
POTOMAC ASSOCIATION FALL MEETING

10/24/2009

Feedback from the Breakout Groups for the Committees of the Association

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE ARE PEOPLE OF GOD'S EXTRAVAGANT WELCOME

Evangelism, Outreach, and Congregational Identity

What matters to you ?

Cancer support group - paddling
similar music connections
directions
gay couple acceptance
Tough to be hospitable . .
Military service judgemental
"assigned seats"
gracious host/guest
disruptiveness
Church extravagant witness
homeless
immigrant

Events the Assoc can do to help individual groups

matters to us & matters to them works both ways
programs vs "getting them in the door"
space to remain who you are
get other similar situations together
distribute information
email / website links
online / teleconf technology
student in care sharing group
ona / glbst advocacy
green groups
group purchasing

What matters to us?

Encouraging
actually doing it
website
use of logos
theological comfort
Might walk thru the doors
otherwise unwelcomed
internet users
To be more welcoming
live what you preach
mass equality

When we gather as the Potomac Association,
What is the Association known for?

Not much
negative - not doing much
positive - dual standing
pastoral leadership
crisis help
polity
local church autonomy
Change the titles of the committees; issues, for you, new and different

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE LISTEN FOR THE STILL-SPEAKING GOD

New Horizons in Ministry Together

To what new expressions of ministry is the association being called?

- Spiritual practices, worship w/ joy
- More “congregational” sharing gifts with each other
- Finding purpose, vision in Association
- Defining role of clergy and laity, be clear about expectations
- More healing, less “words”
- Helping churches deal with change
 - Visioning for future
 - Resistance to “risk”

- Build a tent big enough for all tribes
 - Call out bad practices
 - Build ties/communication
 - Kin-group sharing; build networks
 - UCC/Association/Conference identity—Cross-pollinate
 - Join in worship together
 - Pray for each other
 - Watch for the movement of the Spirit, plan with a vision for today

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE BELONG TO CHRIST

Faith Formation and Religious Education

(Condensed notes)

Where have you seen Christ in the Association's activities?

- Welcoming newcomers

- Being open to establishing relationships

- Polity process vs. personal process

- Intentionally asking visitors to identify self

Christ breaks down barriers

- Greeting (or not greeting) visitors

- Challenge to work together

- Churches visiting one another

- Clergy and layfolk find ways to be together

- Information sharing with one another

- Send "Missionaries" from one congregation to another

- Keep information current-on website, via one another's churches, be welcoming to one another.

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE ARE A PEOPLE OF COVENANT, A UNITED AND UNITING CHURCH

Our Church's Wider Mission and Ecumenical Ties

1: What relationships involve a promise?

Marriage

prayer helps in difficult times.

Association with a Church

O&A declaration is important, It is important that one be recognized as part of the whole, diverse congregation, not just part of a "gay only" church.

Covenant with other congregations.

This is covenant as in cooperation. It can include bible studies or art projects (or lunch).

A result would be improved communications. One person mentioned cooperation between congregations that shared the same facilities.

Rev. Roberts commented that UCC Seneca Valley feels isolated from other churches in the association. Distance makes it difficult for joint projects with other churches.

2: Ideas

A: Churches need a presence on Facebook, or other networking sites with an e-mail contact.

B: A Bible Study about Covenant between congregations

C: A pulpit exchange to bring congregations closer together.

D: A better Potomac Association Calendar, one that would let people know what is going on in other churches. This would require fairly open access so churches could post items.

E: Cooperative workdays for minor church repairs ("This Old Church" as someone termed it.)

F: A Music Exchange, trade choirs for a Sunday.

3: What the Association can do

A: Need to raise visibility of Denomination.

B: Need to educate churches on what it means to be one denomination, to maintain covenant.

4: Ideas for Association involvement

A: Workshops for all church Trustees

B: Financial Workshops, or Christian Ed workshops

C: Stewardship consultations

D: Question-How many members serve the wider church, that is in Association committees or UCC national involvement

5: To What UCC agencies are we connected?

A: Shaw, Lancaster Seminary

B: Ecumenical Connections such as United Campus Ministries

It would be nice to strengthen these connections, perhaps by pastors visiting campus to see what is going on. (Ed. comment; It might be easier to do the reverse, get UCM students out to do a program at local churches.)

