

## Home Is...

### Summary of Meeting Two

#### Sunday, November 11: Community Forum

Planned to expose members of the congregation to needs of our community, the Community Forum attracted approximately 145 attendees. Presenters at the Forum were:

- **Mayor Allen Joines**
- **Cindy Gordineer**, President of United Way of Forsyth County
- **Scott Weirman**, President of the Winston-Salem Foundation
- **Christopher Lowder**, Acting Assistant Chief, Winston-Salem Police Department
- **Dr. Robert Jones**, Director, Downtown Health Plaza
- **Dr. Beverly Emory**, Superintendent of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County Schools

Andrew Heil served as moderator.

This was an evening of extraordinary blessing and important discussion of issues impacting our community---and those people and organizations already striving to serve them.

The Panelists were asked to address these primary questions:

1. What are significant needs and gaps in our community?
2. How might a faith community like Home Church make a positive difference--- what advice do you have for us?

Panelists affirmed the following:

- Homelessness in Winston-Salem, while still an issue, has been reduced substantially as a result of dedicated effort by the City and local service agencies.
- We have geographic and programmatic gaps. Education inequality continues to serve as a barrier to full participation in our growing economy. Creating a fully inclusive economy remains a challenge.
- Poverty remains relatively high. Child poverty particularly is a major concern and a major predictor of future health disparities and long-term financial disadvantages.
- The educational system falters by virtue of its inability to reach children between birth and the time they enter kindergarten. This window of time is when children often fall behind their peers and enter school with 1-2 years disadvantage.

- Many children suffer from lack of food and lack of parental support on an ongoing basis.
- Teachers are often undervalued by the public. Their support and affirmation is vital if the system is to retain quality professionals.
- Law enforcement officers recognize that physical arrest and holding in custody those who break laws, though vital to public safety, is often not a long-term solution to reducing the sources of crime. Officers are being challenged to become problem-solvers for family issues in the community
- The erosion of trust with each other throughout the community undermines efforts to solve community problems.
- Trust of police officers is high among young children but it often dissipates before children graduate from high school. The Police Department is engaging in a study of this phenomenon hoping to understand more fully the factors resulting in this erosion of trust.
- School staff must often serve as gatekeepers for services to families who present at the schools with a host of unmet needs.
- Services in Winston-Salem are abundant and effective, but a lack of coordination within the system hampers the comprehensive delivery of services. Church members who serve on boards of community service agencies must become advocates for greater community-wide coordination and collaboration.
- Lack of information often limits the ability of the poor to access services and to function effectively as citizens and advocates for their own needs. Churches can play a role as information sources and as settings for neighborhood forums; and their members can serve as mentors enabling individuals to increase their capacity to be effective advocates for themselves.
- Lack of efficient transportation for disadvantaged citizens remains a major concern, and a primary obstacle to achieving positive social, economic, familial, and medical outcomes. Church members must educate themselves about this reality faced by large numbers in our community.
- Church members must open themselves to deeper, more intimate and direct understanding of what poverty means and how it impacts our neighbors. *“Poverty happens when people give up on each other.”* The Poverty Simulation Game (Crisis Control Ministry) is a good step. Holding open forums on specific issues may also help in providing greater understanding of challenges and opportunities.
- The erosion of kindness in social discourse increases fear and distrust and creates barriers to working together to solve community issues.

- Change can happen only at the “*speed of trust*”. Trust must be built patiently over time as people interact with each other, come to truly know each other, and ultimately achieve meaningful understanding of their differing views of life.
- Relationships are key. Community is key. Connection is key.
- Doing FOR others matters less than BEING with others. Be with others long enough and they will reveal to you the proper way to help them solve their own problems.
- The organizations present are collaborating. They no longer work in silos. They refer people to each other for assistance. There is a need for a more comprehensive network of agencies in the community.

The Home Is... Vision Team is lastingly grateful to the panelists for sharing these and many other insights into challenges they and **WE** as a community face. The Team hopes all members will meditate on these insights, holding them in prayer while listening for God’s guidance regarding ways that we as individuals and as the Body of Christ may serve our neighbors more fully and effectively.