

Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
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Community Discovery and Assessment Report

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# Acknowledgements

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A special thank you to all members who volunteered their time to participate in the training session and conduct assessment interviews or tried their best to do so:

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Thank you to all of the agencies and schools that participated in this process. Our interviewers thoroughly enjoyed meeting with each of you and gained a much broader understanding of our community and our church’s place in it.

# Getting to Know Us: Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

Located in Washington Township in suburban Dayton, Ohio, the Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (MVUUF) has been serving the area since 1957. As the word “Fellowship” in its name suggests, Miami Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship has a long history of lay leadership; however, it has also been served by six ministers since 1986. The community began its partnership with Reverend Gregory Martin August, 1 2015.

# Getting To Know Us: The Miami Valley Area

**Immigration**

Compared to other US cities Dayton has had the largest percentage increase in its foreign-born population arriving since 2000.

Dayton’s immigration rate increased by 40.3% between 2011 and 2012. Ohio’s rate increased by 7% and the US’s rate increased by 13.4%.

Approximately 200 new English language learners were enrolled in Dayton Public Schools in 2013. DPS has over 700 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students.

38.6% of Ohio’s foreign-born adults have bachelor’s or higher degrees, compared to 25% of native-born Ohioans.

Nearly half of the foreign-born residents in the Dayton area have become naturalized US citizens.

Source: Welcome Dayton

**Food security and assistance**

40% of household members assisted are under 18

79% of those assisted have incomes below the federal poverty level

87% of those assisted are food insecure

38% of those assisted report having to choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heat

The Good-to-Go Backpack program serves nearly 1000 students between Kindergarten and grade 8 who are in need

Source: The Foodbank

Dayton ranks 9th in food hardship among Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and Ohio ranks 19th in the nation for food hardship

Source: Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) *How Hungry is America?* April 2015

Average number of SNAP benefit recipients per month in Montgomery County is 81,263, in Greene County, 12,571, in Warren County 8,285.

Source: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Public Assistance Monthly Statistics Report, FY 2016

Percentage of children eligible for free school lunches in Montgomery County, 35%, Greene County 28%, Ohio 33%.

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2016, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Education/literacy**

Percentage of high school graduates in Montgomery County 81%, Greene County 91%, Ohio 83%

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2016, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

In 2013-2014 school year only 37.1% of kindergarteners were fully ready for Kindergarten based on their scores on the Ohio Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA).

**Mental health**

Nearly 8 in 100 residents suffered from a major depressive episode in the last year. Residents report an average of 4.2 “poor mental health days” per month.

Source: Dayton/Montgomery County Public Health 2015 Annual Report

**Poverty**

Montgomery County poverty rate 18.5%, Greene County 14.3%, Warren County 5.8%

60% of Black female heads of household with children under age 5 live below poverty level

Source: Dayton/Montgomery County Public Health Community Health Assessment 2014

Unemployment Montgomery 6.0%, Greene 5.2%, Ohio 5.7%

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2016, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

**Drug use/crime**

Percentage of driving deaths involving alcohol: Montgomery 40%, Greene 39%, Ohio 35%

Violent crime offenses per 100,000 Montgomery 421, Greene 114, Ohio 307

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2016, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Carepoint Needle Exchange Program had 790 client visits and exchanged 7472 syringes

Source: Dayton/Montgomery County Public Health 2015 Annual Report

Since 2010, 104% increase in drug overdose deaths

Whites are 2 times more likely to die from accidental overdose than Blacks, and the highest rate of overdose death is among ages 35-44 and among those who are divorced

Alprazolam (Xanax) is the most-mentioned benzodiazepine in overdose deaths at 43%

Source: Ohio Department of Health, Center for health Statistics 2011-2015

**Health**

Montgomery County ranks 80th of Ohio’s 88 counties for length and quality of life. Greene County ranks 17th.