C: Interfaith Conference of Greater Washington.

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE ARE ONE AT BAPTISM AND THE TABLE

Inspiring Worship and Celebration

The group discussed at some length the variety of worship traditions available within the UCC, particularly in relation to communion and baptism. But the greater puzzle is those who come to us “unchurched” or with only faint memories from childhood and no true comprehension of the sacramental aspects of worship.

A consensus was formed around the following ideas:

- provide adult education about sacraments, as we do to youth in confirmation classes;
- develop better descriptions and don’t assume that the “Book of Worship” articulates the meaning of the sacraments;
- do a better job of explaining, and exploring, the variety of ways in which to celebrate the sacraments;
- use the ministerium to discuss among ordained clergy their feelings and thoughts and practices about the sacraments.

Generally, the group thought that we assume too much knowledge by parishioners about the sacraments, and that ordained clergy likewise need to explore and refresh their own thoughts about the sacraments. The point of the reflection and education is not to achieve a “common” understanding, but rather to unite all worshippers in their own meditation and contemplation about the sacraments, and to lead them to see that out of a diverse understanding all do “become one” at the table and at the font. To see that the covenant is renewed with each celebration; the covenant with God and one’s fellow congregants.

BREAKOUT GROUP: WE THANK GOD BY WORKING FOR A JUST AND LOVING WORLD

Social Action, Advocacy, and Mission

1. Name the three strongest Mission/activism/outreach ministries in your church
 - a. Christ Congregational
 - i. Shaw Community Ministry
 - ii. Gandhi Brigade (Youth involved in media with a social justice edge)
 - iii. Anti-racism committee
 - b. Plymouth
 - i. Shea Yeleen Shea butter from Africa
 - ii. Food Pantry
 - c. Peoples Congregational
 - i. Breast Cancer and AIDS Walks and activities
 - ii. Food Pantry
 - iii. Clothing Pantry
 - iv. House of Ruth (Abused women)
 - d. Rockville United
 - i. Community Ministries of Rockville (Sophia House for the Homeless and Caseman Clinic.)
 - ii. Habitat for Humanity, annual trip
 - iii. LGVT – how to be advocates. Also LGBT Teens and providing Shelters
 - e. Greenbelt CC
 - i. Christmas in April
 - ii. Campus Ministry – United Campus Ministries Maryland
 - iii. Help by Phone – taking food to food pantry, supporting the Homeless
 - f. Emmaus
 - i. School/Farm in Liberia
 - ii. Shaw Community Ministries
 - iii. CHO (Committee to Help Others- transportation and emergency assistance)
 - iv. Community Ministry – Housing
 - g. Little River
 - i. Shaw Community Ministry
 - ii. Northern Virginia Campus Ministry, and Welcome Center
 - iii. Public Policy and Faith/Footsteps focus on Social/Political Issues in the countries they visit.
 - h. Pilgrim UCC
 - i. Back Bay Mission
 - ii. Shelter for Women in Rockville
 - iii. Backpacks and School Supplies
2. How might this be shared between congregations/the association – what might the association provide that might be useful to local congregations, or that might bring the association together.
 - a. Continuing Anti-racism education
 - i. Providing opportunities for open dialog
 1. How you came to be where you are

2. How you feel about people of other races
 3. Dealing with stereotypes
 4. White privilege and classicism
 5. The contradiction of bigotry in a multiethnic/multiracial society/church
 - b. How can we develop programs for our youth
 - i. Which are effective
 - ii. Which address those at risk
 - iii. Maybe in the schools? Especially academic support to those who are failing?
 - c. Supporting GLBT Teens (could involve the Gandhi Project?)
 - i. Consciousness Raising
 - ii. Involve teens?
 - iii. (For both of the above) Ministry in your community – how to do
 1. what are the challenges and triumphs?
 2. How do you do it?
 3. How does this relate to evangelism?
 - d. Supporting Returning Prisoners, and the relationship of returning prisoners to the issues of homelessness and hunger!
3. We remind ourselves that we have a significant diversity in church size, and programs need to recognize that a church with 20 members of 50 members cannot do what a church with 500 can do.