

Minutes of the Faith Subcommittee of the VSSTF
May 16, 2012, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m., UUCV Conference Room

Attendance: (3 p.m.) Sue Brinkmeyer, Harold Cartlidge, Dorothy FastHorse, Jill Forman, Lynn Geller, Rev. Jerome Kahler (retired), Catherine Kennedy, Rev. David Pyle, Rev. Dave Schulze; (6 p.m.) Kent Brinkmeyer, Debora Schreiber

1. Consensus by both the 3 p.m. and the 6 p.m. groups was that the mission of the Faith Subcommittee should be three-fold:
 - outreach to all of the 60-80 churches, synagogues, and temples in Ventura in order to increase participation in the Faith Subcommittee and in the mission to end homelessness
 - coordination among all of the faith groups providing assistance to homeless individuals so that government agencies, private service providers and faith groups can:
 - know precisely what services each provides
 - learn best practices from others offering similar services
 - avoid any unproductive duplication
 - refer those in need to others providing the needed service
 - learn what gaps in service exist and discuss who might best step in to fill each gap
 - share their needs with one another in the hope that greater coordination can allow each to do more and can lead to the most effective use of limited resources
 - facilitate two-way education between the city-wide faith community and other entities, including the VSSTF, government agencies, and private service providers in order to:
 - increase awareness within each of areas of need, and strategies or approaches that are proving effective (or ineffective) in reducing homelessness
 - ensure that those outside the faith community have realistic expectations of what needs the city-wide faith community can be expected to meet
2. There appeared to be agreement that the Faith Subcommittee should ideally have co-chairpersons, one lay and one ministerial, with the two coming from different groups within the broad faith community.
3. All appeared to agree that an effective way to begin outreach, coordination and two-way education might be to reach out to those faith groups currently providing services to the homeless and invite them to share what they are doing at monthly meetings of the Faith Subcommittee organized around specific services, e.g., food pantries, meal service, clothing, housing, job search, etc.
4. It was suggested that reaching out to churches, synagogues, or temples with an offer to lend the Photo Project of the UU Church of Ventura, which tells the story behind the face of the homeless individual on each, might also be an effective way to begin outreach efforts, create a connection between the Faith Subcommittee and individual faith groups, and increase interest in helping with the many issues of homelessness.

5. It was mentioned that, if a representative of the Faith Subcommittee is invited to attend a meeting of a social action committee or other such group within a congregation as a result of initial outreach, that, in order to quickly counteract stereotypes and put a human face on homelessness, it is effective to take along someone who is or has recently been homeless or who narrowly averted becoming homeless.
6. It was mentioned that there is an out-of-date contact list for the 60-80 churches, synagogues, and temples within Ventura, perhaps available from either Cindy Cantle or Captain Bill Finley. That list needs to be brought up to date and augmented with contact information for the chair of the social action committee or other lay leader(s) who should be contacted with regard to issues of homelessness. Adding meeting times for any committees dealing with these issues would also be helpful.
7. Another suggestion was that the Subcommittee create a list of resources or connections available from individuals within faith communities, such as those who can be contacted to help with items such as car repair or dental care.
8. It was suggested that the Subcommittee attempt to create and then update every 3-6 months a list resources and services available from each faith group.
9. There was discussion of a new one-page monthly newsletter from the Salvation Army and/or Project Understanding that summarizes the current environment and suggests ways organizations or individuals can help. The suggestion appeared to be that the Faith Subcommittee might contribute to or make use of that newsletter to achieve its three-fold mission.
10. A suggestion was made at the 6 p.m. meeting that the Education and Faith Subcommittees be merged, but that item was not discussed at the 3 p.m. session and so no consensus has yet been reached.

Respectfully submitted: Sue Brinkmeyer