Percentage of uninsured people under age 65 in Montgomery County is 14%, 11% in Greene County and 13% in Ohio

Source: County Health Rankings and Roadmaps 2016, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Of county residents of all ages on Medicaid, 36% received dental care in 2011

Source: Montgomery County Safety Net, October 2013, Health Policy Institute of Ohio

14% of students attending Dayton Public Schools have asthma, which is a major contributor to school absences.

# Why?

The purpose of this community assessment was to:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of our community.
2. Learn about existing community agencies and their programs and services.
3. Identify existing community strengths.
4. Identify unmet service needs in the community.
5. Identify ways in which MVUUF can become involved in meeting needs.
6. Establish networking relationships and connect with community agencies and organizations.
7. Use the information to help inform MVUUF’s visioning and future goal setting.

The Process

Reverend Greg Martin guided the Vision and Mission Task Force (VMTF) by providing questions to ask community agencies. The group then brainstormed different agencies in the area. A group of 25 agencies was selected as primary targets that would help us get information about the global areas of education, health, etc. We then contacted members of the community who may have an interest in learning from the groups selected. Several members were trained over two sessions on how to conduct interviews. Pairs of interviewers then went into the community over a six week period. The Vision and Mission Task Force complied and reviewed the interviews submitted, and used that data, in addition to information obtained during the search process, to arrive at a mission and vision that helps us understand who we are, as well as helps the rest of the world understand who we are.

# Survey Questions

One interviewer served as the scribe, while the other asked the questions:

1. How long have you lived/served in this community? What brought you here? What has been a personal highlight in your current role?
   1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of community awareness?
2. What do you most appreciate about our community? What groups or organizations do you think are doing great work? Why?
   1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of appreciation?
3. Is there one concern or issue that needs special attention? Why? In five years, what small issue might become a big problem if not addressed soon?
   1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of concern about this issue?
4. What would you change, enhance, or add to this community to make it better? What results would you hope to see from that change?
   1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of desire for improvement?
5. What skills, experiences, or resources from you/your organization are available for community improvement? How might a faith community (or faith-based coalition) partner with your or other community agencies?
   1. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your level of willingness to work with others?

# Interview Sites

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Montgomery County  409 E. Monument Street  Dayton, OH 45402 937-443-0416  [http://www.mcadamhs.org](http://www.mcadamhs.org/)  Contact: Helen Jones-Kelley, Executive Director | Greater Dayton Christian Connections  4021 Denlinger Rd.  Dayton, OH 45426  937-222-4322  [www.christianconnections.org](http://www.christianconnections.org/)  Contact: Rev. Dr. Crystal D. Walker, Executive Director |
| Artemis Center  310 W. Monument Ave.  Dayton, OH 45402  937-461-5091  [www.artemiscenter.org](http://www.artemiscenter.org/)  Contact: Jane Keiffer, Clinical Program Director | Greene County Public Library  76 East Market Street, Xenia, OH 45385  937-352-4000  [http://greenelibrary.info](http://greenelibrary.info/)  Contact: Karl Colón, Director |
| City of Centerville Police Department  155 W. Spring Valley Rd., Centerville OH 45458  937-433-7661  [www.centervilleohio.gov](http://www.centervilleohio.gov/)  Contact: Bruce P. Robertson, Chief of Police | Montgomery County Sheriff  345 W. Second St., Dayton, OH 45422  937-225-4357  [www.mcohio.org/sheriff](http://www.mcohio.org/sheriff)  Contact: Phil Plummer, Sheriff |
| City of Dayton Police Department  335 W. Third St. Dayton, OH 45402  937-333-2677  [www.cityofdayton.org/departments/police](http://www.cityofdayton.org/departments/police)  Contact: Richard S. Biehl, Director and Chief of Police | Project READ  444 W. Third St., Dayton, OH 45402  937-512-3104  [www.project-read.org](http://www.project-read.org/)  Contact: Laura Mlazovsky, Executive Director |
| City of Dayton Human Relations Council  371 W. Second St. #100, Dayton, OH 45402  937-333-1413  [http://daytonhrc.org](http://daytonhrc.org/)  Contact: Amaha Sellasie, Chair | Dayton LGBT Center  PO Box 1203, Dayton, OH 45401-1203  937-274-1776  [http://daytonlgbtcenter.org](http://daytonlgbtcenter.org/)  Contact: Randy Phillips, Board President |
| Daybreak  605 South Patterson Blvd.  Dayton, OH 45402  937-395-4600  [www.daybreakdayton.org](http://www.daybreakdayton.org/)  Contact: Sean Mitchell, Development Associate for Community Engagement | United Way of the Greater Dayton Area  33 W. First St.  Dayton, OH 45402  937-225-3001  LiveUnitedDayton.org  Contact: J. Thomas Maultsby, President and CEO |
| St. Vincent de Paul  124 W. Apple St.  Dayton, OH 45402  937-222-7349  http://stvincentdayton.org  Contact: David Bohardt, Executive Director | United Rehabilitation Services of Greater Dayton  4710 Old Troy Pike  Dayton, OH 45424  937-233-1230  [http://ursdayton.org](http://ursdayton.org/)  Contact: Dennis Grant, Executive director |
| Dayton Public Schools  River’s Edge Montessori PreK-6 School  108 Linwood St., Dayton, OH 45405  937-542-4640  [www.dps.k12.oh.us/rivers-edge](http://www.dps.k12.oh.us/rivers-edge)  Contact: Lisa Keane, Principal | Washington Township Board of Trustees  8200 McEwen Road, Dayton, OH 45458  937-433-0152  [www.washingtontwp.org](http://www.washingtontwp.org/)  Contact: Joyce Young, President |

