

Report of the Conversations Concerning a Vision for Urban Ministry in the Rochester Urban Region.

There have been three conversations:

August 25, 2016 – facilitated by The Rev. Dr. Wilkinson. The purpose of this conversation was to discover what we shared as we told stories of our ministries in an urban region and to begin to explore what needed to change if, as a corporate church, we were to have a better sense of what God is calling us to be collectively in this challenged region, especially with the growing concerns of poverty, racism, and lost educational opportunities. Approximately 30 attended.

We learned that we were doing some incredible ministries out of our separate congregations but that there was little done to encourage and develop wider cooperation in becoming a more visible presence and voice in these ministries.

We learned that many are challenged to find ways to sustain the ministries in which they are involved.

We also learned that only a few of these ministries were in active collaboration with wider ecumenical or inter faith organizations.

And we learned that not many reflected on the theological foundations for these kinds of ministry.

December 8, 2016 – Again facilitated by Dr. Wilkinson. We reviewed a draft statement of a vision for ministry in an urban context. To better understand the context of this ministry we looked at the two sides of this ministry, direct services to our neighbors and advocacy with and for our neighbors. We agreed to have a third conversation to explore ways in which we could both promote and implement this vision. Sixteen people attended this conversation.

February 23, 2017 Fifteen people from seven of our Rochester Monroe congregations came together for this 3rd Conversation. There were two working sessions, one on direct service ministries and one on advocacy and community organizing ministries.

Here is a summary of the top recommendations related to **direct service ministries**:

- Explore the use of social media to promote, recruit, existing service ministries.
- Create a Ted style presentation for use at Convention and other venues.
- Update (and make more user friendly) the existing list of ministries being done by congregations that is on the diocesan web site. This could be an excellent tool for encouraging mutual support and interest in these ministries.
- Connect to Jubilee resources of the National Church
- Make use of the Diocesan access to Asset Mapping to shape strategic planning.
- Help to tell real stories about these ministries.

Asked who will make this happen there the following responses were made:

- Five to six people and Matt using social media
- Clergy
- Help to create a congregational contact list
- Deacons
- Check on potential allies and be sure not to duplicate

Here is a summary of recommendations related to **advocacy ministries**:

- Use social media more effectively to broaden support and actions.
- Offer training in advocacy ministry/ provide resources (books, etc)
- Connect across urban/suburban divide.
- Raise awareness of issues/problems
- Help to break down issues into manageable and recognizable portions

Top Issues:

- Poverty and racism
- Gentrification and white flight
- Education.

Who are our allies?

- People in these conversations
- ROC/Acts
- GRCC
- Metro Justice
- People impacted by racism, educational challenges, and poverty.

Finally, we agreed to commend our Vision statement to Council for their consideration.

A presentation was made to Diocesan Council in April and a follow up one in June. Here is the text as adopted by Council:

Episcopal Diocese of Rochester: Our vision for ministry in the urban context of the Rochester & Monroe Districts:

Our vision begins with our Baptismal Covenant in which we promise to "seek and serve Christ in all persons," and to "strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

These two promises frame the vision: It is a vision that includes direct services to those neighbors around us who are hungry, in need of shelter or counsel on the one hand, and on the other hand it is a vision that points to the ministry of advocacy as we partner for a more just society. These two planks of our social vision have been called the two feet of social ministries through which we embody God's love for the whole world.

A planning team for a Fourth Conversation was created and made up of The Rev. Christa Moore-Levesque, The Rev. Jimmie Sue Deppe, Paula Valeri, Carl Thorpe, and The Rev. Dr. Peter W. Peters.

We met on three occasions and set the date for this Fourth Conversation to take place on August 10. We planned to focus on the two planks – direct service ministries and ministries of advocacy and explore how we can strengthen what is going on and expand ways to meet the challenges of this urban context.

Unfortunately, there were too few registrations for this event and we chose not to go forward. Instead we met with the Bishop and agreed that what we were trying to encourage was a more creative way of developing active networks around each of the planks of our Urban Vision. We were encouraged to develop a questionnaire to discover who would be interested in being a part of such networks.

We designed a questionnaire and have submitted this to the bishop's office with the request that it be circulated by the Missioner for Communications soon after Convention.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter W. Peters, Conversation Convener.