

Letter from Lynette Fields
Executive Director of Missions



We are excited to share this first quarterly East Winter Garden Mission E-News with you. In this issue, you will get an update on what has been happening in our East Winter Garden Community Initiative over the last several months and how you can get involved and support this amazing endeavor.

After ten months (June 2012 to March 2013) of prayer, research, community listening events, surveys, and interviews with residents and elected officials, it was determined and then approved at the April 2013 St. Luke's Church Council meeting that East Winter Garden was a good fit for our community transformation initiative. It met the criteria of having residents and organizations in East Winter Garden welcome our partnership. In our congregational survey our members also committed to serve all ages in this area during the day, on weeknights and on weekends.

Starting in the early summer and through the rest of 2013, our focus in East Winter Garden was to build relationships and to discover what and who was already working in the area. We focused on discovery, preparation, training, and presence. It was clear that East Winter Garden was full of assets and you will read about some of those assets in this issue. Now our goal is to have a St. Luke's presence in the neighborhood on a consistent basis so that trust and understanding can grow.

In January 2014, St. Luke's Church Council approved the release of the first funds (\$470,000) from the Commit Campaign to begin the long-term work of our community transformation initiative. Later this year, after determining what projects will be done on the church campus, the total four year commitment will be set. With the release of these first funds, staffing and the organizational structure for this ministry can now be established. You will be hearing more about this in the months ahead.

We are working with long-term established community partners like the West Orange Habitat for Humanity and The Jobs Partnership and meeting potential new community partners like the Winter Garden Community Garden and the East Winter Garden Community Development Corporation. We have had incredible support from the City Commissioner responsible for that area, Bobby Olszewski, and the City of Winter Garden Parks and Recreation for which we are very grateful.

During Lent of 2011, we wrote our dream headlines and posted them on our Welcome Hall walls. We said, with God's help, we wanted to make a difference in the lives of children and families who live in poverty or who are regularly hungry. It will not be an easy journey, but if we remain steadfast in this vision and continue to seek God's guidance, I believe significant change will happen through this partnership for the residents of East Winter Garden and for all of us involved.

Please continue to keep this partnership in your prayers.

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