



# FAITHNET COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

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# FAITHNET

In January of 2010, Mayor C. Kim Bracey announced her 9 in 9, nine initiatives designed to be addressed during the first nine months of her serving as Mayor of the city of York. One of the components of the 9 in 9 initiatives established was FaithNet, developed to provide an opportunity to join leaders of the faith and social service community together, in exploring opportunities and streamlining services, to better serve the community and ultimately reduce poverty.

To date, the City of York has held five FaithNet conferences, addressing a variation of community concerns, ranging from poverty, housing, geographic, racial division, and servant leadership in providing opportunities to our youth. Faith based and social service organizations have joined together around the community's table to bring attention to the above mentioned areas of need, while developing collective dialogue and possible strategies in addressing those areas of concern. Faith based organizations have attended from a wide range of faiths, including Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Unitarian Universalist.

Over four hundred community members have had the opportunity to participate in FaithNet conferences over the past five years, from faith and community institutions county wide, while gaining valuable resources and networking opportunities to enhance the overall community as a whole.

Yearly, participants are provided with the opportunity to share their insights regarding the initiative and the future needs of the community, as an opportunity to lead the future direction of FaithNet for the betterment of the community.

FaithNet has developed further community programming, as an extension of its conferences, such as **the 2013 MLK America's Sunday Supper, Leading the Give, and the 2014 America's Sunday Supper**, each intrinsically designed to involve the community as

a whole, along with the overarching goal to display the true power of unification within a community.

### **2010 York City Pastor's Summit**

Provided the opportunity for the faith based community to gather and discuss the areas of need present within the city of York, while learning of the areas of concern in which the administration of the Office of The Mayor highlighted.

In attendance were 52 individuals, representing 42 faith based organizations.

The three top areas of need shared by participants were:

- The commitment of the faith based community to support and attend future summits
- The development of an electronic device to provide a listing of resources and a map of services that would be made available to the community
- Faith and community organizations to become invested and involved in the community through adoption of a park or neighborhood, to assist in the beautification and quality of life in the City of York.

### **FaithNet 2011: Inspiration to Action, Strengthening Connections in the Faith Community**

Created an opportunity for faith – based organizations and social services organizations to engage in dialogue, share experiences and knowledge, and work together in developing solutions in addressing poverty, family, and housing. *FaithNet 2011: Inspiration to Action, Strengthening Connections in the Faith Community* was held in collaboration with The York County Council of Churches.

There were 119 individuals in attendance, with 32 faith based organizations and 34 community organizations represented.

The main three areas of concerns emphasized were:

- The need for the faith community and social services community to hold community conversations surrounding the topics of poverty, family, and housing
- The need for social service organizations to develop family mentoring workshops to educate faith based organizations on the services available to the community
- The need for the development of a database of faith based organizations and social services organizations

### **FaithNet 2012: Breaking Down, Building Up**

Held in collaboration with the York County Council of Churches, *FaithNet 2012: Breaking Down, Building Up* encouraged faith leaders and community leaders to unite, with the purpose of addressing issues of geography, ethnicity, and religion within the community. Faith leaders from the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic community congregated to discuss the importance of collaboration in addressing the needs of the community regardless of religious affiliation.

Attending were 65 individuals representing 29 faith – based organizations and 21 social service organizations.

The main topic designated as an area of concern was:

- The need for faith – based organizations to become involved with other congregations, regardless of ethnicity, location, or religious affiliation, through impactful programming and/or fellowship for the purposes of edifying the general community.

## **FaithNet 2013**

Provided the opportunity for the City of York to highlight the examples of community connections that have developed through all demographics of faith – based organizations and the public – private sector, that have had a tremendous impact on the community. The event was held in collaboration with The Black Ministers’ Association of York County.

There were 91 individuals in attendance representing 25 faith – based organizations and 27 social services organizations.

