

## **ACTION!... The Stewardship Response to Listening**

*"Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear!" – James 1:22 (The Message)*

Dearest Friends and Family,

In our last update we mentioned that inCOMMON recently launched a **Listening Project** in the Park Avenue neighborhood of Omaha. As a reminder, a Listening Project is a tool used to bring neighbors together in dialogue with inCOMMON staff, volunteers, and each other. The purpose is the "building [of] trust and understanding so that [neighbors] can go deeper into their fears, hurts, hopes, needs, feelings and ideas. As [neighbors] begin to understand that their feelings, opinions and actions can matter, they **respond in dynamic ways**. Some offer **creative ideas and solutions**. Some **take the next step to action or leadership**. Thus the Listening Project can be an important step toward **community empowerment**."



Doing "Listening" in the Neighborhood

By definition, a Listening Project requires an essential second step concurrent to dialogue: **response**. Responding, like listening, can pose a great challenge. Generally, people are inclined toward either one or the other (i.e. we're either good hearers or good doers). However, coupling both together is vital, as listening informs our actions and actions bring resolve to our listening (and both bring credibility). In most situations, therefore, listening and responding can't be divorced. This seems to be the general principle of James 1:22 (although James is speaking specifically into our response through interaction with the Word of God).

Overwhelmingly, the struggles named in our early practice of listening in the Park Avenue neighborhood have been rooted around the common theme of **isolation**. Neighbors are isolated from people (social support) and isolated from services (access to resources). Through listening we have begun to identify the "why", in addition to the "what". Isolation from people has resulted from a perceived a lack of safety, broken familial relationships, and insufficient transportation. Isolation from services is experienced due to sprawl (resources geographically relocated out of reach), a lack of social mobility (including inability to relocate to a neighborhood with greater access), and, again, insufficient transportation.

Taking these things into account, inCOMMON's next planned response is a **Community Center** in the Park Avenue neighborhood. The purpose of a Community Center would be to aggressively challenge both social and access isolation. Through the combined efforts of inCOMMON, Neighbors

United, and the Park Avenue residents, a Community Center would provide an interactive space for neighbors to gather and engage, as well as offer free case work, connecting neighbors to available resources in the community. In addition, Community Center plans also include a job readiness program, food co-op (to help address food insecurity), and ongoing educational classes and opportunities.

Would you **please join us in prayer** for the Community Center – for God to bring it into reality and use it to address the urgent needs voiced by our Park Avenue neighbors? Please also pray for funding. inCOMMON was recently awarded a **\$10,000 matching grant from the Peter Kiewit Foundation for the Community Center**, the requirement being inCOMMON would raise an additional \$23,000 by September. Most of all, please pray that Jesus would be glorified through the transformation of lives and neighborhoods in our city and cities/places throughout the world!

Kingdom Come,



Christian & Sonya Gray