# Community Assets, Strengths, and Gifts

The Mission/Vision Task-force wanted to look at what resources are available in the community, rather than to focus only on needs and deficits. Assessing community strengths, as well as internal strengths, resources, and gifts at MVUUF, combined with a look at needs and problems, will help us find a focus for our vision that is fitting and inspiring.

To gain a more complete understanding of the Greater Dayton area, each person interviewed was asked the following questions:

**"What do you most appreciate about our community?"**

**"What groups or organizations do you think are doing great work?"**

Community strengths, assets, and gifts highlighted by respondents included:

* reasonable cost of living
* welcoming and engaging
* entrepreneurial / innovative spirit
* creative people living in urban community
* high participation in philanthropic giving
* people supporting each other in times of need
* strong in the arts, athletics, and higher education
* many people are at work on the issues that we have
* a tradition of music and food bringing people together
* common concerns for children, the elderly, and veterans
* a good place to raise a family and a high appreciation for family
* diversity and also a range of community styles, from urban to rural
* a spirit of collaboration, an eagerness to work together, and a good network of collaboration

The area is rich in service and helping organizations. Numerous community groups (in addition to the ones represented by our interviews) were cited for doing excellent work. These included:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Boys and Girls Club | Habitat for Humanity |
| Bread for the World | Homefull |
| Catholic Social Services | A Hundred Women for Change |
| Churches | Interfaith Forum of Greater Dayton |
| Cornerstone | Kettering Circles USA |
| Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce | Kettering Schools ABLE Program |
| Dayton Circles | LEAD |
| Dayton Gay Men's Chorus | Mathile Family Foundation |
| Dayton International Peace Museum | Ohio Domestic Violence Network |
| Dayton Metro Library | Omega Community Development Corporation |
| Dayton Urban League | Optimist clubs |
| Dayton VA Medical Center | PFLAG |
| East End Community Services | Racial Justice Now |
| Equitas Health Care for All | Rebuilding Together Dayton |
| Families of Addicts | Rotary clubs |
| Family Violence Prevention Center | Salvation Army |
| The Foodbank | South Community |
| Goodwill Easter Seals | United Way |
| Greater Dayton Union Co-op Initiative | Welcome Dayton |
| Greene County Community Foundation | West Dayton Health Center |

# Significant Issues in the Community

The leaders interviewed were each asked questions about the needs and problems they see in the community and what could be changed to make things better.