The three main areas of need were reported as:

- The need for the development of programming to assist faith organizations with strategies on engaging youth
- The need for the faith community and social service community to work amongst themselves towards togetherness and strengthening diversity
- The need for government assistance with re-establishing the broken collaborative efforts developed in the past at the grass roots level

## **2013 MLK America’s Sunday Supper: Where Do We Go From Here?**

In collaboration with The Black Ministers Association of York County and Lincoln Charter School, this national program adapted from Points of Light and Rethink Church was held in January 2013, inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s vision to provide communities from diverse backgrounds with the opportunity to join together, share a community meal, and discuss issues that affect their community. Our community chose to discuss the current state of our youth. The event featured the documentary, “The Interrupters,” which shares the moving and surprising stories of three Violence

Interruptioners that aim to protect their Chicago communities from the violence they once employed.

Over 250 community members attended the event and offered various ideas during the community dialogue.

Suggested community changes were as follows:

- The need for male community members to step up and become role models
- The need for the faith community to provide opportunities for youth to attend activities in their buildings or create programming for youth
- The need for community programming to collaborate
- The need to bring youth together to discuss the changes that they would like to see in the community
- The need to educate parents and hold parents accountable

## **Leading the Give**

In July 2013, Leading the Give was held in collaboration with over 45 public – private, social service, and faith – based organizations, designed to provide a unified day in which all partners join together to display an outpouring of love and support to those in the community in need. The event featured health screenings, dental screenings, employment assistance, youth activities, free groceries, counseling assistance, arts/crafts, and entertainment.

Leading the Give provided the opportunity for 345 families within the city of York to receive free groceries and access to social service agencies to assist with needs, while providing the visibility of a community working together to bring about change.

## **2014 MLK America's Sunday Supper: Where Do We Go From Here?**

In collaboration with Asbury United Methodist Church and Lincoln Charter School, this national program adapted from Points of Light and Rethink Church, was held in January 2014, inspired by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision to provide communities from diverse backgrounds with the opportunity to join together, share a free meal, and discuss issues that affect their community. Our community chose to discuss the topic of the current state of our youth. The event featured the documentary, "The Graduates," which addresses education issues through the eyes of six Latino and Latina students.

Over 250 community members attended the event and offered various suggested solutions during the community dialogue that would assist in creating effective change in the current educational challenges that students are facing in the community.

Students and families shared the following suggestions during the community dialogue that could assist with the improvement of students and education in our community:

- The need for adults to increase their involvement with students
- The need for the development of after school programming that specifically focuses on college preparation and workforce development
- The need for the community to work together
- The need for parents to become more involved with their children
- The development of more community events to discuss topics and areas of concern

## **FaithNet 2014: Changing the lives of our youth through male servant leadership**

Individuals from the faith and social services community were encouraged to become active participants in the lives of youth, referencing President Barack Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" initiative, to assist youth in reaching their goals of achievement. Participants were encouraged to become thoroughly engaged in the lives of our youth, thus providing them with the benefits of a prosperous future, by giving of their time to assist within the school system, sports leagues, community organizations, or the development of their own programming that would meet a need that exists within the community.

The event was attended by 85 individuals, to which, 27 faith institutions and 21 community organizations were represented.

The three main suggested areas of importance to focus upon were:

- The need for the elimination of racism amongst the faith community
- The need for the creation of a living document that lists faith organizations and community organizations that are a resource to the community
- The need for evidenced based youth programming in which programs can collaborate

## **Conclusion**

Overall, FaithNet opened the doors for the social service, private – public, and faith – based community from diverse faith, ethnic, and service backgrounds to join together, share differences and similarities, while strategizing effective tactics to deliver efficient services to community members in need.

Over the five years, it is evidenced that the following areas of need have been consistently reported by our community:



- The faith community and social service community joining together amongst themselves, to commit to developing community conversations surrounding issues of need in the community, as well as further developing their relationship building.
- The need for the development of a community database, which would include a listing of faith – based organizations and social service organizations as a resource to community members in need.

Relationships have been developed over the past five years between social service organizations, our education system, health care, and faith – based organizations that have impacted our community positively, thus providing for the development of programming and institutions that currently serve the constituents of the city of York and assist in meeting needs where there once was a gap in service.

In conclusion, FaithNet will no longer remain as an initiative of the city of York. The faith community and social service community have committed to gathering amongst themselves and further advancing the goal of the initiative, to bring together representation of all faiths, social service organizations, and public – private organizations for the betterment of the community, in providing an active service to assist those in need.