discounted. The stories we have heard provide several examples of ways in which local associations can benefit community. They also show examples of the roles congregations can play in mobilizing them.

Mapping is a powerful tool that can be used by congregations and other community builders to locate and network all of the associations in a community. Bethel New Life set out to create just such a map. When it was complete, participants were overwhelmed by the number of large and small gatherings they found. Publishing the *Connections* directory provided an important resource; bringing groups together for lunch started a networking process. The potential of these networks is just beginning to be actualized, but Bethel New Life has set the wheels in motion.



The Salishan Eastside Mission built networks among associations throughout that diverse community. Mission participants stepped outside of ethnic and religious boundaries and joined associations for the betterment of the community. In Rogers Park in Chicago, Pathways to Peace called for celebration of the array of differences among its religious and ethnic associations as a way to combat intolerance.

In some religious traditions, particularly in African-American churches, all of a congregation's associational life is considered part of its ministry. Those called together by interest in the context of faith are given that title: Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Housing Ministry, etc. Directly connecting the power of association with the work of the faith community illustrates the importance of connections.

Institutional Assets: Moving Mountains

The relationship between communities and institutions is not always cooperative. Many community members see institutions as “outsiders” that have too much power over their lives. This distrust can exist whether the institution is government, academia, service providers, or the church. Bridging the gap, convincing large institutions to listen to communities, is necessary work for community builders. Going a step further and turning those institutions into partners in community building is the lesson taught by some of the stories told here.

In the Salishan community, Pastor Ron Vignec calls himself “a pastor to institutions.” Using his community maps and guided tours, Vignec and the Salishan Eastside Mission participants have brought the outsiders into the community, shown them around, and changed the way they see Salishan. They have also brought service providers and government agencies to the table with the community to discuss cooperation. When Pastor Vignec attends private board and public council meetings in Tacoma, he is preaching the gospel of an empowered community.



Sometimes, church bureaucracies and denominations can provide reminders of the strengths of the communities they serve. The Shalom congregations in the United Methodist Church are called by the national denominational leadership to engage local communities in new ways. The Asset Mapping initiative of the ELCA came directly from the charge of the Churchwide Assembly. As the demonstration phase of the initiative comes to an end, the Task Force is calling for a permanent place within the denomination for “asset thinking” of all kinds. The variety of benefits to local congregations in the ELCA is becoming clear, and the denomination is providing its support to the process.

At other times, it is the denomination itself that needs to be reminded of the abilities and talents of its own congregational members. The Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan has completely restructured the relationship between laity and clergy and between congregation and hierarchy. There, Mutual Ministry has provided a model for small, rural churches around the world.

The Center for Community Transformation at Chicago Theological Seminary seeks to change the assumptions of the ministry regarding local community. Learning

from the community is a powerful addition to seminary education that could change the ministry completely.

And in the huge institution that is the Salvation Army, a combination of education, training, and the practical application of these in the larger community is changing both the Army and the communities it serves.

Physical Assets: Upon This Rock

Sometimes we tend to get so caught up in the human aspect of community, we forget to see the more concrete bounty around us. Every community, every **place**, has an inventory of physical assets that can and should be mobilized for the benefit of that human community.

When Bethel New Life looked at the neighborhood around the church, it saw unrealized potential. Although there was much work to be done, East and West Garfield Park were communities filled with treasures including a landmark park, a fieldhouse and conservatory, great public transportation, underutilized industrial property to provide jobs, and a library that could be a community center. Bethel's activities over the years have been instrumental in returning these assets to community use and community benefit.

The Animators of the Human Spirit at Broadway Christian Parish made art out of trash. They celebrated their neighborhood with murals and festivals and marketplaces. In Philadelphia, the Frankford Group Ministry cleaned up the local stream and developed greenway access for the community. They also worked to put the major commercial street in Frankford back on the map.

But congregations also stand in a unique relationship to the physical assets of their communities. An innovative research project illustrates just how much residents, active congregations, and their overused buildings can mean to communities.



Partners for Sacred Places

A congregation actively involved in its community may host dozens of programs in its church buildings on a weekly basis. In older communities, these buildings may be the only available public spaces and they may be used by the whole

neighborhood, whether or not the neighbors are church members. Yet the cost of building maintenance skyrockets as buildings age, and struggling congregations can be hard-pressed to make repairs. One disaster can eliminate many neighborhood programs from existence. As one pastor of a church built in 1909 explains, "Because of our space limitations — the parish hall burned down several years ago — we can't host as many neighborhood groups as we'd like. We are scheduled by the hour."

Partners for Sacred Places, a national group located in Philadelphia, studied older congregations in six cities, hoping to call attention to the role played by churches as centers of community life.

Their findings, published as *Sacred Places at Risk: New Evidence on How Endangered Older Churches and Synagogues Serve Communities*, are astounding.¹⁵

- Ninety-one percent of all surveyed congregations with older buildings open their doors to the larger community.
- On average, congregations house four ongoing community service programs.
- For every congregation member served, more than four noncongregational members benefit from programs supported by churches and synagogues.
- Congregations with older buildings host 76% of their community service activities in their own facilities.
- Children and youth benefit from congregation-supported programs more than any other group.
- More than 50% of congregations use their older buildings to meet basic needs through food and clothing programs.
- The average congregation provides over 5,300 hours of volunteer support to its community programs, the equivalent of two-and-one-half full-time volunteers stationed year-round at the church or synagogue.
- On average, the subsidy congregations give to their community programs is valued between \$100,000 and \$140,000 a year, or 10-15 times what they receive in return from the users of their space.
- The vast majority of community programs supported by churches and synagogues are initiated by congregations.

In an attempt to motivate investment in these buildings by foundations and government, Partners for Sacred Places has developed a formula with which to assess the public value of community programs hosted by congregations (see

¹⁵ Cohen, Diane and Jaeger, A. Robert (1998). *Sacred Places at Risk: New Evidence on How Endangered Older Churches and Synagogues Serve Communities*. Philadelphia: Partners for Sacred Places.

Appendix VI). Using the numbers generated, they were able to determine that the value of congregational support to the human service and cultural infrastructure in Philadelphia alone is almost \$100 million per year.

Partners for Sacred Places works to make the connection between buildings and community, between place and people. They attempt to place cash value on the intangible contributions made by churches to the community as a whole, and to advocate for their maintenance and restoration.

Economic Assets: One Dollar, One Thousand Hands

It has been said that a healthy neighborhood economy is where one dollar changes hands a thousand times. Even the poorest communities have an amazing amount of cash flow, and finding ways to keep that cash flowing for community benefit is at the core of community economic development.

Big projects can seem impressive, but they often rely on outside financing and provide most of their benefit for those outside as well, thus diverting the flow of community capital. Building a community economy from within happens first on the small, local scale.

A HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOOD
ECONOMY IS WHERE ONE
DOLLAR CHANGES HANDS
A THOUSAND TIMES

Broadway Christian Parish provides a powerful example of how to develop that microeconomy. From the capacity inventory at the food bank, to the community marketplace, to the bicycle repair shop, to the graphic design group, all of the efforts to celebrate the giftedness of community members also built the local economy. Putting individual gifts to work keeps more local dollars in the community.

Bethel New Life combined caregivers with those needing care, a fine idea in itself. But they took the idea a few steps further to provide affordable health care for seniors and jobs for eldercare workers first trained and then employed by the Bethel HMO. They turned trash into cash by recycling, but took the idea a few steps further and developed the Materials Recovery Facility that contracted to recycle suburban garbage, providing jobs for local residents. Combining a vision for the physical community with a mechanism for its economic development has benefited everyone in the Garfield Park community.



Building a local economy based on individual gifts was the goal of Interfaith Action and Sagrado Corazon. Each step of the way — from the Hispanic Community Talent Inventory, to the pairing of entrepreneurs, to the small business development training and funding — brought them closer to the result of the vision, the Mercado Central. A regional marketplace run by Hispanic entrepreneurs providing products for the Minneapolis/St. Paul Hispanic community now means jobs, income, and cultural celebration.

Congregations have been involved in community economic development for some time now, but these new tools can strengthen that commitment and bring new participants to community economic life.

Conclusion: Finding Useful Ideas in this Book

In *Finding Inspiration in our Community's Assets*, connections were made among the stories presented in this book. Finally, we offer some ideas for making the connection between the stories in this book and the story of your congregation and your community. The process of community building is as idiosyncratic and fluid as it is rewarding and renewing. So, nothing here is written in stone; these are simply suggestions for possible ways of moving to action.

Book Club Discussion. Propose a group discussion of this book to your church group. Compare the stories told here to those in your congregation; discuss similarities and differences. Think about your assets and those of your community. Create lists and compare them.

THE PROCESS OF
COMMUNITY BUILDING IS
REWARDING AND RENEWING

Congregational Capacity Inventory. Devise your own capacity inventory and distribute it in your congregation. Refer to the tools developed by the ELCA, included in the Appendices, as the starting point for tailoring your own inventory. Compile the results and distribute them to initiate discussion and to tap new sources of energy from within the congregation.

Community Capacity Inventory. Undertake a similar project in the local community. Compare the results to what was found internal to your congregation. Think about ways to create links between the gifts you find.