**"Is there one concern or issue that needs special attention?"**

**"In five years, what small issue might become a big problem if not addressed soon?"**

**"What would you change, enhance, or add to this community to make it better?"**

The answers to these questions took two forms. Some were about very specific needs and problems such as the opioid drug addiction epidemic or the need for improvements in public education. Others addressed underlying causes and how working on the underlying causes would help remedy and prevent these problems.

Drug abuse was the most frequently cited specific problem in the community. The lack of connection among people was the most frequently discussed root cause of such major problems as drug abuse and racial inequality. The common thread in the broad view of what would make our community better was improved connection and understanding. Poverty, mental illness, and family dysfunction were also acknowledged as sources behind specific concerns.

Dayton's Chief of Police described an overall need for learning *community resilience* as a way to effectively respond to problems. (Community resilience is defined as "a measure of the sustained ability of a communityto utilize available resources to respond to, withstand, and recover from adverse situations." According to The RAND Corporation [www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html](http://www.rand.org/topics/community-resilience.html))

The Executive Director of the Wesley Community Center commented on the media's emphasis on negative stories about West Dayton as a source of misunderstanding that impedes progress in the neighborhood.

Helen Jones-Kelley, Executive Director of The Alcohol, Drug, Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Montgomery County said "We need to increase general knowledge about pain. We *will* have it in our lives."

The Artemis Center's Clinical Program Director cited a "culture of toxic masculinity" as a cause of domestic violence.

The Executive Director of United Rehabilitation Services of Greater Dayton remarked that we need to expand the definition of diversity to include people with disabilities.

Amaha Sellassie, Chair of Dayton Human Relations Council, felt the area needs a "deliberative dialogue among all segments of the community. Part of that is building relationships with people, to humanize each other." He also said “We have to structuralize equity so that policies, structures, and procedures recognize the dignity and worth of every person. Transform the systems. When the system perpetuates inequity, even good-willed people help to perpetuate inequity.”

Karl Colón, Director, Greene County Public Library says "Often people don't see the need to reach out to other people. It's too easy to see people as the 'other.'" He also said “"People need a path and a promise in their lives. We need to get people to a place where trying heroin for the first time doesn't seem like a good idea."

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issue or Need** | **Number of people noting this issue (out of 18)** |
| Drug abuse/addiction | 10 |
| Need for more connection among people | 8 |
| Improve public education | 8 |
| Racial injustice | 8 |
| Food insecurity | 7 |
| Need for more mental health services/support for mentally ill persons | 6 |
| Early childhood education | 6 |
| Poverty/employment issues | 6 |
| Family dysfunction | 4 |
| Safe, affordable housing | 4 |
| Senior services | 4 |
| Infant mortality | 3 |
| Adult literacy | 2 |
| Children's services | 2 |
| Domestic violence | 2 |
| Gun violence/gun control | 2 |
| LGBTQ+ support | 2 |
| Programs for juvenile offenders | 2 |
| Affordable childcare | 1 |
| Community resilience | 1 |
| End culture of toxic masculinity | 1 |
| Expand definition of diversity to include the disabled | 1 |

**Key Issues and Needs**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Drug abuse/addiction | More connection among people | Improve public education | Racial injustice | Food insecurity | mental health services/support | Early childhood education | Poverty/employment issues\* | Family dysfunction | Safe, affordable housing | Senior services |
| ADAMHS | x | x |  |  |  | x |  |  | x |  |  |
| Artemis Center |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| Centerville Police | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |
| Dayton Police | x | x |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton Human Relations Council |  | x |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton LGBT Center |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton Public Schools |  | x | x |  | x | x | x | x |  |  |  |
| Daybreak | x |  | x | x |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |
| Greater Dayton Christian Connection | x | x | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Greene Co.  Public Lib. | x | x | x |  | x |  | x |  | x | x | x |
| Mont. Co.  Sheriff | x |  |  |  |  | x |  | x | x |  |  |
| Project READ |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| St. Vincent de Paul |  |  |  |  | x | x |  | x |  | x |  |
| United Rehab. Services | x |  | x | x | x |  | x | x |  |  |  |
| United Way of Greater Dayton | x | x | x | x | x |  | x | x |  |  | x |
| Wash. Township Trustees |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  | x |
| Wesley Community Center |  |  | x | x | x |  | x | x |  | x | x |
| Wright State U. | x |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

