

## ***Using PIA's Faith-Based Community Organizing Model to Strengthen Congregations***

Faith-based community organizing enables congregations to not only develop a relevant and effective outreach ministry to the surrounding community, congregations themselves can be strengthened and enriched by adapting and adopting the resources and techniques of faith-based organizing to their own internal processes and ministries.

For example, the focused, intentional listening conversations that PIA calls "one-to-ones" can be used in a variety of ways in congregational life. One congregation in PIA plans to use the one-to-one process in response to the congregation's recently developed mission and vision statement. Individual meetings will take place with each member of the congregation in order to have personal conversations about this statement. The congregational leadership wants to make certain that members understand the implications of this statement, which will shape and direct the ministries of the church for the next ten years. More importantly, however, the team wants to learn and listen to members' thoughts and responses to the statement and sees this as an opportunity to build relationships within the congregation.

A second congregation in PIA is considering doing "one-to-ones" throughout the year as a means of developing a vision that is emerging, relevant and ongoing, rather than the more traditional method of producing a static document that marks a time and place in the congregation's history.

One of the aspects of faith-based organizing that has attracted many people to involvement with faith-based organizing is that it is **the members of a congregation that determine the issue, rather than the established congregation leadership or a select committee.** This grassroots approach is distinct from other models of social action where a project or goal is determined prior to involvement from members. To that end, the one-to-one process is the means through which hundreds of interviews are conducted with individual congregation members. In these one-to-ones, concerns about the community are elicited, and then the congregation selects the concern that seems most pressing. This one-to-one process enables people from all sectors of the congregation to be invited into sharing their concerns about the community and then be invited to be a part of creatively addressing and solving their concern. In this way, then, addressing the concern is not left to just those who are interested in social action or who serve on the congregation's "social justice/action/mission/outreach" committee.

In PIA, this one-to-one process in a congregation is often called "Inreach." Other PIA congregations have called it "Outreach Conversations," as the team of listeners are "reaching out" to members of their congregation about the congregation's "reaching out" to the community.