Asset-Based Bible Study. Use some of the texts suggested in the Appendices to examine the calling for community building in the scriptures. In addition, pastors may want to review the suggested texts for use in their sermon preparation.

Compute the "Value" of Your Congregation/Church. The tool devised by the Partnership for Sacred Places, included in the Appendices, can serve as a catalyst for discussion and planning in any local congregation engaged in community

building. For more information on uses of this tool, see the Resources section following the Appendices.

Storytelling. Gather members of your congregation and compose your story, like the stories of congregations in this book. Use the stories collected here as reference or benchmarks. Take turns telling stories; imagine stories that might be told about your congregation if you undertake community-building work.

Use the Resources. Contact the congregations mentioned in this book for networking; they may have been through an experience similar to yours, or may have different perspectives that can be useful.

Training. Use all or part of this book for Staff Training or Leadership Training within your congregation. Discover and engage the gifts and capacities of new members of your church council.

Use as a Reference for Grant Writing and Strategy. Keep this book handy to refer to for examples when writing grants or devising collective strategies.



APPENDIX I

FAITH STATEMENTS IN THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

While the stories just told carry lessons about the practice of asset-based community development as conducted by faith organizations, the individual practitioners involved in the stories also contributed commentary about the significance of faith in their own community-building activities. The following section shares the words of individual community builders as they articulate their own interpretations of the Christian's call to the work. Some of these faith statements are clear messages about specific calls to action, others are framed as a sermon might be; in each case, the individual prepared his or her own statement in the format that provided what they saw as the best opportunity to convey what Mary Nelson of Bethel New Life calls "the faith factor." What follows is individual testimony to the significance and guidance of faith in community building.

As noted at the beginning of this volume, the stories presented here are mostly about Christian churches. The theological references and reflections that follow are also based on Judeo-Christian theology and scripture. The inclusion of these statements is not intended to imply that Christian congregations, churches, or denominations are unique or special in terms of their community-building endeavors.



**Mary Nelson, Founding Director, Bethel New Life
Chicago, Illinois**

In this time when faith-based organizations are in vogue, a time of both opportunity and danger, we must reflect on the "faith factor" in community building. The faith factor has a number of important components:

- *God's clear call for us to be about the work of justice.* Micah 6:8 identifies the three major ingredients for purpose in our lives: "do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God." This call to justice is one that sometimes unifies, sometimes disturbs the comfortable, sometimes gives us the courage to critique government, society and ourselves in its light. Justice calls us to action, to risk for the sake of the whole.

- *God's reminder that every human being is sacred, is loved by God, no matter what color or economic status or condition or geography.* This is our motivation to act in interests beyond our own self-interest, to care for our "neighbors," to share of our bounty, to think of the impact on others. God's reminder of each person's value is a reminder not to give up on anyone.
- *God's promise of victory.* The promised land instills hope for the future; the David-and-Goliath struggles are not hopeless, no matter the odds. The vision of the fullness of life and of the wholesome sense of community are renewed in our worship and prayer. The promise of victory gives us "the long look," the persistence to keep working, and the patience to be assured that, although it may not be in our lifetime, there is victory in the end.
- *God's love can turn lives around.* The transformational power of God's love has been witnessed and experienced in our own lives and in the lives of people around us. God's spirit in people can transform whole groups, whole efforts, turning from bickering and dissension to unity of purpose and single-mindedness of effort.
- *God's plan for the human community is one without borders or barriers.* In the faith setting there is a sense of belonging, a sense of community that restores and binds and calls us to be in support of each other.

It would be easy to gloss over the demands of God's justice and faithfulness. It would be easy to think that God is on our side, and lose the critique and perspective that examines how we measure up to God's scheme. We need to make sure that we are on God's side, that we stand squarely in justice and love, and that we continue to be willing to risk. *"The spirit that God has given is not one that shrinks from danger; it is a spirit of action and love and discipline."* (1 John 3:18)



Theological Framework of Mutual Ministry, The Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan

"Each piece of creation is unique and treasured by God. Each blade of grass, each snowflake, each sentient being, each planet and star and galaxy, each person, and each community is in itself a wonderful and sacred mystery. Yet no part of the universe stands alone. There is a dance of mutuality at the heart of holy mystery.

The ancient story of God, the story of the Holy One of Israel, suggests that Yahweh loves creation and yearns for creation and, by creating, continually enters into relationship with creation. Yahweh will not be God alone; Yahweh is God in relationship. And it is Yahweh's passion for relationship that drives toward incarnation. Through the incarnation of God-with-us in Jesus, we are driven to a shattering revelation of Yahweh's refusal to be Yahweh apart from relationship. Nor will Jesus be Jesus alone. He shares his ministry with the disciples, calling on them to go out two by two, calling them to become partners and co-creators with God. Together, Jesus and his disciples hammer out a community of radical equality. (Mark 10:28-31.)

Community and apostleship are integral parts of the Baptismal Covenant. We remember that ordination does not separate the ordered from the baptized. The ordered remind us of who we are in this paradoxical and sacramental life. Every man, woman and child in the Christian community has experienced, and continues to experience: 1) a diaconal ministry of serving and being served; 2) a priestly ministry of reconciliation; and 3) an apostolic ministry of teaching, oversight and witness. But no longer will Jacob's ladder serve as our paradigm. Today it is Sarah's circle that informs us. To be with and to be for, that's the heart of ministry. And the ministry belongs to the baptized.

In the early years of Church history, St. Paul and his companions forced a young church to redefine itself by entering into new relationships with those who had been considered outsiders. By honoring each person's gifts and inviting those gifts to be shared, self-sufficient communities of faith emerged throughout the Mediterranean. Leadership was not imported from the outside, but was shared indigenously, and there was a large network of itinerant apostles who nurtured the interconnectedness and cohesion of the Church Universal.

In the Diocese of Northern Michigan, we seek to honor the uniqueness of each baptized person and each community in our diocesan family. We understand that the responsibility of ministry in any place belongs primarily to the people of God in that place. Seminary-trained persons serve as resource, sharing in the on-going formation and education of God's people living the Baptismal Covenant. We use the term "Mutual Ministry" to describe this partnership. It is the partnership between God and God's people. It is the partnership among God's people, between the ordained and the rest of the baptized, among congregations and the national church and beyond our denominational boundaries."

Pastor Mike Mather, Broadway Christian Parish: South Bend, Indiana

Jesus came that we might have abundant life. If that's true then where is it? And how do we in the church witness to it? Can we recognize its presence in the midst of a suffering, hurting world? Can we celebrate abundant life, not in place of stressful living, but in the midst of stressful living? Can we recognize abundant life in the face of addiction, disease, suffering, and injustice?



When we baptize a child or an adult at Broadway Christian Parish, among other things, we name that person as a beloved child of God. Now that doesn't mean we believe that this person is a beloved child of God and that person over there isn't. Quite the contrary. To our view, when we can see that you are a beloved child of God, then we can see the same in the stranger. And having seen it we are called to name it.

It is from this faith perspective that the School of the Spirit has flowed from our life and ministry at Broadway. Years ago, John Wesley started schools that taught the basics of the culture. We are doing something in that same tradition. At a time when our society seems more fragmented than ever by modernity, our electronic culture, and our serious dependence upon "professionals," the church can celebrate that which we have to teach each other.

Abundant life means to us that God's spirit is flowing in and around the lives of the people of our parish. It means that we can take the time to trust that God has put inside each one of us gifts for the building up of community. And we trust that both inside of our walls and outside of them.

We do that by seeking to find ways to celebrate the rich cultures that reside within every community, every place where two or more are gathered. We are more aware than ever before that we are not one culture, but many.

In small low-income neighborhoods we are all the time reminded of our emptiness. It is our calling as Christian people to speak the other part of the truth. Yes, there is emptiness, but there is also abundance. Actually, the blessing we have in our congregation and in our community is that we know more fully who we are than people in other places.

What do I mean? I mean that in larger communities you can be anonymous. And so can your sin. But that anonymity sometimes breeds contempt for sinners (that is to say, for oneself). When the police make drug arrests and prostitution arrests in our neighborhood they are rarely arresting people who live here. The communities where these people are arrested often see themselves as places that are "good" communities. They think that sin is a stranger to their community.

We have no such luxury in our community or in our congregation. If someone in our congregation is drunk, we all know it...and it reminds us that we are all in the same sinking boat. If someone is struggling with drug addiction....we know it. We know that there are many other sins more hidden from our eyes. But, because we can see these, we know both our sin and our redemption. We know the grace that

comes not from what we do, but from the fact that we belong to God. And there is great freedom in that.

It is from this perspective that the church can derive its vitality. It's by celebrating the gifts in the midst of brokenness and sin that we can see God's glory, most completely. This gives the church its most powerful witness. I think how much easier we have it than large churches who have to grow away from the idea that their glory is in their size, in their numbers, and not in their salvation and hope. We in the small membership church have it easier, and we should not waste that grace.

The church can play a central role in the life of our larger denomination, our communities, and even our nation. To begin to see one another as teachers is part of the valuing we do of one another, and it is one of the ways we feel and know that affirmation that we are beloved children of God.

