



INTERFAITH
ACTION OF GREATER
SAINT PAUL

Experience Poverty: PlaySpent.org An Interactive Poverty Simulation

October 11, 2018 | Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

Welcome!

Randi Roth, Executive Director of Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul, welcomed our 2018-2019 Opportunity Saint Paul cohort to the first learning community event. Randi kicked off the evening by sharing her vision for what Opportunity Saint Paul can be. While the vision is audacious, it is achievable through the work that the volunteers and partners bring to Opportunity Saint Paul.

As Opportunity Saint Paul continues to grow into a movement throughout Greater Saint Paul, our goal is to continue to recruit volunteers through relationships and word of mouth. This year recruitment is also focusing on recruiting ten anchor houses of worship, who will commit to having ten or more volunteers participate in Opportunity Saint Paul. The educational pieces from our learning community events can be brought back to each community to teach others about the topics discussed and help recruit more volunteers.

A Picture of Poverty in Saint Paul

Sarah Peterka, Program Director of Opportunity Saint Paul, presented the latest data on the poverty level in the Twin Cities. View her PowerPoint.

Though poverty levels in the Twin Cities have consistently gone down over the last five years, there are still about 287,000 people living below the poverty line in the Twin Cities. Opportunity Saint Paul seeks to help increase economic mobility and reduce this statistic. Through the work of our volunteers with our partner non-profits, our lofty vision can become a reality one person at a time.

When simply looking at statistics, sometimes the weight of what it means to walk in another person's shoes is difficult to comprehend. Taking time to do an interactive poverty simulation is one small way to feel the weight of the decisions that need to be made each and every day by individuals living in poverty.

PlaySpent.org

Playspent.org is an online poverty simulation tool developed by Urban Ministries of Durham. During this simulation you are asked to make choices about how you will earn and spend money. Some choices have consequences when made, and job loss is always a possibility. Using this online tool helps you experience just a small percentage of what it feels like to live in poverty.

Challenge yourself to not run out of money during the month, and see what decisions were difficult to make, because some decision can be tougher than you might think. Then, do the simulation again and bring others in to create a family to weigh in on decisions. It is always harder when you have to listen to other opinions and make a decision together. Don't forget to think about your own situation, your own family or other members of your community and how it would be to live with this small of income. Remember that nearly 21.6% of people living in Saint Paul live in poverty. This totals about 62,405 people who make these decisions each and every day.

Interfaith Dialogue – Earl Schwartz

Professor Earl Schwartz, a religion professor at Hamline University, led our interfaith dialogue session. We read from Leviticus 19:18 and an Aramaic paraphrase of the biblical text from c.600-700 C.E.

Interfaith Dialogue Discussion Questions

- What might be the difference between:
 - Being called to *feel* for another as you feel for yourself, and
 - Being called to be loving *toward* someone, knowing that that person is “like you”?
- Do you have a “breakthrough story” about coming to see, suddenly or over time, that someone who seemed so different from you was in fact, in a more profound way, someone “like you”?

Video Discussion Questions

- What stood out as most interesting about the video?
- What stood out as most surprising about the video?
- If you went online and participated in playspent.org:
 - What was the hardest decision you had to make for your simulation family?
 - What does this poverty simulation have to do with our work in Opportunity Saint Paul?
 - What have you learned through participating in the online poverty simulation?
- Does one person volunteering their time change anything? If yes, how? If not, what are some other things we can do to make the changes we want to see?

Discussions for Faith & Spiritual Groups

- Did your faith play a role in the decisions you had to make during the online poverty simulation? If, yes how? If not, why?
- Did anything in the video or in our discussion thus far resonate with you as it relates to our/your faith tradition?
- What values do we espouse when we volunteer our time to help other?