

# The Dream Team process

by Mark Oudersluys, Team Facilitator



*For where your treasure is,  
there your heart will also be."*

Matthew 6:21

Two years ago, Church Council sanctioned a small group to explore the possibility of a capital campaign to address pressing needs in Kalamazoo. The Team developed a set of guidelines to focus our discussions. The following are a few of

these guidelines:

- The project should not duplicate existing services or the work that community organizations already perform.
- Since we will not be able to complete a project on our own, we acknowledge we will partner with existing organizations to encourage, facilitate, and raise funds to meet mutual goals.
- This project will not add ongoing expenses to the normal church budget.
- This project will not be an alternative source of funding for existing FUMC justice/outreach projects such as YANA, JFON, HON or the Costa Rica Mission Trip.

In late 2017, both the Church Council and the congregation voted to move forward to the next step, which was working with local organizations to identify community needs. The congregation's highest priorities were to address hunger and housing deficiencies.

Over the past year the Dream Team met with a wide variety of organizations. During this time, the Team also discussed not only what funding activities we should undertake, but also what areas would allow for personal congregational involvement. As a result of these discussions, several other decisions were made: First, the team will not recommend one \$1,000,000 project. Instead, multiple smaller projects that address a variety of needs will be explored. Second, after revisiting an earlier decision to adopt the Vine neighborhood, our focus was expanded to also include the Northside and Eastside neighborhoods.

Late last year the Dream Team decided to recommend a three-pronged approach to address housing needs in Kalamazoo:

- 1) Assist in the renovation of Eleanor House family shelter, a shelter with which the church has a long history and is now run under the umbrella of Housing Resources, Inc.
- 2) Assist the YWCA in providing transitional housing to the victims of domestic violence; and to work with Open Doors, Habitat for Humanity, and Kalamazoo Collective Housing to provide additional affordable housing in Kalamazoo.
- 3) Third, work with Building Blocks and other non-profits to stabilize and renew specific neighborhoods. We included this third approach neighborhood stabilization/renewal for a variety of reasons. First, one of our goals was to provide opportunities for the congregation to become personally involved with individuals who were attempting to improve not only the physical aspects of their neighborhoods, but also their relationship with others in their neighborhood. Second, we learned that it is much easier, and more cost-effective, to assist individuals to remain in their current homes rather than assist them in finding new housing after they become homeless!

This is a short description of our Team's current process. If you would like to learn more about what the Dream Team has learned and our recommendations, please join us for a more in-depth discussion during our six-week Academy Class in the parlor from March 3 to April 7. At that time, we will introduce the organizations which the church will be partnering to reach our goals. An agenda for the Academy Class can be found on page 10 of this newsletter.

Members of the Dream Team will also be available for congregational questions during scheduled Q&A sessions. These times are scheduled as follows:

- 1) March 17 and 31 at 9:30 a.m. in the Jesus Lounge;
- 2) March 10, 24, and April 7 after the 11 a.m. worship service in the chapel.

The Dream Team is excited about making a positive impact in our community and hope you will join us for this discussion.