I remember several years ago in Indianapolis, sitting around the table with young men from our inner city neighborhood there and talking about creating what they called "The People's Academy." These young men between the ages of 15-19 had all dropped out of school. None of them was employed. Yet I was struck when one of them said, "I want my little brother to see me walking down the street and say, 'That's my teacher.'"

I realized that in a way he already was the teacher. As we all are. And that we need to give each other the opportunity to teach one another the good gifts that we have.



**Rick Deines, Assistant to the Bishop for Coalition Ministry, The Greater Milwaukee Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
And Director of the Milwaukee Lutheran Urban Strategy**

"This concept [creating the 'Yellow House' where he hoped to gather a new community of artists in Arles, France] involved a view of art as a source of hope amid the challenges of modern life; the artist as missionary prophet; and of a brotherhood of painters joined in the pursuit of shared beliefs." (Vincent Van Gogh, Letters, 1889)

Van Gogh longed for a community of artists committed to making a new art that would express the "joy of life" in the real way people experience nature and each other. He wanted to be the "sower" who planted the seeds of life in the midst of struggle and death. In his paintings he placed Emile Zola's book *Joie de Vivre* in a prominent place near the Bible.

The life quest is to find and have meaning, significance, “*joie de vivre*.” Yet, it eludes and even mocks our attempts. Are there ways to recognize, claim and use the gifts of all of us? To build healthy, interesting, joy-filled lives and a relatively just society?

The urban strategy of the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) in the city of Milwaukee regards the relationship to neighbor as the foundation of our work. The mission in Milwaukee is the journey of a cross-section of African-American, Latino, Asian, and White people looking for the keys to living quality lives with dignity.

In the “Youth Work Ministry” mentoring children and youth about being responsible citizens is about “*neighboring*.” So is working with folks in finding job placement home ownership, effective schools, or just government: the neighbor is at the center. It is the neighbor whose gifts build up the church. It is the neighbor who leads in spreading the word in the neighborhood. It is the “us in the neighbor” and the “neighbor in us that informs our mission. Our mantra is “*We’re in the City for Good*.” So we’ll see.....

And as one seeks to be in community with others it is inevitably the daily challenges that threaten to undo us: drugs, crime, family dysfunction, violence, despair. These surround our neighbors. How does one face day after day the forces that seem to find meaning in wanton and willful destruction? Really, why should anyone hang in there? What kind of ‘new surround’ can be created that is more powerful than the death and destruction that now surrounds so many neighbors and imprisons us all?

Some advise, “*have faith*” as if faith is a magic bullet. But in daily life there is no magic to deliver us from our situation. There is only stark reality — daily, hourly pressing its face against our window as we look to see what’s out there. If faith only communicates a mystical kind of “*things will be all right*” then faith may not be the word we need. Perhaps a substitute is the word “*trust*.”

Martin Luther apparently said something like, “*Show me what you trust in and I will show you your god*.” No life choices are certain — all contain risk. Even the most radical claims about God, Jesus, Allah, Buddha or others are human faith ventures — they are culture bound and limited in their views. Religion may help us find the way, but religion is not the way. This may be why Van Gogh turned to art and Einstein to science.

We give ourselves to things, people, causes, and groups. At best we can only partially trust any of it. To give our lives 100% over to job, family, hobbies, the desire for stuff or nation is to reduce our life experience, perspective, and possibility. Everything and everyone wants its pound of flesh from us. If we obey (trust) them, we forfeit the possibility of total freedom. Strangely, true freedom is found from the bottom up, not in having, knowing, possessing, or controlling.

Many great religious traditions acknowledge weakness and suffering as the starting point for the journey of faith. These rare ones know freedom in the living the paradox and the tension — the crux of conflicting truths in life. They have no answers. And sophomoric “faith” just won’t do. So, where do we turn?

From Alcoholics Anonymous and its sister groups we have learned that it is the very people who face up to their chaotic, broken existence who also can go deeper, trust life itself, and become life-givers to others. This is what we find in the neighborhoods of Milwaukee. We see an amazing strength in not just “keep on keepin’ on” but in saying “Yes.” This “Yes” is not a weak acceptance, a going along to get along. It is a willingness to suspend judgement of right and wrong. It plunges into what may appear to be the “heart of darkness.” Trust is a relationship. It is risk. It is not a magic bullet or simple solution.

The Jewish-Christian journey is all about this kind of trust. But no Christian individual or group owns this precious pearl. Others practice it too. At its best Christianity provides some of us the stories, the practices, and the kind of community that invite and undergird us. For Christianity Jesus (as the Christ) is the embodiment of radical obedience, radical trust — he demonstrates an authentic life of ultimate freedom and true responsibility.

Inauthentic faith asks, “Why did this happen to me?” Authenticity asks, “How can I embrace reality and respond creatively in the midst of all that surrounds me?”

What does it look like to live a relationship of ultimate trust to Life — with neighbors near and far with whom we share the planet? What quality of life (joie de vivre) will flow from this stance? How is it supported? How can it grow?

Communities of life-givers are all over the place. They care for their families, they give their best to their daily work, they visit in hospitals, they serve meals, they work for prison reform, they travel to far places to interact with those different from themselves, they teach new attitudes for recognizing racism or homophobia, they offer new ideas and they bring neighbors together to look out for each other — they enrich their community with each one’s gifts.

I am thankful for the neighbors who work to include all at the table of creativity. Even those with whom we disagree need not be a threat to us. We will build together.



Steve Grumm, Pastor, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church: Seatac, Washington

The neighborhood of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church sits on the West side of SeaTac International Airport bordering the Puget Sound of Northwest Washington.

The dynamic of a busy international airport, a growing warehouse industry supporting that airport, and residential neighborhoods surrounding those industries makes for a challenging place for God's kingdom to come. Young families, immigrant people, and wealthy, well-established residents make up our mission field. What do we bring, as the people of God, to this corner of the world? Jesus tells his followers in John's Gospel, "I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I go to the Father." Through congregational and community asset mapping, discipleship training, Youth Ministry's 40 developmental assets,¹⁶ and dialogue with other community resources, we work to discover and grow our gifts as the people of God in this place. We are finding this involves vigilance and humility, for the gifts of God for ministry come through a variety of people in many places. As God enlightens us through the words and work of people outside our immediate faith community, we are encouraged to become a ray of light to the people of South Seattle and the world.

Each week, the people of Prince of Peace gather to honor and worship a God who invites everyone into an eternal relationship, heals brokenness, and calls each of us into a ministry of daily life. We receive these divine blessings as we experience the Word of God and celebrate the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. As the newly baptized gather around the font of blessing, each of us present are reminded of our beginning, "By water and the Holy Spirit we are made members of the Church which is the body of Christ." To know that we are unique and chosen by God for a life with others that is eternal in nature is self-defining. We are called to see ourselves as people filled with talents and assets that are ever evolving. As we recognize, claim, develop, and share our gifts, others are invited into this God-given process.

It is in this relationship of giving and receiving with the world around us where we reveal our deepest fears, reflect our self-centeredness, and demonstrate our struggle to trust the promises of God. We are a broken, self-destructive people. In this tension, between God's desire to be in relationship with us and our unwillingness to trust this relationship, we seek healing and wholeness. It is a gift promised to the community gathered around the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the meal of Holy Communion. Preparing to receive this meal of forgiveness and new life we pray,

"We give thanks to you for the salvation you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ.

Send now your Holy Spirit into our hearts, that we may receive our Lord with a living faith

As he comes to us in his holy supper."

¹⁶ See Appendix VII for a description of the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets.

With a meal of renewal and a healing ritual of oil, laying on of hands, and prayer, we are reminded each week of our wholeness in Christ and the gifts of God available to a world in need of compassion and reconciliation.



A Sufi Story

You will only learn what you already know.

The village elders had failed time after time to resolve a difficult problem. They invited a very wise person from another village to come and help them. In time, she came. People gathered to hear her wisdom. She asked them: “Do you know what I’m going to tell you?” In unison they responded, “NO.” The wise woman replied, “You will only learn what you already know, and if you do not know, I am leaving.” She left. The village was in an uproar.

Months passed and the problem didn’t go away. The elders debated and issued a second invitation to the wise woman. In advance of her arrival, they coached the villagers.

When the wise woman arrived the second time, the village gathered. Again she asked, “Do you know what I’m going to tell you?” The villagers shouted in unison, “YES.” She stared at the people. “If you already know, then I have nothing to tell you.” She left.

The village became even more frustrated, but after many months, they issued a third invitation. This time they were ready for the wise woman.

“Do you know what I’m going to tell you?” Half the villagers shouted “YES”; the other half shouted “NO.” The wise woman looked at the people and said, “Those who know should now get together with those who don’t; then you will all know.” She rose, left and never returned.

That night, an elderly woman had a dream. “Last night, a voice told me the meaning of the message from the wise woman. She wanted us to know that any really important knowledge can be derived from our own community and our traditions, not from outside experts. We already have the knowledge. We already know. We just don’t have the confidence to believe in ourselves.

This is as true today as in ancient times. We all have communities and rich traditions to build on. If only we had the confidence to believe in our own history.