\* poverty, unemployment, lack of job skills, under-employment, people working multiple jobs

**Key Issues and Needs, continued**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Infant mortality | Adult literacy\*\* | Children's services\*\*\* | Domestic violence | Gun violence/gun control | LGBTQ+ support | Programs for juvenile offenders | Affordable childcare | Community resilience | End culture of toxic masculinity | Include disabled in "diversity" |
| ADAMHS |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Artemis Center |  |  |  | x | x |  |  |  |  | x |  |
| Centerville Police |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton Police |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  | x |  |  |
| Dayton Human Relations Council | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton LGBT Center |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dayton Public Schools |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Daybreak |  |  |  |  |  | x | x |  |  |  |  |
| Greater Dayton Christian Connection |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Greene Co.  Public Lib. |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Mont. Co.  Sheriff |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Project READ |  | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| St. Vincent de Paul |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |
| United Rehab. Services |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |
| United Way of Greater Dayton |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wash. Township Trustees |  |  |  |  |  |  | x |  |  |  |  |
| Wesley Community Center | x | x | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wright State University | x |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

\*\*both reading and math literacy

\*\*\*such as food; clothing; shelter; medical, mental health, and dental care

# Current Needs

Agencies were asked: ***How might a faith community (or faith based coalition) partner with you***

***or other community agencies?***

Specific answers given by each agency follow. Members of our community can make a difference for these agencies and all those they serve, strengthening the fabric of our community.

**Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services**

* Employment connections
* Connect people to the community after they complete treatment or rehabilitation
  + Re-engage people. Invite them to church
  + Invite people to come to a meal and bring their child and their family. Make people part of a network outside the treatment system
  + Example for re-engaging: mentoring moms could give advice, provide respite, teach young mothers about buying groceries by the week and cooking nutritious meals

**Artemis Center**

* Supplies and toiletries for the shelter
* Food pantry needs snacks to serve to kids while their parents are in programs
* Cell phone drive
* Volunteers for fundraising events
* Spread the word about domestic violence from the pulpit and community-wide –ministers partner with Artemis House on an “In Her Shoes” exercise, for example

**Centerville Police Department**

* Partnering: tell us what you can do, and we will steer people who need it your way. Contact volunteer coordinator Maureen Hodggons
* Community oriented policing; we link people in need to food, medical help, counseling, etc.

**Daybreak**

* Grants and donations to Lindy & Co., a Daybreak-owned business employing Daybreak clients to help them develop job skills; 100% of profits go back to Daybreak
* Volunteers – healthy adults with boundaries who will not get taken advantage of – needed to provide a healthy adult presence at Monday night coffeehouse (ice cream, movies, socializing)
  + Host game night
  + Movie night
  + Socialize
* Post-transition community support. Check in and don’t judge

**Dayton LGBT Center**

* Partner with the Center to plan Transgender Day of Remembrance with vigil and faith-based speakers. Reverend Greg Martin of MVUUF spoke at the 2016 event
* Promote the Dayton LBGT Center

**Dayton Police Department**

* We need a robust response to the public health crisis of firearms in the community
* A crisis intervention center is needed, in collaboration with ADAMHS (Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services)
* Community collective efficacy: positively influence the behavior of individuals and groups in the community
* Economic justice

**Greene County Public Library**

* Sign up families in Greene County for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library
* Help Greene County residents in need of meeting rooms and resources access the library
* The library uses the United Way 211 Help Line to connect patrons with needed services; help Greene County residents in need access this

**Human Relations Council**

* Understand the basic premise that the people closest to an issue or most directly affected by it understand the issue more than anyone else ever will
* A faith community might help build local capacity to listen to those closest to an issue
* Get their voice out there to academia or whatever outside sources are looking at the situation
* Be present
* Listen
* Ask questions
* Move slow

