

Love



of Neighbor

## “PLEASE, WON’T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?”

There used to be a program which aired on PBS; Mr. Roger’s Neighborhood. Fred Rogers was a friendly, non-threatening-presence, who helped children, as well as adults, cope with things that they experienced in the world; many of which they found frightening. At the opening of each episode, he sang a little ditty, inviting all to be his neighbor, “It’s a beautiful day in the neighborhood. It’s a beautiful day for a neighbor. Would you be mine? Could you be mine?”

In similar fashion, Altadena Community Church in Altadena, CA wanted to know their neighbors better as well as tackle the sensitive subject matter of mental illness. So, in October 2017, they offered a free Mental Health First Aid Training for community leaders and first responders, sponsored in part with a Neighbors in Need Grant. 25 people registered.

The church’s leadership wanted to raise the communities awareness of mental health with the hope of reducing the stigma associated with it. Issues of public safety were to be addressed; hence the leadership at Altadena Community Church believed that providing mental health first aid training could prove beneficial for all.

“Awareness of mental health as a justice issue has grown in the congregation”, said Associate Pastor, Kelli Parrish Lucas. Furthermore, she stated “there is a growing awareness in the church that there is need to distinguish between actual danger and acute mental health symptoms which some may perceive as potential dangers or something to fear. The Mental Health First Aid Trainings have prompted congregational awareness that there are safe ways to engage in situations that involve mental health crises.” Many participating agreed.



One participant who attended the free two-half day training sessions had this to say about it, “Thank you so much for this training. I have already told others about it and I think it is a very essential training to do and partake in.”

When asked whether the discussion on disability awareness and justice, added or detracted, from the topic of mental health, another attendee replied, “This was my favorite discussion. Because I deal with this on a daily basis, it was easy for me to provide my input on the subject. With relation to mental health, I think it was a good conversation to have.”

*For more information about this event contact:*

**Altadena Community Church, (626) 798-1185**

*To learn about the UCC’s positions on Disabilities and Mental Health contact:*

**Sarah Lund, Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice,  
(216) 736-3230, lunds@ucc.org**

**Please join us in supporting the 2018 Neighbors In Need Special Mission Offering. Thank you!**

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## WE GET BY WITH HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

It can be difficult for some to show empathy or compassion, no matter the circumstance. Yet scripture tells us that when we offer those qualities to strangers in our communities, we are representing Christ. [Matt 25:43-45]

Having received a Neighbors in Need grant in 2017, First Congregational Church of Dundee, IL, was able to better live out the scriptural command cited above. With grant money awarded them, they purchased a double convection oven which allowed them to expand their free community supper; offering more menu options and allowing larger quantities of food to be prepared, saving time and money in the process. It has been a win-win with the help of friends.

Over the last couple of years, Hilltop Community Suppers has provided hot meals to people in the neighborhood every second Tuesday of every month. Spanning many ages, 120-200 guests are treated to a sit-down dinner and provided a delightful social evening.

According to a member of the planning committee, "This important mission has strengthened our church's bond with other agencies within our community. Furthermore, our church members enjoy being apart of doing something meaningful for our local community."



A member of the Hilltop Community Supper staff had this to say about their community program, "One evening we provided a meal to a man and his child who told us that he had not eaten in three days. Another man who had just lost his wife said he appreciated a home cooked meal and an opportunity to socialize. And finally, a proud mother of a socially challenged boy scout was thrilled to watch her son interact with our guests as he took their orders and served them meals. These are just a few of the many stories I hear while working here."

The following are a few quotes provided by visitors who have attended the community supper:

- "Eating on real dishes means a lot to us."
- "I was invited to the community dinner after my husband passed away. My friend didn't want me to be lonely. Bless her heart. I have enjoyed the fellowship and food and the servers who are so precious!"

For more information about the **Hilltop Community Suppers** contact:  
**First Congregational Church of Dundee, IL (847) 426-2161**

*Because of the generosity of UCC members across the US, programs, such as this, can be supported and communities are strengthened.*

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