The Rabbi's Gift

There is a story, perhaps it is a myth. The story concerns a monastery that had fallen upon hard times. Once a great order, as a result of waves of antimonastic persecution in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the rise of secularism in the nineteenth, all its branch houses were lost and it had become decimated to the extent that there were only five monks left in the decaying mother house: the abbot and four others, all over seventy in age. Clearly it was a dying group.

In the deep woods surrounding the monastery there was a little hut that a rabbi from a nearby town occasionally used for a hermitage. Through their many years of prayer and contemplation the old monks had become a bit psychic, so they could always sense when the rabbi was in his hermitage. "The rabbi is in the woods, the rabbi is in the woods again," they would whisper to each other. As he agonized over the imminent death of his order, it occurred to the abbot at one such time to visit the hermitage and ask the rabbi if by some possible change he could offer any advice that might save the monastery.

The rabbi welcomed the abbot at his hut. But when the abbot explained the purpose of his visit, the rabbi could commiserate with him. "I know how it is," he exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my town. Almost no one comes to the synagogue anymore." So the old abbot and the old rabbi wept together. Then they read parts of the Torah and quietly spoke of deep things. The time came when the abbot had to leave. They embraced each other. "It has been a wonderful thing that we should meet after all these years," the abbot said, "but I have still failed in my purpose for coming here. Is there nothing you can tell me, no piece of advice you can give me that would help me save my dying order?"

"No, I am sorry," the rabbi responded. "I have no advice to give you. The only thing I can tell you is that the Messiah is one of you."

When the abbot returned to the monastery his fellow monks gathered around him to ask, "Well, what did the rabbi say?"

"He couldn't help," the abbot answered. "We just wept and read the Torah together. The only thing he did say, just as I was leaving — it was something cryptic — was that the Messiah is one of us. I don't know what he meant."

In the days and weeks and months that followed, the old monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the rabbi's words. The

Messiah is one of us? Could he possibly have meant one of us monks here at the monastery? If that's the case, which one? Do you suppose he meant the Abbot? Yes, if he meant anyone, he probably meant Father Abbot. He has been our leader for more than a generation. On the other hand, he might have meant Brother Thomas. Certainly Brother Thomas is a holy man. Everyone knows that Brother Thomas is a man of light. Certainly he could not have meant Brother Elred! Elred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even though he is a thorn in people's sides, when you look back on it, Elred is virtually always right. Often very right. Maybe the rabbi did mean Brother Elred. But surely not Brother Phillip. Phillip is so passive, a real nobody. But then, almost mysteriously, he has a gift for somehow always being there when you need him. He just magically appears by your side. Maybe Phillip is the Messiah. Of course the rabbi didn't mean me. He couldn't possibly have meant me. I'm just an ordinary person. Yet supposing he did? Suppose I am the Messiah? O God, not me, I couldn't be that much for You, could I?

As they contemplated in this manner, the old monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah. And on the off, off chance that each monk himself might be the Messiah, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

Because the forest in which it was situated was beautiful, it so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the monastery to picnic on its tiny lawn, to wander along some of its paths, even now and then to go into the dilapidated chapel to meditate. As they did so, without even being conscious of it, they sensed this aura of extraordinary respect that now began to surround the five old monks and seemed to radiate out from them and permeate the atmosphere of the place. There was something strangely attractive, even compelling, about it. Hardly knowing why, they began to come back to the monastery more frequently to picnic, to play, to pray. They began to bring their friends to show them this special place. And their friends brought more friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men who came to visit the monastery started to talk more and more with the old monks. After a while one asked if he could join them. Then another. And another. So within a few years the monastery had once again become a thriving order and, thanks to the rabbi's gift, a vibrant center of light and spirituality in the realm.

Excerpted from *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. M. Scott Peck, M.D.

APPENDIX II
SCRIPTURAL TEXTS ON COMMUNITY

Some of those whose stories are included in this volume were also asked to share their favorite texts, texts that speak to building community, giving gifts, or, what one called “general asset-thinking.”

Almost all respondents make regular use of **Micah 6:8** in explaining their understanding of the calling to the work of building community.



REV. JIM CONN, Urban Strategist for the United Methodist Church in Southern California, uses the following texts in his ABCD trainings for faith communities:

Basic Text for Asset Thinking

Mark 6:30 ff – Story of Feeding of 5000

Key commentary:

Disciples ask, “Are we to spend a year’s salary to try to feed these people?”

Jesus says, “What do you have? Go and find out.”

Basic Text for Including Labeled People

Mark 10:13-16 – Story of Jesus welcoming the children

Key commentary:

Disciples keep the children away because Jesus has “important” things to do.

Jesus chastises disciples and praises openness of children.

Basic Text for the Power of Associations

Luke 16:1-9 – Story of Dishonest Manager

Key commentary:

The manager is fired, so he shrewdly makes allies who will take care of him when he is jobless (networking).

Basic Text for Institutions

Luke 13:31 ff – Story of Jesus’ life threatened

Key commentary:

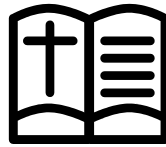
His life threatened by institutional power [king], Jesus proclaims his “vision statement” [casting out demons and curing the sick — two concepts worth deconstructing in terms of community building] to stay on track.

Basic Text for Community Building

Acts 4:32-5:11 – Story of Ananias and Sapphira

Key commentary:

Building a civil society in the midst of institution-dominated culture is a life and death matter for human beings.



PASTOR MIKE MATHER of Broadway Christian United Parish also contributed his commentary on his favorite texts:

Acts 3.1-10 — In this text Peter and John are going up to the temple and a man lame from birth asked them for some money. Peter and John looked intently at him the scripture said and they said, “Look at us. Silver or gold have we none, but I give you all that we have; in the name of Jesus Christ get up and walk.” We use this story to remind people that we don’t need to have a lot of money or any money to give what we have to offer. What we are called to do is to look at people and offer the gifts that we have: encouragement, healing, challenge: whatever. Too often we say, “well here’s a little money” rather than offering all that we have. Just because we have some money doesn’t mean we aren’t called to offer all that we have (which is to see the person before us and to be seen by them). I once heard Daniel Berrigan comment on this passage and say that it was embarrassing that so little was expected of Peter and John.

I Corinthians 1.26-28 — “Now remember who you were dear sisters and brothers: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what the world looks down on and despises and thinks of as nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks of as important.” This passage challenges us to see one another with the eyes of God. Where the world sees “learning disabled, co-dependent, youth-at-risk” we are called to see beloved children of God with something to offer for the building up of the community. Why? Because that is our witness to the grace and the majesty of God. Because it reminds us that what is truly important is not wealth and status, but neighborliness, forgiveness, love, and hope.

Hebrews 11.1 — “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things unseen.” This text reminds us that it is the invisible things of this world that sustain us. It challenges us to see what the world doesn’t see — the giftedness of places that seem abandoned, the life and hope in places of hopelessness, the abundance in the face of poverty. These are things that are unseen, but that are clearly present if we have eyes to see.

I also use the **feeding of the 5,000**, pointing out that the disciples (read “believers” of “the church” or whatever) fail to see that there is not only enough to feed the crowd already present, but that there is more than enough! I think this is what I bet my life on everyday in our ministry.

PASTOR RON PIERRE VIGNEC sends these texts with cryptic but suggestive commentary that have shaped the **Salishan Mission**:

“Our spiritual motto: **‘Pay attention!’**”

Ecclesiastes 10:19 (“A good fund raising text.”)

Feasts are made for laughter;
Wine gladdens life,
And money meets every need.

Sirach 34:24-27 (“Not a favorite Wisdom saying for some.”)

Like one who kills a son before his father’s eyes is the person who offers a sacrifice
from the property of the poor.
The bread of the needy is the life of the poor;
whoever deprives them of it is a murderer.
To take away a neighbor’s living is to commit murder;
to deprive an employee of wages is to shed blood.

Mark 2:27 (“A working theological text. Luther’s two kingdoms thoughts and Calvin’s public grace, saving grace.”)

Jesus said to them. “The Sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the Sabbath.”

Luke 13:10-17 (“Especially for women accused by “systems” for exclusion) Jesus says “get up!” and go back to community.”

Ephesians 2:8-10 (“I prefer the Jerusalem translation here) Vs. 10 We are God’s work of art (poema in the Greek, living poems!”)

1 Peter 4:10 (“Great word: manifold = *poikilos* means ‘many colored.’ So it reads: ‘Like good stewards of the many colored graces of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.’ Good Assets Text!”)

APPENDIX III
CAPACITY INVENTORY EXAMPLES

NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH
Survey Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

My name is _____ What is your name?

Thank you for coming over. Did someone talk to you about what the "Gift Exchange" is all about? What do you understand it to be?

Basically, we believe that everyone has God-given talents and gifts that can be used to benefit the community. I'd like to spend a few minutes talking to you about your gifts.

Before we get started, let me give you a small gift.

GIFTS

Gifts are abilities that we are born with. We may develop them, but no one has to teach them to us.

1. What positive qualities do people say you have?
2. Who are the people in your life that you give to? How do you give to them?
3. When was the last time you shared with someone else? What was it?
4. What do you give that makes you feel good?

SKILLS

Sometimes we have talents that we've acquired in everyday life such as cooking and fixing things.

