

SOME HELPFUL REFERENCES

MINUTE FOR MISSION OPEN DOOR PRESENTATION By Kate Callas, 11/26/2023

Good News/Bad News

Bad News-We are losing two valuable Open Door Staff members to retirement at the end of the year, Trish and Sheila.

Good News- We will celebrate their service with a special coffee hour.

More Good News- Over the past year, a Session-appointed Open Door Work Group has been meeting to understand the current needs of, and available resources for, Detroit's unhoused and vulnerable population, and to look at how we might modify the Open Door program to make the best use of Fort Street's resources while continuing to meet the needs of our guests and other vulnerable people in Detroit.

We mapped the locations of organizations currently serving this population in and around downtown Detroit and learned two important things:

1. Most of the services and resources provided by the Open Door also are available at other locations in the city throughout the week and on Saturdays (food, clothing, showers, medical and dental attention, haircuts, social work services.)
2. Most of our Open Door guests are aware of these other service providers and they regularly frequent these other locations in addition to the Open Door.

So, we learned that although the services we provide at Fort Street are very appreciated by, and important to, vulnerable people in Detroit, we are not unique. We are not the only place nearby where people can— and do— go for this wide range of services.

As we looked at how we could make the best use of Fort Street's resources, we realized that our volunteers are aging and dwindling in number while the Open Door's hours have expanded beyond Thursdays to include Tuesdays and Wednesdays as well. These extra days take a toll on Fort Street's staff and on the facility. We are spreading ourselves very thin.

The Open Door Work Group is looking at better ways to steward Fort Street's resources at this time when other churches provide similar services. One way to best preserve staff and volunteer time and energy would be to retrench. Starting in January, we could eliminate Tuesday and Wednesday hours and return to the Thursday only model.

This retrenchment would allow us to use our energy and resources to address other needs of this population that are not being met by other providers.

Two unfilled needs were voiced in focus groups by both client guests and by service providers:

1. a Sunday meal and

2. emergency cash to individuals, which can sometimes mean the difference between stable and unstable living conditions. Examples could be cash for apartment security deposit, house downpayment, car down payment, car repair, appliances or appliance repair, bus or train ticket to relocate to a promised job or living situation.

WITH ALL THIS IN MIND

WHAT IF

Fort Street filled the need for a nutritious Sunday meal by offering a nutritious breakfast. We have already been doing this on a small scale and we could expand it by inviting Open Door guests and Fort Street members to enjoy breakfast together.

Instead of using all of the Open Door's annual budget to provide duplicate services, we could return to the Thursday-only model and be more intentional about providing a Sunday Breakfast. We could use budget savings to create an Emergency Fund to address the unmet community need of providing emergency cash to help enable self-sufficiency.

The Open Door Work group plans to propose to the Session that these modifications to the Open Door program be initiated beginning in January. We also are working on a new Job description for the Director position.

If you have ideas or questions regarding this new direction, please contact members of the Work Group, who include me, Pastor Sarah, Nancy Jackson or Tom Marshall.

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ARTICLES WHICH ALSO MAY HELP TO EXPLAIN OUR EFFORTS

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/22/opinion/homeless-houston-dallas.html?unlocked_article_code=1.Bk0.7wkX.8DiUSIBRJPPU&smid=em-share

<https://www.winnetworkdetroit.org/resources/resource/housing-and-shelter-2/>