

12 April 2007

City of
Indianapolis
Bart Peterson, Mayor



To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the pleasure of knowing Mike Mather for several years and have witnessed the transformative effect he and his congregations have had on the community, both in Indianapolis and in South Bend, Indiana. Mike's current church, Broadway United Methodist Church, has worked to creatively engage the congregation with the nearby residents, and the neighbors with the church. The City of Indianapolis was able to support the Roving Listener, one of their innovative endeavors and a partnership between Broadway UMC and the Mapleton-Fall Creek Development Corporation (MFCDC), with a small grant. The faith based community, as exemplified by Broadway UMC, has a fundamental and profound role to play in the revitalization of our city's neighborhoods, and they city is eager to assist in this regard when we can.

Mike recently shared with me some of the details of ***The Miracle on 29th Street***, a campaign for the Mapleton-Fall Creek neighborhood led by Broadway UMC. I was impressed with many aspects of the project, particularly the focus on creating connections among diverse community resources such as businesses, neighborhood organizations, and congregations of various denominations, for the benefit of individuals and families who have lived in the area for years and those who are new to the neighborhood.

I support ***The Miracle on 29th Street*** because it capitalizes on what is already working in the Mapleton-Fall Creek area and creatively expands on it. Building on the innovative Roving Listener position, the campaign will develop additional neighborhood and community ministries which partner, in a very different way, with what we would traditionally call an "underserved population." Through this campaign, a new clergy position, based out of Broadway UMC, will work with churches, businesses, artists, schools, etc., to advance the neighborhood in the areas of economic development, arts and music, health promotion, and social justice. Supported by hundreds of parishioners from Broadway and many other congregations, this position will be charged with listening to area residents and engaging them in opportunities that strengthen their connection to the neighborhood and to each other.

Cities across the country are experimenting with different responses to the same challenges faced by the Mapleton-Fall Creek area. My experience in economic and community development leads me to conclude that this collaborative effort - in partnership with the MFCDC, area churches and neighborhood businesses - will not only be effective in Indianapolis, but could also serve as a model for other cities to follow in transforming similar communities. The unique focus on activating the best in each individual and building relationships to foster a community of connection set this effort apart from other conventional efforts.

With Broadway UMC as its leader and with several supportive partners, ***The Miracle on 29th Street*** has the potential to transform the lives of individuals and families in a profound and lasting way. While it remains to be seen whether this is "the" answer to the challenges this community faces, I know that it will absolutely move us in the right direction - toward an answer. I enthusiastically endorse ***The Miracle on 29th Street*** and look forward to seeing the fruits of this effort in the years to come.

Respectfully,


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