1. What do you enjoy doing?
2. If you could start a business, what would it be?
3. What do you like to do that people would pay you to do?
4. Have you ever made anything? Have you ever fixed anything?

DREAMS

Before you go, I want to take a minute and hear about your dreams — those goals you hope to accomplish.

1. What are your dreams?
2. If you could snap your fingers and be doing anything, what would it be?

CLOSING

First, I'd like to thank you. We're talking to as many people as we can and what we'd like to do is begin a Wall of Fame here in the Soup Kitchen highlighting the gifts, skills and dreams of as many people as possible. The ultimate goal is to find a way to use those gifts in rebuilding the community.

Before you go, can I get your full name? Address? Age?

INTERFAITH ACTION-COMMUNITY TALENT INVENTORY

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ INSTITUTION: _____

LIST BELOW THE ANSWERS YOU GET TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What do you do well? For example, cooking, "I'm a good listener," cross-stitching, public speaking, plumbing, etc. (We want to know practical skills and social skills).

Have you ever been paid for any of these skills?

No _____ Yes _____ Which Ones _____

2. When you think about all of these skills which would you say are the ones you are best at or enjoy doing most?

Would you be interested in making money doing them or teaching someone else to learn them? (i.e., a gardener selling produce, someone who makes quilts selling them at a craft fair, teaching someone carpentry skills etc.)

Which skill would you like to use to: Make money _____

Teach others _____

Have you tried to make money on a skill and been successful? No _____

Yes _____

What skills _____

What happened _____

3. Have you ever thought of starting a business at home or in the neighborhood?

No _____ Yes _____

What kind of business would you start?

Why haven't you started it?

What would lead you to try?

4. What are some of the groups you belong to? Do you have a role in these groups? (chair, fund-raiser, treasurer, troop leader, etc.)

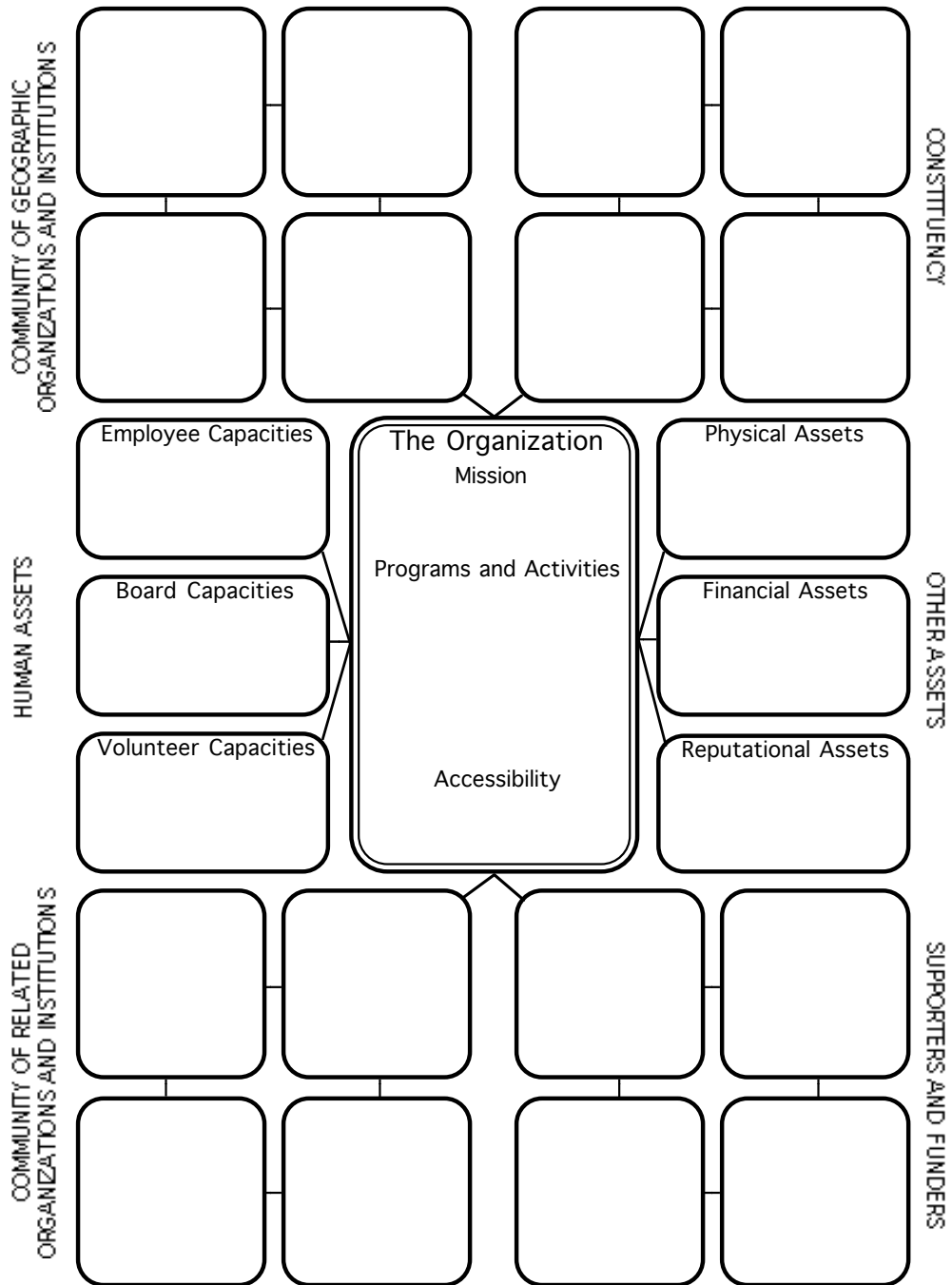
5. Can we list these skills in a published inventory for the community?

Volunteer Yes _____ No _____

Paid Yes _____ No _____

This inventory was completed by: _____

APPENDIX IV
 TOOLS FROM THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
 CHURCH IN AMERICA
ORGANIZATIONAL ASSET MAP



© Chicago Foundation for Women: Adapted for Use by the ELCA

Individual Asset Map — Looking Inward	
General Interests (motivations, passions)	General Skills (not necessarily within organization)
Specific Interests (activities you enjoy)	Specific Skills (in groups, community, household, job, etc.)
Organizational Activities: Experience: (What you have learned how to do)	Organizational Activities: Experience
Organizational Activities: Potential (what you could do to match your skills and interests, whether this is a new or existing activity within the organization)	Organizational Activities: Potential

Individual Asset Map — Looking Outward	
Connections with Other Groups and Associations:	Connections with Institutions and Professionals:
Connections with Constituencies, Families, and Individuals:	Other Community Connections:
Connections with Other Faith-Based Groups:	Connections with Businesses:
Connections with Government and Politics:	Other Personal Assets:

APPENDIX V
NORTHERN MICHIGAN SUFFICIENCY GIFTEDNESS

As part of the Mutual Ministry effort, the Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan developed guidelines for what it calls, "Sufficiency Giftedness." These guidelines are intended to assist congregations as they work through the asset discovery process and to help congregations move from an internal deficits perspective to one that allows them to begin to see their gifts as sufficient for their needs. The guidelines offer thinking points and action steps for moving toward the full implementation of "mutual ministry."

STEP ONE

- A. Two-hour meeting with Bishop's Committee/Vestry and those whom they invite to assure as broad an awareness of the membership as possible.
- B. Consultant describes the vision of 1995 and the sufficiency support team's place in this. Also, identify the purposes of the discovery process and review the scope, limitations, and possible outcomes of this process.
- C. Consultant and participants talk through the "generally desirable characteristics" and participants receive their "homework" assignment:

After a time of personal prayer, and on your own, read slowly through the adult membership list (16 years of age and up), putting a plus next to those whom you would say you know well-to-very-well.

Next, read through the names of those whom you have marked, and put a check beside those for whom you feel the general characteristics are mostly true.

Bring your marked list to the next meeting.

STEP TWO

- A. Consultant leads participants through the sufficiency team categories one at a time, as they place a check beside those whom they have observed to possess a capacity for a specific sufficiency category.
- B. Those marked for each category are written into the appropriate section of a second sheet of paper provided, and this is returned to the Bishop's Committee/Vestry for collation.
- C. The separate lists of names are collated by one or more members of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry.

STEP THREE

- A. The Bishop's Committee/Vestry and other participants in the first two steps receive the collated lists, which are to be considered to be confidential.

- B. The Bishop's Committee/Vestry meets to look at the collated lists, and to arrive at consensus on those members to be invited to consider membership in the Covenant Group.
- C. With the consultant, the Bishop's Committee/Vestry decides how to contact those to be invited this time around. An agreed deadline for these contacts is established related to a date for gathering those to be invited.

STEP FOUR

- A. Those who have accepted the invitation meet with representatives of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry and the consultant. The representatives share their understanding of the vision and invite people to accept specific invitations related to sufficiency.
- B. Each person receives a written identification of their specific invitation and a list of all accountabilities, which the consultant then identifies with them one by one.
- C. Each person is asked to give prayerful consideration to their response to their invitation.
- D. Representatives of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry contact each person for their response.

