



Guilford Interfaith Ministries – A Short History

Guilford Interfaith Ministries started from a conversation in 1985 that Dr. Elisabeth Adams had with a priest at St. George Catholic Church. One part of Dr. Adams' practice was doing home visits. In addition to nursing care, she would provide food to her patients when needed. Dr. Adams' conversation led to a gathering together of the faith groups of Guilford to address the need of feeding our frail, elderly residents. Out of that gathering of faith groups, GIM and the Guilford Meals on Wheels program was born with the mission "neighbor helping neighbor". The town of Guilford provided the cook and kitchen through the Parks and Recreation Department and on July 15, 1985, 12 hot meals were delivered.

The founding faith groups were St George Roman Catholic Church, Christ Episcopal Church, Temple Beth Tikvah, First Congregational Church, North Guilford Congregational Church, St. John's Episcopal Church and Shoreline Unitarian Universalist Society. Today these faith communities, together with First Church of Christ Scientist, Vineyard Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, provide leadership to GIM through Board Members as well as financial support.

From the beginning of meal deliveries, the volunteer drivers reported that many clients were home bound and isolated and that they were as hungry for companionship as food. In January, 1986, the GIM Board decided to begin an outreach program and worked with the New Haven Interfaith Caregivers to establish the Friendly Visiting program. The first trained visitors began their mission in January 1987. In response to the growth of the program, the GIM Board hired a Friendly Visiting director in January, 1990.

In January 1998, the GIM Board president, Charlie McGowan, asked the staff to locate a stair glide for a friend. From this request, Charlie's Closet began with its mission of lending used medical equipment. By December 1998, Charlie's Closet was providing equipment for loan on a regular basis. As the program grew, volunteers were recruited to handle the many request and the Town of Guilford supported the effort by providing a trailer for equipment storage. In 2007 the GIM Board hired a Charlie's Closet director and built a storage barn on Guilford Housing Authority Property with a grant from the State of Connecticut.

The community of Guilford has supported GIM since its inception. The town entered into a partnership with Meals on Wheels, providing the cook and kitchen facilities for preparing meals, and into a partnership with Charlie's Closet by providing storage facilities for medical equipment. To this day, the town provides funding in its annual budget through the Human Services Council and the Guilford Community Fund has been generously supporting GIM since 1989. The Guilford Foundation has given GIM a number of grants over the years. We have been generously supported by the Guilford Savings Bank, the Guilford Rotary, and by the fund raising efforts of many local groups.