

Urban Ministry is Revitalized!

Report to the 225th Annual Diocesan Convention

On September 20, 2008 the Urban Ministry had their first Workshop in years. To say the workshop was productive is an understatement. With over 30 committed attendees from more than seven churches from around the state, the group gathered together to figure out what they can do to address the issues of the churches in the Urban areas. The Guest Speaker and Facilitator of the Workshop was Nell Braxton Gibson, Coordinator of the Episcopal Urban Caucus and an Activist of equality in all facets, for many years.

The group succeeded in getting a preempt to a Mission Statement after a lengthy overview. The Mission Statement will temporarily read; "Share the gospel with all those who live and work in cities, by preaching, teaching, advocating and empowering in a spirit of inclusiveness".

The group discussed how systemic change is a major key in making and leading in urban ministry, incorporating their mission statement as the actions of the committee. As the dialog progressed the group discovered that many of the same community necessities were desired, with no difference to the area there urban communities were located. Church sizes from 75-600 connected through the very comparable liabilities in there surrounding neighborhoods.

The Ministry appointed specific duties to members of the caucus, proving that the meeting was fruitful and evolving on all levels. The discussion of meeting more recently to get the Ministry back in full operation again was agreed upon by all parties involved. The commitment level was very high, which prove to be quite advantageous to the entire group. In all, it was an afternoon of discovery, learning, solidarity, and compassion for solving the issues that plague all urban community churches.

Some of the concerns highlighted for immediate attention were Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, Homelessness, Mental Illness, Affordable Housing, and Hunger. At the upcoming meeting the team will discuss and hopefully implement ideas and projects to initiate rescuing the urban communities of these problems.

December 2008:

In the December meeting Ms. Clara Gregory reached out to resources in the state government of New Jersey and invited Ms Sarah Kleinman, Coordinator of HIV Prevention for the New Jersey Department of Education who spoke to the group on the continuing need for education about the AIDS epidemic. We agreed to follow up by sending an information packet to each of the congregations within the diocese informing of nearby resources and ways to get involved. The Rev. Jarrett Kerbel was also an invited speaker; he is the Executive Director of Crisis Ministry, an organization which addresses hunger and other urban issues in the Trenton area. He spoke about the need for like-minded people to gather to address the common needs of the community and offered to facilitate a discussion on community organizing at our next meeting. We also discussed the 2009 budget and the need to prioritize our activities for the year at the next meeting on March 7th, 2009.

Submitted By: Cheryl Browne, Annette Buchanan