DISCOVERING A SUFFICIENCY SUPPORT TEAM

One key to effectiveness in this task is to be clear from the outset with people, starting with the Bishop's Committee or Vestry, about the fact that expecting a congregation to discover its own giftedness for supporting daily ministry is a new emphasis in most congregations. This certainly need not frighten us away from doing it, but it does call for great sensitivity and care.

Here are some other points which we will want to stress in our initial conversations.

- ❑ The search is fairly limited in scope and is intended to address the need for structured or organized support for the important daily ministry being carried out by many members to homes, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and community responsibilities.
- ❑ This is an initial search. This will be just the first round of an ongoing process. It is not expected that those affirmed in the first round will make lifetime commitments to these responsibilities. Therefore, others will need to be discovered in future years.
- ❑ The purpose of this discovery process is not to reward or give recognition to those who have given faithful service to the church over the years. On the other hand, some of those who have done so will prove to be gifted for sufficiency support.
- ❑ Those who will participate in the discovery process should be assured that it is appropriate to consider themselves among the rest of the members.

- ❑ It may be useful to be “up front” with people that in that this first round some people whose gifts are more subtle may be overlooked. Also, there may be a tendency to look toward the stronger personalities since we are not experienced with this process.
- ❑ Where ordination, licensure, or certification is involved, the Bishop and appropriate diocesan bodies, such as the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee, will participate in the discovery and affirmation process as it unfolds over the 18-24 months.

Let's take a look now at some characteristics, skills, and experiences which are observable, and which may give clues to a person's capacity for sufficiency support related to the priesthood, deaconhood, and bishophood of the congregations.

DISCOVERING SOME MEMBERS TO SUPPORT OUR CONGREGATION'S DAILY MINISTRY

Some generally desirable personal characteristics:

Most of us know the kind of people we find helpful, or to whom we might turn when we hoped to get help accomplishing something. Here is a list of some of these general characteristics of helpful people.

We need people who:

In relating to others:

- ❑ Listen attentively to others and seem truly interested.
- ❑ Show as much willingness to accept help from others as to offer help.
- ❑ Can disagree without being disagreeable.
- ❑ Offer suggestions and criticism in helpful, sensitive ways.

As members of the Church:

- ❑ Worship regularly and frequently because they are committed to God and the Church.
- ❑ Share from their time and money as generously as possible within their circumstances.

As human beings:

- ❑ Exhibit enough flexibility to respect the past while being open to necessary changes.
- ❑ Can exhibit good-natured humor about themselves without putting themselves down. Are generally optimistic, but can live with disappointments or delays, and go on.
- ❑ Find opportunities to affirm other peoples' valuable qualities and skills.

We need people who:*As members of groups:*

- ❑ Cooperate with others in group activities.
- ❑ Don't stake out territory, preferring to share activities with others.
- ❑ Usually can find ways to get others involved, rather than usually preferring to do jobs alone.
- ❑ Remain a loyal member of a group even when disagreeing with decisions made by a group.
- ❑ Accomplish assignments by the time agreed upon.
- ❑ Know the difference in the time to be a leader and when to be a follower.
- ❑ Usually appear well prepared for accepted responsibilities.

The Priestly Ministry of Congregation:

"...to minister the sacraments of the New Covenant that the reconciling love of Christ may be known and received."

This responsibility will focus on the sacramental features of liturgy and worship that illuminate and support our daily ministry of reconciliation; draw the congregation by anamnesis into reliving Christ's life known through observing the Christian Calendar and supporting the events of human life from birth through death; celebrating God's loving initiative in making possible harmonious relationships with God and humanity. It is planned for a locally affirmed presbyter to share this responsibility.

PRESBYTERS/PRIESTS***We need people who:***

- ❑ Appear comfortable in public gatherings.
- ❑ Read well and with understanding in public.
- ❑ Exhibit natural dignity and poise in public ceremonies.
- ❑ Participate in worship unless prevented by serious circumstances.
- ❑ Participate as leaders of worship without dominating.
- ❑ Exhibit concerned awareness for those absent from worship.
- ❑ Respect past worship practices, yet are open to change in worship.
- ❑ Arrive early for worship and are well-prepared for their part.
- ❑ Respond to unexpected worship circumstances with grace and ease.
- ❑ At the time of Ordination will be at least 32 years of age, an Episcopalian for at least 5 years, and a confirmed or received member.

PREACHERS*We need people who:*

- Show sensitivity to the diversity of attitudes, values, and conditions within a congregation.
- Demonstrate skill in public speaking.
- Appear comfortable as a focus of attention in public gatherings.
- Exhibit a broad awareness of human experience.
- Can cope with disturbances/disruptions while speaking.
- Show willingness and ability to study and learn.
- Exhibit curiosity for learning.

COORDINATORS OF PRIESTLY MINISTRY*We need people who:*

- Demonstrate good personal organization.
- Show openness to using others' skills without favoring some.
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to provide leadership when appropriate, but can also be a follower when appropriate.
- Accomplish assignments or preparations after taking responsibility.
- Seem comfortable delegating responsibility; follow up to offer help to those delegated but don't do their jobs for them.
- Offer suggestions/criticisms in sensitive, helpful ways.
- Exhibit regard and excitement for worship.
- Participate in worship unless prevented by serious circumstances.
- Tend to invite wide participation in activities, rather than preferring to do things on their own.

The Congregation's Diaconal Ministry:

"...look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need" and "...strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

This responsibility will focus on the mutual pastoral care among the membership of the congregation; identify and respond to human need in the community: interpret to the congregation the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world — sensitizing the congregation to the issues of peace and justice, the social concerns and responsibilities present locally and internationally; it is planned for a locally affirmed deacon to share this responsibility.

DEACONS

We need people who:

- ❑ Offer assistance with kindness and courtesy, without pushiness or superiority.
- ❑ Exhibit common sense in meeting needs.
- ❑ Presently involved in activities that provide effective assistance to people with specific needs.
- ❑ Persist and seem generally optimistic, even when positive results are delayed.
- ❑ Encourage wide participation of others in activities, rather than preferring to work alone.
- ❑ Show confidence in others' abilities, while offering help desired.
- ❑ Express awareness of an appreciation for what others do.
- ❑ Exhibit openness to receiving caring attention or help from others.
- ❑ Appreciate and honor confidentiality about other people; don't gossip.
- ❑ Appear comfortable working cooperatively with others.
- ❑ Seem open to and expectant of receiving from those being helped.
- ❑ Demonstrate awareness of human suffering inside and outside the Church.
- ❑ At the time of Ordination will be at least 32 years of age, an Episcopalian for at least 5 years, and a confirmed or received member.

COORDINATORS OF DIACONAL MINISTRY

We need people who:

- ❑ Demonstrate good personal organization.
- ❑ Show openness to using others' skills without favoring some.
- ❑ Demonstrate willingness and ability to provide leadership when appropriate, but can also be a follower when appropriate.
- ❑ Accomplish assignments or preparations after taking responsibility.
- ❑ Seem comfortable delegating responsibility; follow up to offer help to those delegated but don't do their jobs for them.
- ❑ Offer suggestions/criticisms to sensitive, helpful ways.
- ❑ Tend to invite wide participation in activities, rather than preferring to do things on their own.
- ❑ Presently involved in community activities which help meet human need.
- ❑ Respect other denominations or religious traditions in the community.
- ❑ Exhibit ability to interact with various community groups and helping agencies in a spirit of mutual respect.

The Congregation's Apostolic Ministry:

"...boldly proclaim and interpret the gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience (of the congregation)" and "...encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries." Three elements of this are:

Stewardship

Education for Christian Responsibility

Ecumenical Cooperation

STEWARDSHIP COORDINATORS

Stewardship — discovering and coordinating voluntary participation for the talent and money necessary to support daily ministry.

We need people who:

- ❑ Seem genuinely interested in other people in the congregations, and are aware of their skills, experience, gifts, and talents.
- ❑ Are comfortable talking informally about personal and family commitment to Christian responsibility.
- ❑ Exhibit some excitement and optimism for what human and financial resources can accomplish.
- ❑ Consistently show regard for confidentiality; don't gossip.
- ❑ Have the reputation of being good stewards in daily life of their own money and talent. May demonstrate in the home or workplace one or more of these: property care, budget making, planning for the future.

EDUCATION COORDINATORS

Education for Christian Responsibility — providing catechetical preparation and study opportunities necessary to support daily ministry, this is where persons become better prepared to share the Good News with those they encounter in daily situations.

We need people who:

- ❑ Show interest in the questions and experiences of others.
- ❑ Might have a reputation for being a creative or imaginative public educator.
- ❑ Demonstrate enthusiasm about learning, finding, and sharing information.
- ❑ Give evidence of spending some time thinking about what life's about, how religion helps make sense of life, and how that fits with their own life story.
- ❑ Exhibit intellectual curiosity about religion — "the acts of the Faith."
- ❑ Participate in study/learning groups in the congregation.
- ❑ Appear imaginative and resourceful in using materials that are available.
- ❑ Ask others for help/information when needed.

- Generally are good at adapting to the needs/interests of others.

ECUMENICAL COORDINATORS

Ecumenical Cooperation — seeking to interact with any other denominational and religious groups in focusing support for our common mission.

