



Plenary Report – October 27, 2016

Report Introduction

Beth Israel Synagogue was bustling Thursday morning with individuals from all different backgrounds entering the building to be part of the goal to end homelessness in Edmonton. The Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative held its plenary on October 27, 2016. For the past five years, it has been held at the Catholic Archdiocese, as Rev Don Koots, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee mentioned now that Beth Israel Synagogue graciously hosted us we are indeed an interfaith initiative. The plenary opened with some coffee and muffins at the registration table.

The Plenary

Jay Freeman, Executive Director of Housing & Homelessness with the City of Edmonton updated us on the 10-year plan. In 2015, 1611 people were housed with a 91% retention rate. While we housed 5,028 people from 2009 to 2014 there are still 123,000 people living in poverty which is one of the main causes of homelessness. Thus, the city is updating the plan to work in concert with efforts of the End Poverty Edmonton (EPE) initiative.

Rev Don Koots introduced our recent two new employees, Pastor Mike Van Boom the Housing Ambassador who organizes affordable housing workshops to engage communities in conversation about affordable housing in order to work through fears, concerns and questions ahead of new proposals. He is available to facilitate these conversations at faith groups or community leagues. Rabbanit Batya Ivry-Friedman joined the initiative in the beginning of June whose primary goal is to engage with the interfaith community and bring awareness to work together to end homelessness.



Mike Van Boom shared on CRIHI's work of hosting regional workshops on affordable housing in different neighbourhoods around Edmonton. The goal of these workshops is to help neighbours discern and choose a healthy response to new affordable housing units and new neighbours seeking home nearby. CRIHI gathers local community leagues, local neighbours, and people of faith to these conversations.

Pastor Wayne McNeilly informed us about the upcoming project from Habitat for Humanity. Celebrating 150 years in Canada, HFH plans to build 150 homes across Canada, half in Edmonton! It will be part of the Jimmy and Roslyn Carter project, where former US president and First Lady will attend the ceremony. We look forward to hearing more details in the coming months.



Claire Rolheiser presented on behalf of Catholic Social Services about the Welcome Home Program. How individuals feel welcomed in their neighbourhood with the help of volunteers taking them for coffee or a to a movie, which is supported by the Activity Fund, budgeted at \$13,500. They need ongoing, sustainable funding to continue to run the program. They are also in need of more volunteers.

Rabbanit Batya spoke on the role of the interfaith community, the need for faith leaders to galvanize their constituents to open their hearts, get involved with Habitat for Humanity, Welcome Home or attend a workshop. Be engaged and aware of CRIHI's efforts via newsletters, Facebook and Twitter.

The gathering then shared a delicious brunch of eggs, hashbrown, vegetable platter, bagels, lox and cream cheese brought to the tables for discussions and sharing of stories about each faith group's experience with hospitality. The event ended with an optional tour of the synagogue led by Rabbi Daniel Friedman.



The Prayer

Rabbi Daniel Friedman from Beth Israel Synagogue Prayer at the Plenary

Avinu shebashomayim, O Father in Heaven: We thank Thee for bringing us together today to declare that we are united in our mission and service before Thee as ambassadors of hope. Thou, O Lord, charged us with creating a Kingdom for Thee on Earth. A King, however, is only crowned whilst His subjects feel safe and secure. We have thus gathered before Thee in sacred communion to demonstrate that we shall no longer pay mere lip service to being party with Thee in the care for all Thy holy children. On the first day of this week, the Jewish tradition celebrated the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a commemoration of Thy protection of the Israelites as they sojourned through the Wilderness. Once a year, we leave our warm, comfortable homes, and venture out into the elements to remember Your lovingkindness. Now, according to the Law, in cold climates, one is absolved from sleeping in the tabernacle. And yet, O Lord, there are those who sleep nightly in the freezing elements of Edmonton. We pray that Thou guide us to help them find warm shelter under the wings of Thy Presence. At times, Almighty G-d, we feel that we are fighting a neverending battle for the hearts and minds of those who wish to brushstroke believers as contenders, sectarians and dividers. We pray that You grant us the strength to provide for Your children and thereby demonstrate that Divine faith is a source of goodness, grace, compassion, and hope. Our name, Edmonton, derives from the Old German word ‘eidel,’ meaning refined and ‘of good character.’ We ask Thee, Almighty G-d, that You bless us to continue to be a shining example of eidelkeit to the world – refinement, good character, and peace and cooperation between faith groups. And on a personal note, I thank Thee, Almighty G-d for fulfilling in Rabbanit Batya and myself the words of the Prophet Isaiah, “For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.” Now, let us say, Amen.