**Montgomery County Sheriff**

* Support the efforts of Improving Modern Police And Community Trust (IMPACT) committee
* Faith-based program in the jail
* Support addicts in re-integration after release from prison
* Faith-based institutions are the backbone of the community but need to work cooperatively to solve local problems

**Project READ**

* Sort books and help with basic customer service at “Look at a Book,” 661 Lyons Road, an affiliate of Project READ
* Project READ collects and distributes books to schools and others involved in literacy education.
* Volunteer to be a literacy tutor (must be 18 or older)

**River’s Edge Montessori, Dayton Public Schools**

* Shoes for the shoeless
* Food bags for the weekend
* Respond to the “bat light” when there is a sudden, specific need for clothing (for a family whose house burns down, for example)
* Volunteers for school-based mentoring
* Gardening
* Adults to sit with kids, go over material, and listen to them read, especially in the spring during testing season

**St. Vincent de Paul**

* 75 to 100 faith-based agencies work with us on many needs:
  + One-time projects
  + Providing meals on a regular basis
  + Fund raising for our center
  + Helping with housing
* We do not allow proselytizing or religious instruction
* We do a comprehensive case management plan to get clients from the place they are to escape homelessness and build a sustainable lifestyle. Our other services include:
  + Tutoring
  + Support for women’s shelter
  + Providing clothes, personal care items, and shelter

**Summit Christian Connections**

* Community involvement: this is a connecting organization
* We can inform you where and when to get involved, on a number of issues

**United Rehabilitation Services**

* Expand community awareness of people with disabilities
* Expand definition of diversity to include people with disabilities
* Create a truly welcoming community for all
* Faith communities can partner with us, but only non-denominationally
  + Non-denominational service inclusive of those with vision impairment and hearing impairment, with interpreter, once or twice a month
  + Sensory-sensitive service for people with autism
* URS is not a charity; it is a business with a six-million-dollar budget. We give workplaces full inclusion of people with disabilities. URS helps build a fairer and more equitable society; open people’s eyes

**United Way of the Greater Dayton Area**

* Faith communities need to be at the table and on the ground
* Churches play a big role in working around the ingrained racism in Dayton. Use white privilege to create change
* Offer transformational experiences to chip away at racism, the biggest challenge of our community

**Washington Township Trustees**

* Maintenance
* Community improvement
* Local government can’t direct faith-based efforts
* Faith-based communities must decide for themselves how they want to help

**Wesley Community Center**

* Monetary donations
* Assist with food pantry
* Assist with senior meals program
* Prayer. “When you put it out there the universe conspires to make it happen, inspires change and movement.”
* Volunteer to read to people
* Volunteer to help with accounting
* Take on one thing each year, such as painting or doing repairs
* Workforce development so people can get and keep jobs
* Don’t cut out Wesley Community Center or West Dayton

**Wright State University**

* Center for Service-Learning and Community Engagement tracks Wright State’s volunteer efforts in Dayton Public Schools and other areas of the community

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# What Do Community Leaders Want Us to Understand?

Background research includes data, facts, statistics and descriptions of the numerous challenges facing the Dayton region. This kind of objective information can help set priorities, plan action steps and identify agencies and populations to target. The interviewees also provide their personal insights into the “why” and “how” of these regional challenges. These insights are the wisdom gained from real-world experience and work with their organizations. What follows are words of encouragement, words of caution and a glimpse of the bigger picture of our region. This more subjective data further informs our decision-making as we frame our vision and mission.

