



# Prairie Lane Press

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## Exploring the Potential for a Neighborhood Food & Baby Pantry at Prairie Lane

It was about a year ago that the Mustard Seed Board and pre-school teachers had to make the difficult decision to close the pre-school for the upcoming school year. It was a decision that we all grieved because the pre-school has been an important ministry in our church since 1976!

It also raises the question – “now what?” With the ending of one ministry, there is a desire to find something new to replace it. Not only do we have some more space and more flexibility with our building space, but we also want to keep finding ways as a church to engage and serve our community. As this ministry door closes, where does God want us to head next?

This question has been a matter of prayer, and I hope it can continue to be an item of prayer. Last year I investigated an idea to partner with a home schooling group or agency that might need some space. That eventually did connect me to a group who used our basement for a short time this fall. However, this idea has not worked very well so far.

The church council has discussed future children’s ministry and did some investigating of what it might take to run a bigger program. We know that there is a need for quality and dependable day-care and early childhood education. Many other churches in our area offer such programs, and can even make a profit doing it. If we did a major renovation, hired staff, and committed to a full-day, 5-day a week kind of program, it might work. And, we have

not completely ruled this out for the future. But, is this where God is calling us?

Well, another option that has been on my heart for some time is to consider ways to expand our benevolence outreach. This was confirmed on my heart this winter when I was at the Dordt Day of Encouragement. I went to a seminar taught by Kevin Schutte (Pathway Church in Kansas City)

about building partnerships for benevolence ministry. Pathway Church uses their space, teams up with a bigger church and a community program to offer a ministry to troubled families. I think these kinds of partnerships should be explored also here at Prairie Lane. Plus, keynote speaker Hugh Halter also talked a lot about reaching out to meet the needs of the community and how benevolence ministry builds a church’s impact and credibility.

Plus, God has been opening up more opportunities to partner with area Reformed Churches (RCA). The RCA and CRC in Eastern Nebraska have formed a “Kingdom Enterprise Zone” program to encourage teamwork and collaboration. So, I recently was having a lunch with Pastor Scott at Westwood Church (RCA) in order to talk about possible projects that our churches could do together. And, at first we weren’t getting very far. I think we had already paid our bill and were wrapping things up when I mentioned my interest in using some extra space in our

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## Time to Plant Your Garden by Jill Adams

Grace Moses reminded me recently that it is time to start planting radish seeds. She just planted some of hers at home. I love radishes and it got me thinking about planting some of my own. Like Grace and her family, I had to consider the soil and

the type of seeds I want to plant...there are many types of radishes! To get the radishes I want, I have to plant the right seeds.

What type of plants do you want this year? What kind of seeds are you planting? Is your soil right

for your crop?

These are all questions to also ask of your spiritual garden. If you want to grow spiritually, you need to have the right mix of soil and the right seeds.

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## FOOD & BABY PANTRY



church to run a small food pantry or baby pantry to give away diapers, and formula, etc.

And, at that moment I saw Pastor Scott's face light up: "Hey!!! That is something we've wanted to do at Westwood. We've been talking about it for a long time. People are interested, but we're just not sure how to get it started, and we don't have any extra room in our building." So, we decided to meet again and talk about this some more. And, it appears to me that God is opening up some doors in this area.

Basically, what I have learned in the past month or so is that Westwood Church already has some talented people and resources in place that could run a simple food pantry. They don't need too much space initially, and they liked the idea of starting it modestly in half of our education building basement. They see a need for more benevolence ministry in our area, and there aren't too many places in this part of town that are currently offering anything. By partnering with Westwood, we also have good opportunities to receive some grant money through the "KEZ" program for start-up funds. And, there is potential for future partnerships with other agencies here too. Westwood has already spoken with the Omaha Food Bank. And, I have met with someone from Assure Women's Center about the possibility of teaming up with them to set up a West Omaha "baby boutique" in the education building, which would give away baby items to new moms.

So, we are still in the development stages, but the church council in March at least approved to continue

pursuing this idea, and also to present the idea to the congregation and seek congregational approval at the congregational meeting on April 27. At this point we will be asking the congregation permission to move ahead with a food pantry partnership with Westwood Church. The details will still need to be figured out as we go. We hope to have a food pantry board with reps from PLC and Westwood to oversee it.

Here are some other reasons why I think this might be a good option for our church:

- The need for benevolent services continues to grow. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen, and that trend does not seem to be going away. There are many needy families, even in our area.
- Helping those in need is central to the gospel message. It is a way to bless our community, and help those who need it. Passages like Isaiah 58-59 and 1 John 3 speak strongly on these themes. Plus, we are seeing more and more young adults wanting the church to be more engaged in issues of social justice.
- Our current education building does not really need to be used for any of our current church programs, and that space gives us a lot of potential to try something new. Groups that currently meet over there could meet in other areas of the church if necessary. Plus, that building is in need of some up-dating and renovation anyway. Both Westwood Church and Assure liked the education building best because it also means that those seeking help do not have to overcome the potential barrier of walking into a church to receive help.
- The downstairs Mustard Seed space could still be used by home school groups or MOPs groups during the week if new opportunities did come up, in addition to GEMs, youth groups, Sunday School, etc.

## Time to Plant Your Garden

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We are God's garden. He grew us in a soil rich with relationships so we could live and grow together. He wants us to learn from others and teach those around us. We do this through growing in relationship with others. LIFE Groups and Triads are great gardens with rich soil!

While you're considering your gardens this year, please think of your spiritual garden as well. Plant the seeds that will bring a harvest of spiritual growth and enrichment. Find the richest soil whether that is a LIFE Group or a Triad. Your crop will be blessed!

Contact me through the communication sheet in the worship folder or [markandjilladams@yahoo.com](mailto:markandjilladams@yahoo.com) or 402.980.9645 and I will help you find the right soil!