We need people who:

- Speak proudly of their Episcopal heritage without putting down other religious traditions.
- Seems generally open to and respectful of differences in other people.
- Participate in local ecumenical gatherings and activities.
- Usually appear comfortable and courteous in talking to others to invite their participation in something.
- Demonstrate some awareness of the contributions made by various religious traditions.

APPENDIX VI
PARTNERS FOR SACRED PLACES EQUATION

1. Where is the program housed? (circle one)
 - inside the church’s property
 - outside the congregation’s building space
 - in several locations

2. Who initiated the program? (circle one)
 - clergy
 - congregational members/ groups
 - congregational committee
 - congregational staff members
 - another congregation
 - diocese/judicatory
 - neighborhood coalition
 - human service organization
 - government agency

3. Who is served (members vs. non-members)?
 - a. number of congregation members who benefit from the program (per month or per year) _____
 - b. number of community members who benefit from the program (per month or per year)

4. What is the percentage of program users who are congregation members? (your answer to 3a divided by [3a + 3b]) _____%

5. What is the percentage of program users who are non-members? (your answer to 3b divided by [3a + 3b]) _____%

6. What is the annual value of the contribution the congregation makes to its community? (in other words, what would it cost for another organization to start and run this program in this neighborhood?)
 - a. Cost of comparable space

Calculation (approach 1): square footage of space that program uses times the market value of space @ _____\$ per sq. ft. annually = \$_____

Calculation (approach 2): day rental rate @ _____ \$ per day
times _____ days used per year = \$ _____

PLUS

b. Value of volunteer help

Calculation: _____ volunteer hours per week times \$11.58 times 52 weeks =
\$ _____

PLUS

c. Value of congregational staff help

Calculation: _____ staff hours per week times \$10.00 times 52 weeks =
\$ _____

PLUS

d. Value of clergy help

Calculation: _____ clergy hours per week times \$20.00 times 52 weeks =
\$ _____

PLUS

e. In-kind support (phone, printing, postage, food, office supplies)

Calculation: \$ _____ per month times 12 months = \$ _____

PLUS

f. Utilities (if not included in rent)

Calculation: \$ _____ per month times 12 months = \$ _____

PLUS

g. Cash support from the congregation

Calculation: \$ _____ per month times 12 months = \$ _____

MINUS

h. Rent or fees paid by the program to the congregation

Calculation: \$ _____ per month times 12 months = \$ _____

TOTAL CONTRIBUTION \$ _____ per year

APPENDIX VII**SEARCH INSTITUTE'S 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS****EXTERNAL ASSETS****Support**

1. Family support
2. Positive family communication
3. Other adult relationships
4. Caring neighborhood
5. Caring school climate
6. Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment

7. Community values youth
8. Youth as resources
9. Service to others
10. Safety

Boundaries and Expectations

11. Family boundaries
12. School boundaries
13. Neighborhood boundaries
14. Adult role models
15. Positive peer influence
16. High expectations

Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities
18. Youth programs
19. Religious community
20. Time at home

EXTERNAL ASSETS**Commitment to Learning**

21. Achievement motivation
22. School engagement
23. Homework
24. Bonding to school
25. Reading for pleasure

Positive Values

26. Caring
27. Equality and social justice
28. Integrity
29. Honesty
30. Responsibility
31. Restraint

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making
33. Interpersonal competence
34. Cultural competence
35. Resistance skills
36. Peaceful conflict resolution

Positive Identity

37. Personal power
38. Self-esteem
39. Sense of purpose
40. Positive view of personal future

APPENDIX VIII

THE ABCD RELIGIOUS NETWORK

The Asset-Based Community Development Religious Network is a network of people of faith who are working to support and build community within their congregations and neighborhoods, following the basic principles of asset-based community development, which are:

- everyone has a gift
- vital communities are those in which everyone gives his/her gift.

Network members are currently focused on the following areas:

- building congregations from the inside out, starting with the strengths and assets of their members rather than relying solely on outside “experts” and resources;
- involving congregation-based people in building communities using the asset-based community development approach;
- applying congregational and community asset-based approaches to vital public policy issues such as welfare reform.

Some of the tools that local congregations and communities are developing for their work:

- capacity inventories: an interview format to help discover the skills and gifts of members or local residents;
- community asset maps: lists and surveys of local citizens groups and local institutions to involve in the community-building process;
- self-help groups.

The network publishes a newsletter and is currently compiling a directory of members.

The ABCDRN is affiliated with the ABCD institute, Northwestern University. The basic text used at the ABCD Institute and in the ABCD Religious Network is Kretzmann and McKnight’s *Building Communities from the Inside Out*.¹⁷

For more information on the network, publications, and resources, contact: Eliza M. Carney, 2215 Shooting Star Lane, Ft. Collins, CO 80521, Phone: 970-416-0636, Fax: 970-416-0429 Email: abcdrn@greyrock.org

¹⁷ Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.

APPENDIX IX
THE INTERFAITH HEALTH MOVEMENT

Aligning Faith and Health: A Movement Toward Wholeness

The Interfaith Health Program is a program of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, where Gary Gunderson, author of *Deeply Woven Roots*, is director. The Interfaith Health Program vision is for all the assets and strengths of faith and health groups to be aligned with the most relevant public health knowledge and the most mature faith.

A Faith / Health Movement is Underway

- ❑ The link between personal spirituality and healing (wellness, wholeness, etc.).
- ❑ The link between faith structures and public health.
- ❑ The broad renegotiating of social roles between public, private, not-for-profit and voluntary organizations in our society.
- ❑ The changing vitality among congregations and faith structures of different kinds.

We value the full menu of religious assets:

- ❑ 30,000 congregations in the U.S. (especially the 10% doing heavy work).
- ❑ Connectional systems such as denominations.
- ❑ Interfaith and ecumenical systems such as the many social service agencies.
- ❑ Agencies owned directly and indirectly by religious groups (hospitals, schools, etc.). Agencies *influenced* by religious groups, usually by heritage or value commitments.
- ❑ The members, perhaps as many as 150 million that attend worship.

We value the eight enduring strengths of congregations (from *Deeply Woven Roots*, Fortress 1997):

- ❑ The power to accompany, to be physically present.
- ❑ The power to convene, not just in large groups, but in small ones across interest lines. The power to connect, to form human networks across which resources flow.
- ❑ The power to frame, to story, to set events and data in a meaningful context.
- ❑ The power to give sanctuary to programs, people, ideas and dialogue.
- ❑ The power to bless, forgive, to nurture hope amid its opposite.
- ❑ The power to pray, to mark the boundary between holy and human.
- ❑ The power to endure, to maintain a different sense of time and development.

Collaboration issues involves three domains of activity:

A Task (or several): specific actions that resonate to the partners (immunization, etc.). Building Capacity: creating or strengthening roles such as parish nurses which are needed in order to do the heavy work. Building capacity is also a shared domain. Creating a critical mass of boundary leaders that do the “plumbing among partners.” Each component of the movement contributes visibly to the whole and is thus valuable. The great gain will derive when we move from a “heap” of laudable activities toward a system of projects aligned by a common vision. Our aspiration is for all these assets and strengths to be aligned with the most relevant public health knowledge and most mature faith.