*Problems in education, the heroin addiction epidemic and domestic abuse all come from an attitude of lack of purpose…People need to be able to see a path and a promise in their lives.*

Karl Colón, Greene County Public Library

*[We] must not focus on heroin: go upstream to prevention…Most people have a stereotypical view of heroin users, but kids in sports with pain medication sometimes end up looking for alternative ways to mitigate pain. We need to increase general knowledge about pain: we will have it in our lives. Other substances out there will come on after heroin peaks.*

Helen Jones-Kelley, ADAMHS

*We (ADAMHS) offer treatment, but connection to community is needed after treatment…Invite people to come to a meal and bring their child and their family. Make people part of a network outside the treatment system. Without that, people cannot be successful.*

Helen Jones-Kelley, ADAMHS

*We need the people who have the heart and the passion to care for the community and be part of the solution, not just through money but real connections, and being intentional about being good people.*

J. Thomas Maultsby, President and CDO, United Way of the Greater Dayton Area

*Even one-off events matter…If you have members with talent and expertise it would be great if they would volunteer to read to people, offer accounting help, etc. Take on one thing a year.*

Yvette Kelly-Fields, Wesley Community Center

*We need the “village” mentality (it takes a whole village to work together).*

Rev. Dr. Crystal Walker, Summit Christian Connections

*The entrepreneurial spirit can lead us to be too independent. The collective impact approach is necessary. Our goal is to bring together fragmented community into a team that marshals all of our resources for the greater good.*

J. Thomas Maultsby, President and CEO, United Way of the Greater Dayton Area

*Faith-based institutions are the backbone of the community, but they are not working cooperatively to solve local problems.*

Phil Plummer, Montgomery County Sherriff

*[We need] resilience: organizational and community…We need a collective conversation; the reverence for many paths of faith. Christian prayer doesn’t bridge across faiths.*

Richard Beihl, Chief, Dayton Police Department

*When we do not focus on relationships and go straight to problem solving, we lose momentum. Partner: being present, listening, asking questions, moving slow…understanding the basic premise that the people closest to an issue or most directly affected by it understand the issue more than anyone else ever will.*

Amaha Sellassie, Chair, Dayton Human Relations Council

*Be in the uncomfortable place of dialogue and something emerges. If Ferguson [Missouri] is all true, then what really matters?...We need police-community relations in communities of color.*

Richard Biehl, Chief, Dayton Police Department

*People are still emotionally unintelligent about their ingrained racism. Because they’re not self-aware, I’ve found you have to work through it…Churches play a big role in this. Use white privilege to create change, offer transformational experiences.*

J. Thomas Maultsby, President and CEO, United Way of the Greater Dayton Area

*We have to structuralize equity so that policies, structures and procedures recognize the dignity and worth of every person. When the system perpetuates inequity, even good-willed people help to perpetuate inequity.*

Amaha Sellassie, Chair, Dayton Human Relations Council

*The middle class doesn’t need community so they don’t contribute to it. When’s the last time anyone borrowed a cup of sugar in your neighborhood?*

Richard Beihl, Chief, Dayton Police Department

*The [Dayton] community is starting to really rise and start becoming aware of, and have a sense of, its own power. People are taking ownership for community and taking ownership of where it goes instead of letting things happen.*

Amaha Sellassie, Chair, Dayton Human Relations Council

*Don’t listen to people who say Dayton is dying! It’s absolutely on the rise. Look for the good and you’ll find it.*

Sean Mitchell, Development Associate for Community Engagement, Daybreak

# What now?

After reviewing the summaries of the **MVUUF Community Stakeholder Interviews**, the Vision Mission Task compiled this report in order that the Board, Program Council, and congregation would have an opportunity to not only read the summaries, but also have an opportunity to provide additional input and suggestions for implementation. The Task Force will carefully consider all questions, comments and criticisms that are offered in order to develop guidelines for responding to the issues identified in the report. The individuals representing the organizations that were interviewed will also be given copies for review if requested. Hard copies of the finalized report will be made available and it will also be posted at *MVUUF.org*.

# Suggestions for Implementation

1. Develop an action plan to address issues and community needs that were addressed multiple times in the stakeholder interviews.

* Prioritize those issues in terms of those that could be realistically addressed by MVUUF volunteers.
* Identify and attempt to recruit potential volunteers.
* Establish objectives and goals in keeping with available resources and personnel.
* Gather information on actions already taken by other community agencies.

