

## Walking the Neighborhood



Deacon Barb Limbach recalls that when their church, Resurrection Lutheran in Ft. Wayne, IN, first moved to their current location, they were “in the middle of a cornfield.” The area was hit by rapid growth, and now within a mile radius of the church’s new location around 900 new homes are expected to be built.

In their new space, the church created a 5-acre park intended as a magnet for community members. Among other things, the space includes fitness stations, music stations, a butterfly garden, playground, gazebo, and a firepit.

In the fall of 2022, Resurrection Lutheran participated in Stewardship for all Seasons, and according to Deacon Barb, the mission and vision goals generated as a result were centered in evangelism and stewardship. Neighbors weren’t accessing the new park frequently, and that was a key element in their plan to reach out to the community. To raise awareness of the park, the congregation organized a “Free Frozen Fun” event in September of 2021. Barb recalled a conversation with Pastor Nancy Nyland about the best way to interact with all those new neighbors and shared Pastor Nancy’s suggestion suggested that the members of Resurrection “walk the neighborhood” to advertise the event and meet neighbors in person. Members did walk the neighborhood, talked to 27 neighbors, passed out flyers, and mailed information about the event. The event, with frozen treats, a bounce house, and all the park amenities, drew more than 85 people- 27 members, and over 60 people from the neighborhood.

The next event was a tree event with free seedling distribution and a planting demonstration by Indiana Trees. Advertising again included walking the neighborhood, passing out flyers, and a mailing. Only about 20 members from the congregation and 3 families from the neighborhood attended this time due to bad weather, but the trees were heeled-in (temporarily planted and preserved) and the congregation will distribute the tree seedlings to neighbors in the community this spring.

Barb says the change that happened within their congregation was that members are becoming more loving, accepting, and aware of their neighbors. They have become more intentional in planning events that include people from their church neighborhood. Deacon Barb identifies her initial conversation with Nancy Nyland, IN-KY Synod Director of Evangelism, as “the big thing that triggered our engagement with the neighbors”.

Stewardship isn’t only about collecting dollars. Stewardship is about building relationships. Thanks to your mission support, IN-KY Synod is able to make the Stewardship for All Seasons program available to congregations at a reduced cost so participating congregations can reach out and build connections. To find out more about Stewardship for All Seasons, contact Nancy Nyland. [nnyland@iksynod.org](mailto:nnyland@iksynod.org)

by Susie Swenson