

Report of the Social Justice Network to Diocesan Convention

It has been an exciting and productive time for the Social Justice Network! We have talked for some time of hosting a significant gathering around Social Justice Ministries and with our Social Justice Learning Weekend August 9-10, we achieved that goal.

This was made possible by an invitation to collaborate with the Stevenson School for Ministry – focusing one of their Learning Weekends on Social Justice. We invited The Rev. Becca Stevens of Thistle Farms, nationally known in Episcopal Social Justice circles to be our Keynote Speaker. She was indeed inspiring and set an energetic tone for the whole weekend.

We invited many folks with whom we have been in contact to lead small group learning sessions. These included Gus DiRenna and The Rev Canon Jay Geisler from Pittsburgh (Addiction/Recovery), The Rev. Kate Harrigan (Opioid Crisis) Nathan Sooy and The Rev Yvette Davis (P.O.W.E.R./Community Organizing), Keven Barron and Marion Schwartz (Dismantling Racism), Gerald Rhoades and Bryan Miller (Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence), The Rev. Michael Nailor (Asset Mapping) and Matthew Klipp (Autism Awareness/Advocacy).

We were also inspired by a presentation given by The Rev. Chuck Wynder from the Episcopal Church Center on "Becoming the Beloved Community". We immediately felt that Chuck has much to teach us and are making plans to have him come back to the Diocese for a more intensive time with us.

Matthew Klipp is a recent high school graduate and lifelong member of St. Mary's, Waynesboro. His own struggles with Asperger's led him to create GEAR – an organization dedicated to spreading awareness of and advocating for issues surrounding autism. This Learning Weekend was an empowering experience for him and he was delighted to make some good contacts with people in the Diocese who are interested in his work.

And making these kinds of connections was the most powerful part of the weekend. Inspired by Becca Stevens and the small group learning sessions, we divided into "commitment groups" so that people interested in the same issues could better keep in touch and begin working together more effectively.

In addition to the Learning Weekend, we have talked with Michael Nailor about how we might use his work in Asset Mapping, which is an organized way of discovering, naming and celebrating the gifts and resources we have available for ministry. We see a huge need for something like this and are pleased that Michael is now a member of our Network core team. His work will be starting with the Harrisburg Convocation and we'll be seeing how we can pull out Social Justice ministry information to disseminate throughout the Diocese.

We are also delighted to have The Rev. Ingrid Andersen working with us. Ingrid has formed an Environmental Committee that is in its initial phases of discerning how to provide leadership to the Diocese around the Climate Crisis and other areas of Caring for God's Creation. This, too, is a goal the SJN has long had. We'll be working with Ingrid and keeping in touch with this new committee as it develops.

Ingrid is also doing doctoral work on Social Justice Curriculum – researching how Seminaries teach about Social Justice Ministry to their students, if they do at all. This is an area that we will be exploring in 2020. The Stevenson School has great interest in this and is exploring working with the Lutheran Synod (Marsha Roscoe) on this.

So, we are working on the following plans for the rest of 2019 and into 2020.

- Work with Matthew Klipp to develop brochures and then a video course on autism awareness
- Work with the Stevenson School to bring Rev. Chuck Wynder back to the Diocese for intensive work on “Becoming the Beloved Community”
- Work with the Stevenson School on developing Part 2 of our Social Justice Learning Weekend – “How to Pray About This” to be held Oct. 25 – 26
- Work with Michael Nailor on Asset Mapping targeted to Social Justice Ministry
- Look at a major gathering for Social Justice Ministry in 2020 – perhaps at the Province level
- Work with the Stevenson School and Lutheran Synod on a Social Justice curriculum.
- Solidify networks that have been established and help build new ones, especially on Environmental Justice. This also includes working more closely with the Dismantling Racism Task Force and their collaboration with P.O.W.E.R.