What does the movement look like?*Health / Faith 101-102: Healthy Congregations*

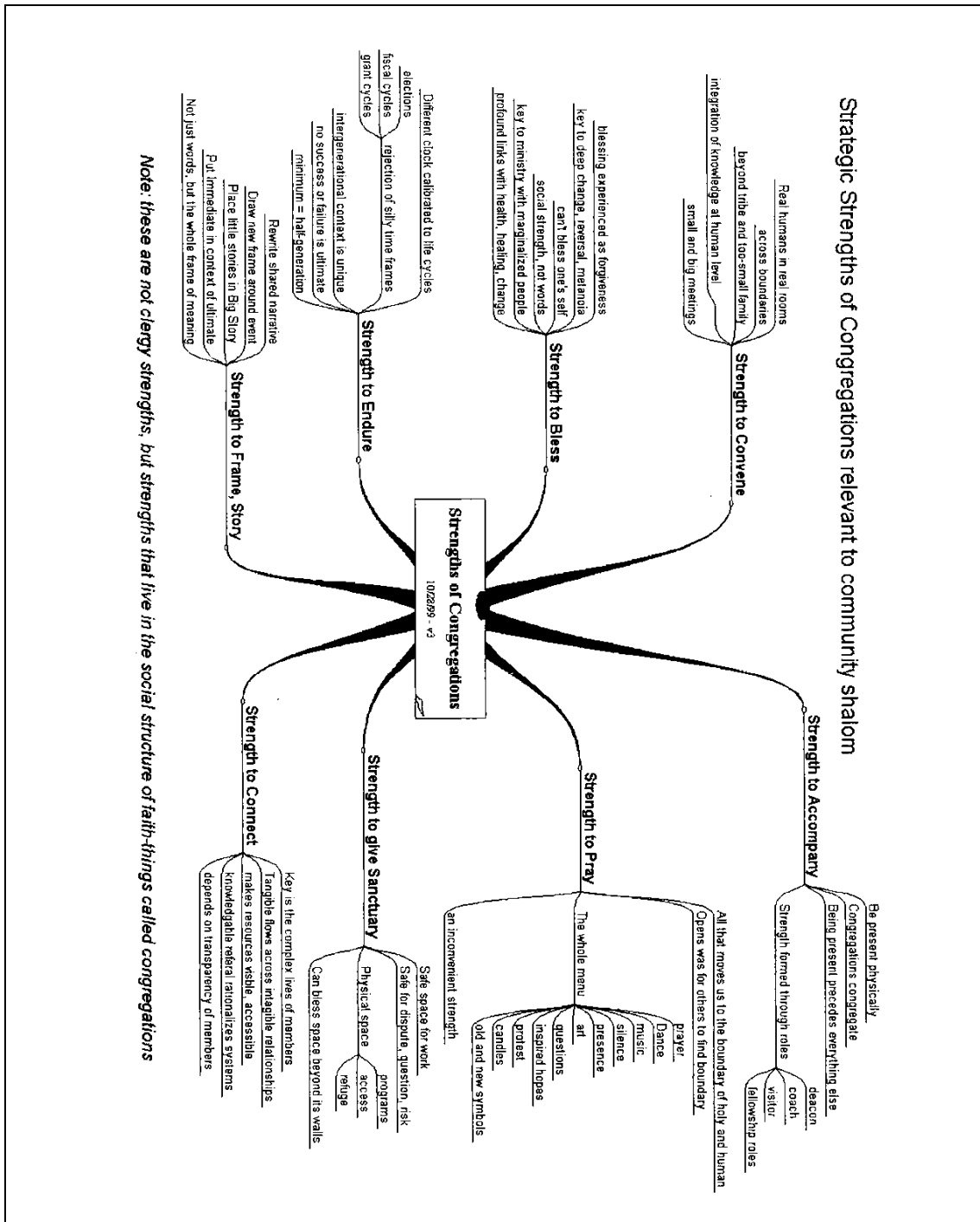
Nearly every congregation can do the basics of caring, as well as simple disease and injury prevention: disease screening, local risk assessment (railings, sidewalks, crosswalks), emergency nutrition for vulnerable people, smoking cessation, exercise programs. Almost any can make available basic health education materials and include them in educational opportunities for groups of many kinds. These activities can be done within the congregation, by building on the capacities of existing roles such as secretary, elder, music minister, visitation committee, etc. Health and wholeness-making become the lively center of the identity of the congregation.

Health / Faith 201-202: Collaboration

More extensive collaboration is natural for specialized ministries: clinics, food banks, safe haven for dependents (day care), soup kitchens, specialized sanctuary ministries and respite care for long term caregivers, networks of client advocates for especially marginalized groups such as the mentally ill or homeless, organized volunteer care programs, advocacy networks. These are usually ecumenical and often interfaith. Even referral requires intelligent, ongoing collaboration. So does pastoral counseling of different kinds, upgraded visitation programs, upgraded youth and young couples ministries, care for clergy. All these build on existing roles, but augment them with special training or ongoing relationship to specialized ministry groups.

Health / Faith 301-302: Systems of Projects

Over time — and with mature leadership — the assortment of projects moves toward being a system of deeply aligned efforts moving toward a common vision. This movement depends on new kinds of leaders (boundary leaders) in new kinds of relationships (webs of transformation). The key is the existence of a critical mass of boundary leaders working in between structures and disciplines to aligning the assets not around “needs” but strengths and enduring commitments. Finding, nurturing, and supporting these leaders is a high order task.



Deeply Woven Roots, 1997

The movement takes time and tenacity. It rests on the religious virtues of patience, humility, grace, constancy — the capacity to do small right things and form right relationships over and over for a generation or two.

Interfaith Health Program — Emory University

RESOURCES
NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF GROUPS
SHARING MATERIALS FOR THIS WORKBOOK

New Prospect Missionary Baptist Church

1829 Elm Street
Cincinnati, OH 45210
Pastor Damon Lynch III
513-721-2355
revdl3rd@aol.com

Broadway Christian Parish United Methodist Church

1412 South Carroll Street
South Bend, IN 46613
219-287-9452
Pastor Mike Mather
Mikem93274@aol.com

Salishan/East Side Lutheran Mission

504 East 123rd Street
Tacoma, WA 98404
253-531-5109
Pastor Ron Vignec
Vignecland@qwest.net

Bethel New Life

4950 W. Thomas St.
Chicago, IL 60651
Mary Nelson, President
777-473-7870
www.bethelnewlife.org

Interfaith Action (now Isaiah)

2720 East 22nd St.
Minneapolis, MN 55406
612-333-1258
speac@speac.org

United Congregations for Youth Development

The Search Institute
700 South Third Street, Suite 210
Minneapolis, MN 55415
612-376-8955; 800-888-7828
www.search-institute.org

Episcopal Diocese of Northern Michigan

131 E. Ridge St.
Marquette, MI 49855
906-228-7160
Jane Cislucyis
Jane.cislucyis@ecunet.org

The Communities of Shalom

United Methodist Church
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1545
New York, NY 10115
212-870-3826; 212-870-3711
<http://gbgm-umc.org/programs/shalom>

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Project Director — Congregational Asset Mapping
Luther Snow
409 Upper Broadway
Decorah, IA 52101
563-382-6386
snowluth@luther.edu

Center for Community Transformation

Chicago Theological Seminary
5757 S. University Ave.
Chicago, IL 60637
Rev. Deborah Haffner
773-322-0269
www.chgosem.edu

Salvation Army, Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware Division

Kevin Thompson-Hooper
701 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
215-787-2802
www.salvationarmyphiladelphia.org

Partners for Sacred Places

1700 Sansom Street, Tenth Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
215-567-3234
www.sacredplaces.org

Catholic Schools Opposing Racism (COR)

Queen of Peace HS
7659 S. Linder
Burbank, IL 60459
Suzanne Wille, Coordinator
www.racebridges.net/COR

Interfaith Health Program

Emory University
Rollins School of Public Health
750 Commerce Drive, Suite 301
Decatur, GA 30030
404-592-1461 voice
lmcphee@emory.edu
www.ihpnet.org

SOME OTHER RESOURCES

Books and Articles:

- Bethel New Life (2000). *Community Connections*. Chicago: Bethel New Life.
- Betz, Ann, & Roehlkepartain, Jolene. (2000). *Networking Congregations for Asset Building: A Tool Kit*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
- Boggs, Terry. (2001). *Visioning for the Future of the Church in Public Life*. Presented to a gathering of church leaders in Fort Worth, TX. Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Carney, Eliza. (2001). Small Congregations and Asset-Based Community Development. *Community Investments*, 13, (3), pp. 3-5.
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- Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.
- Kretzmann, J. P. and McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.
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Peck, M. Scott. (1997). *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*. Simon & Schuster.

Puntenney, Deborah L. (2000). *A Guide to Building Sustainable Organizations from the Inside Out*. Chicago: Chicago Foundation for Women.

Sitze, Bob. (2001). *Not Trying too Hard: New Basics for Sustainable Congregations*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute.

Skjestad, Joy. (2002). *Setting up a Nonprofit in your Church*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute.

The Salvation Army. (2000). *Horizons Christian Leadership Magazine*. July/August, p. 11. Toronto: The Salvation Army.

Videos:

Where, Why, How (2000). Produced by the Communities of Shalom. Available for \$12.00 from Service Center, P.O. Box 691328, Cincinnati, OH 45269-1328. Call Toll Free: 1-800-305-9857.

Religious Publishers:

ACTA Publications. 4848 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60648.
Phone: 773-271-1030. Toll Free Phone: 800-397-2282; Fax: 800-397-0079 in the U.S. and Canada. E-mail: actapublications@aol.com

Web Pages:

Christian Community Development Association
www.cdda.org

Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions
www.cpwr.org

National Council of Churches
www.nccusa.org

Union of American Hebrew Congregations
www.uahc.org

Universal Health Care Action Network
www.uhcan.org/faith/index.html

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

- Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993). John Kretzmann and John McKnight.
- A Guide to Mapping and Mobilizing the Economic Capacities of Local Residents* (1996). John Kretzmann, John McKnight, and Deborah Puntenney.
- A Guide to Mapping Local Business Assets and Mobilizing Local Business Capacities* (1996). John Kretzmann, John McKnight, and Deborah Puntenney.
- A Guide to Mapping Consumer Expenditures and Mobilizing Consumer Expenditure Capacities* (1996). John Kretzmann, John McKnight, and Deborah Puntenney.
- A Guide to Capacity Inventories: Mobilizing the Community Skills of Local Residents* (1997). John Kretzmann, John McKnight, and GERALYN SHEEHAN.
- A Guide to Evaluating Asset-Based Community Development: Lessons, Challenges, and Opportunities* (1997). Thomas Dewar.
- A Guide to Creating a Neighborhood Information Exchange: Building Communities by Connecting Local Skills and Knowledge* (1998). John Kretzmann, John McKnight, and Deborah Puntenney.
- City-Sponsored Community Building: Savannah's Grants for Blocks Story* (1998). Deborah Puntenney and Henry Moore.
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- Asset-Based Strategies for Faith Communities* (2002). Susan Rans and Hilary Altman.