

Ministry Plan for More Loving Community

Prayer attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;

where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union;

where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

Scripture Reflection: Ephesians 4: 1-7; 11-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Questions for Discussion

1. What did you hear in this Bible passage?

2. Jesus says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).
 - a. How do we welcome and show hospitality to guests?
 - b. Would guests pick up on areas of conflict or disagreement in our community?
3. How good are our processes for creating the community culture we would like to have?
 - a. Pastoral care: Disagreements arise when people are under stress/distress in their personal lives.
 - i. Who is responsible for pastoral care in our congregation?
 - ii. Is each member connected with a small group or ministry team which looks out for them?
 - iii. Is our first response to disagreement or anger to ask: "What are you going through?"
 - b. Mutual ministry: Is everyone invited into a ministry where they can apply their spiritual gifts, heart (passion), abilities, personality and experience (SHAPE)?
 - c. Communications: Do we focus on developing relationships vs. just conveying decisions or information?
 - i. How are our communication processes among ministries?
 - a) Meetings (Vestry, committees, annual and special parish meetings, calendar meeting, joint meetings)
 - b) Committee liaisons
 - c) Minutes
 - ii. Do we use the most personal communication medium possible within the congregation (asking, Who? What? How?)
 - a) Interpersonal interaction (pastoral care, meetings, Christian formation classes and study groups, coffee hour, passing the peace, social events, mission activities, etc.)
 - b) Phone calls
 - c) Live announcements during services
 - d) Programs, e.g., Stewardship

- e) Mail
 - f) Email
 - g) Paper: Weekly Bulletins, brochures, bulletin boards
 - h) Media: calendar, Facebook, Website, Blogs, E-News, etc.
- d. Behavioral expectations: Do we have or are we discussing a behavioral covenant for our leaders (Vestry, ministry teams) and/or members of our congregation?
4. How do we do when we have conflicts (as a Vestry or in the congregation)? Do we follow the steps Jesus outlines in Matthew 18:15-20:

"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

- a. Every person and community faces challenges in their interpersonal relationships. What are areas of unresolved tension in this Vestry or congregation?
- i. If we can, let's just list areas of disappointments or differences without trying to reconcile them.
 - a) Past
 - b) Present
 - ii. In Matthew 21-22, Peter asks "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" And Jesus responds, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times." Might it help to have a facilitated conversation with a trained mediator to encourage reconciliation of certain issues or concerns?
5. What is our role as a Vestry in leading this?

6. What do we need help with?

7. What goals would we like to set for strengthening our interpersonal relationships?
Have specific answers to three questions for each goal:

Goal	Who (will do this)?	What (will they do)?	When (will it be done)?