



Overview

How do you bridge the gap between races and cultures?

At times, Charlotte seems to have an especially wide gap. Too often we view people from a race or culture that's different from our own as "people we don't trust" and "people and have no way to get to know". Much too often, we have to ask ourselves..."where's the faith community? Why aren't they leading the way"?

Now, the faith community led by the Executive Directors of Mecklenburg Ministries and the Charlotte Rescue Mission is stepping forward to lead the way with an idea called "Friday Friends."

The mission is to identify 500 people through the faith community and the cultural community: African American, White, Latin, Asian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist...and to pair them as lunch partners. They agree to eat lunch on the last Friday of the month for 6 months to get to know each other as people...not as "categories".

The goal at the end of the 6 months is to have at least 500 people who have learned to connect beyond the color of their skin and their religious or cultural beliefs. These 500 people have broken bread and bridged a cultural gap to find the common ground of trust.

As Joe Martin taught us all, trust is something we earn one person at a time. Joe's wife, Joan, has endorsed this idea.

Friday Friends at a Glance

Commitment: Have lunch with someone of another race, religion or culture on the last Friday of each month for 6 months to build a relationship together.

Partners: Leaders of Houses of Faith, Corporations, Non-profit organizations, Business organizations

Launch date: March 30, 2007 with a goal of 500 people (250 pairs) partnering to have lunch on the last Friday of the month from March 2007 through August 2007.

History leading to Friday Friends

A study of 40 major metro areas identified Charlotte as number two for attendance at houses of worship and number thirty nine for racial trust. The Knight Foundation asked Mecklenburg Ministries (MM) to address the issues. MM launched "Souls of White Folks" as part of their Crossroads project to address the issue of "white privilege". One result included addressing racism by the community. This was the genesis of the idea to resurrect the late Joe Martin program of taking someone of a different race or ethnicity to lunch to build relationships.

This program is part of Mecklenburg Ministries' 20th anniversary celebration and a follow up project by Tony Marciano of Mecklenburg Ministries' "Souls of White Folks" project. Friday Friends seeks to help us know our neighbors in order to love them as our faiths call us to do.



Leadership Team

Co-Chairs

Dr. James Howell	Senior Pastor, Myers Park United Methodist Church
Cecilia Ramirez	Latin Chamber of Commerce Charlotte
Willie Ratchford	Executive Director, Community Relations Committee, City of Charlotte

Committee

Dr. Claude Alexander	Senior Pastor, University Park Baptist Church
Debbie Antshel	Mayor's International Cabinet
Dr. Nini Bautista	Asian Chamber of Commerce
Gene Bucelli	Urban League
Dr. John Chen	Asian Chamber of Commerce
Marlene Cox	TJ Maxx
Dianne English	Community Building Initiative
Natalie English	Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
Drew Henderson	Associate Pastor, Covenant Presbyterian Church
Ken Garfield	Myers Park United Methodist Church communications
Jess George	Latin American Coalition
Dr. Maria Hanlin	Executive Director, Mecklenburg Ministries
Mohammad Jenatian	President, Greater Charlotte Hospitality and Tourism Alliance
Rev. Tony Marciano	Executive Director, Charlotte Rescue Mission
Aaron Means	Site Based Initiatives Manager, IBM Charlotte
Francene Marie Morris	Communications Consultant
Moira Quinn	SV Communications/COO, Charlotte Center City Partners
Rabbi Judy Schindler	Senior Rabbi, Temple Beth El