

Mission moment: faith-based community organizing in the Mat-Su

By the Rev. Lisa Smith Fiegel, DEM

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ELCA Lutherans in the Mat-Su Valley are connecting with their neighbors in new and powerful ways through faith-based community organizing. Trinity-Palmer and Good Shepherd-Wasilla are members of Valley Interfaith Action (VIA) which works with other faith communities and community members to address quality of life issues and act for change. Members of Trinity's Local Organizing Ministry held a public meeting on housing in the Mat-Su on Monday, August 7, as part of their work with VIA.



Valley Interfaith Action Logo

Pastor Diane Krauszer said more than 75 people attended the public meeting on affordable housing and related wait lists, with guests from Alaska Housing and Finance Corporation (AHFC). Trinity's leaders shared their research, heard testimony and heard a response from AHFC guests. Pastor Diane said though the outcome of the response from AHFC wasn't exactly what leaders had hoped for, the success in relationships built and conversations begun. "Cathy Stone, [director of public housing at] Alaska Housing and Finance Corporation, said she hasn't heard anything from the public on this issue and now she has," Pastor Diane said.

The meeting on public housing is the second public meeting hosted by VIA since the organization was launched in 2015. St. Michael's Catholic Church, Palmer, held a meeting recently on the potential closure of the Pioneer Home in the Valley. VIA has 11 member congregations in the Valley, three with active organizing ministries.

VIA's sister organization, Anchorage Faith in Action-Congregations Together (AFACT) in Anchorage shares a similar mission of leadership training, 1-1 listening, action and reflection. Faith-based community organizing is a primary way dozens of congregations across the ELCA are building relationships and collaborating with partners for lasting change.

If your congregation is interested in joining one of the faith-based organizing efforts in the Mat-Su or Anchorage, or if you would like to learn more about organizing tools and principles that can be used in any congregation in any setting, contact Rev. Lisa Smith Fiegel, Alaska Synod Director for Evangelical Mission at alaskadem@gmail.com or check out the web pages of VIA and AFACT at www.valleyinterfaithaction.org and www.anchoragefact.org for more information, including contact information.