1. At the beginning, identify one broad need to be addressed. Do not become overwhelmed by trying to do too much at once.
2. Establish connections with other churches and/or community agencies that serve critical needs.
3. Develop a plan to build a coalition of community leaders for the purpose of addressing some critical needs that have been identified.
4. Establish a communications network to keep our MVUUF community informed of our programs and progress.

# A Few Thoughts

1. In regard to the Community Stakeholder Interviews, Rev. Greg Martin noted that impressions take two forms :

* The Forest (the overarching big picture impressions;
* The Trees (specific needs identified by specific agencies).

From the interviews completed, we can get a sense of “the forest” of community needs.

1. As we move forward we should research and build on the experience of other churches that have embarked on similar missions. Seek advice from others so that we do not have to reinvent the wheel.
2. Get to know the communities that we will serve by spending some time there. Who are there leaders or influential folks there?
3. Keep our congregation engaged by keeping them informed on a continuing basis. Let everyone know what’s happening. Share our Vision/Mission over and over.
4. Make the process doable. First, develop an overall plan. Then break it down into smaller steps.
5. At all times, work hand-in-hand with our minister, staff, Board, and Program Council.
6. Utilize any resources that may be available from the Unitarian Universalist Association.
7. Attempt to engage a diversity of MVUUF members and friends – leaders, families, youth, seniors, new members, etc.
8. Be flexible, make needed adjustments if things are not going according to plan.

# Further Insights from the Interviewees

**Bruce Robertson, Chief of Police, Centerville Police Department**He gave example of how today there are few neighbors we know well enough to  
socialize with. “I ask people to remember what their lives were like in their neighborhood as kids and compare it to now.”

**Phil Plummer, Montgomery Sheriff**He identified churches as both helpful and sometimes too caught up in competition with each other to be effectively helpful.

**Helen Jones-Kelly, Director, Alcohol, Drug, Addition & Mental Health Services**If I won the lottery, I would convene an ongoing series of community conservations. People’s voices need to be heard. Parenting and family seminars. Opportunities to bring groups together just to talk. No technology allowed in the room. A group conversation is better than going behind walls and having sidebars. You make the community better by connecting people.

**Karl Colon, Director, Green County Library**Often people don’t see the need to reach out to other people. It’s too easy to see people as “the other”.

**Richard Biehl, Chief, Dayton Police Department**All the neuroscience literature that has come out – we need to use it to our advantage. We need a collective conversation – the reverence for many paths of faith.

**Yvette Kelly-Fields, Executive Director, Wesley Center**It would be helpful for the city of Dayton to take a comprehensive strategy for us ALL. The WHOLE city has worth and value.

# Bringing It Home:

**A Reflection On Living Our Mission:**

When you shop at the same grocery store for years, the cashiers become familiar.  You might even get to know them a little as you chat in line.  Where I shop, one cashier in particular is always happy to say hi and make small talk.  She’s friendly, funny, and good at her job. She is also an immigrant with a name that's not too common in America.

Not long ago, I noticed she was wearing a different name tag.  I figured she picked up the wrong apron that day.  But each time I saw her after that, she was still wearing it.  Eventually I asked her about it, expecting to hear a funny story, or that she’d misplaced her original tag.

“Yes, they *finally* let me change my name.  I was getting too much attention for it…some of it not very nice,” she replied with a weary look.  I told her I was sorry she had to deal with harassment from customers and that I was glad the store tried to help.

To some eyes, this cashier is “the other,” apparently not worthy of respect and dignity. So, they decide, why not point that out to her repeatedly and cruelly?  What’s she going to do about it anyway?  I drove home embarrassed and outraged by my fellow shoppers.

The cashier is the obvious “other” in this story, but there is a second:  the people who make the insensitive, racist, funny-but-not-funny comments.  It’s easy to feel sorry for the cashier who is harassed by intolerant customers.  It’s far harder to feel compassion for the customers themselves.  If we see no “others,” can we extend compassion even to those we prefer to turn our backs on?  We might not always find the common ground we seek, but maybe showing that we always value *everyone’s* worth and dignity is a good start.

