

Present: Joanne Beatty, Lauren Holdsworth, Millie Rollins, Betty Burleson, Pat Kaiser, Eric Gilcrest, Andy Kilpatrick, Griffin Kelp, Don Schmetekopf, Eric Howell

How can we involve our lives with those most 'at risk' in our community? This is the question that shapes the cluster conversation 'serve'? What is guiding us is the sense that this work is not a project that sees the 'other' as a project, but this is a ministry through which we know the 'other' as a neighbor. We recognize that we are a group of upper middle-class white people sitting in a comfortable room talking about people who are hurting and struggling in ways most of us have never experienced. So we approach the conversation with a large measure of humility and in a posture of learning, but we also come with courage, trusting that by listening, learning, and respecting the life experiences of others, we may be a positive witness for Christ and a helper on the road to experiencing the fullness of life for some in our community who are 'at-risk'.

We each likely have different images of who is most 'at-risk'. These images are not in competition with one another, but reveal something of our own life experiences and sensitivities. Among those at-risk that we picture (and in some cases know personally): children in the 'projects' whose mothers themselves are young, in many cases teenagers themselves and whose fathers may be in jail; Spanish and other foreign language speakers here trying to make their way through society; suicidal women who have lost hope, children with learning disabilities, children who are hungry, the abusers and perpetrators who are 'at-risk' of losing everything; men and women coming out of jail and prison, trying to integrate back into society, the homeless and helpless who do not know how to access services and help . . .

Some of us also care deeply for addicts who need recovery, senior adults who need care and inclusion, those who are helpless and dysfunctional, women who can be helped with resources like sewing equipment to help themselves.

We did not discuss any particular short-term initiatives, but a macro-vision suggested itself from this particular conversation . . .

The image is of DaySpring significantly involved in ministry with little children whose parents are unable to prepare them for school and life, possibly through Talitha Koum and also significantly involved in ministry with prisoners at McClennon County Jail who are integrating back into society. The key would be to recognize that these two seemingly distinct endeavors are actually the same ministry. For one, many of the prisoners are the daddies of the little kids served at Talitha Koum. For another, helping these at-risk children just may put them on a path to live their lives in a way that pursues the wholeness for which God created them and give them a self-image that helps them be the kind of people who avoid going to jail when they are older. It's the hope that this work breaks the cycle.

The group is going to take a month to reflect and pray. Lauren and Griffin are researching who is doing what already in Waco. We'll come back together in about a month to see what, if anything, in particular those in this cluster conversation are ready to propose.