



Who Are We Now?

What Has God Called Us to Do Now?

Who is Our Neighbor Now?

Presbytery of Detroit Holy Conversations Project

Applications to Participate are due
August 1, 2014

To the Rev. Dr. Richard D. Brownlee,
17575 Hubbell, Detroit, MI 48235
or fax 313-345-7250

For answers to questions contact
The Rev. Dr. Richard D. Brownlee at
rdbrownlee@toast.net
or 419-450-0466

Holy Conversations Project

for Congregations

Presbytery of Detroit

Project Definition:

A congregational discernment process that seeks God's vision for the future of a congregation, leading to a new vision and mission statement, and at least one new ministry project that engages the neighborhood.

Desired outcomes:

A new vision and mission statement, and a project that enlarges the ministry of the church.

Process:

- Session initiates a six month conversation about the future of the church.
- Transformation Facilitator is assigned to guide the six month Holy Conversations Process
- Session forms a team to lead holy conversations within the session, and congregation, about the future of the ministry of the congregation, asking the questions: Who are we? What has God called us to do? And who is our neighbor?
- Team engages in internal and external data gathering to understand the church and the community it serves.
- Session undertakes a discernment process about enlarging ministry in the community which will serve neighbors including "the least of these" and demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ in word and in deed.

How a session can get involved:

Session will make an initial application for inclusion in the project and if chosen, will sign a covenant, agreeing to form a steering committee, and purchase a copy of Holy Conversations by Alice Mann and Gil Rendle for each member of the committee. The books are available at the Presbytery office or through Amazon.com. The congregation will also be asked to pay any other expenses such as a retreat or fees for demographics.

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Are you interested?

Contact Richard Brownlee at 419-450-0466 or rdbrownlee@toast.net

or Al Timm at 586-899-8708 or allen@detroitpresbytery.org

What Happened When We had a Holy Conversation!

by Michael Horlocker, First Presbyterian Church, South Lyon

Who are we? What has God called us to do? Who is our neighbor? These are the questions that the congregation at First Presbyterian Church of South Lyon sought to answer in 2013. Upon accepting the invitation from the Presbytery of Detroit, First Presbyterian Church made a commitment to work through the Holy Conversations Project. This was just the strategic planning tool that this small, diminishing congregation needed to re-energize its members as they listened for the Spirit to lead and guide them.

The basis of this project is to invite God into your conversations through Bible study, worship, and going out into the community and learning who your neighbors are. First Presbyterian discovered that their neighbors included residents of a low-income mobile home park, just blocks from the church. The children who reside at the park were looking to be a part of something special, to be around people that cared. Since few had the means to come to the church's Vacation Bible School, the church took Vacation Bible School to the mobile home park; 1 day a week for 5 consecutive weeks. The evening began with dinner, and then we shared Bible stories, made crafts, played games, and taught the children how to play the hand chimes. What began with a family of two children quickly grew to 25 children within a matter of weeks.

At the end of the Vacation Bible School, the children who attended knew that they were loved and cared for, and the many members of the congregation that pitched in to help, knew that they were loved as well. More conversations have taken place between the congregation and the management office on how we can better serve the residents of the mobile home park, i.e. – community meals, transportation, home repairs. The possibilities to serve are endless.

The Holy Conversations Project has opened our eyes to even more neighbors...those who are unable to afford insurance and/or medical premiums. More than 200 families within the South Lyon school district fall below the poverty line, many of which are not seeking dental and medical care. With five other churches, First Presbyterian Church joined the South Lyon Churches Health Initiative, also known as the Capernaum Health Clinic. Together we are able to provide four (4) free medical/dental clinics per year utilizing local doctors, dentists, hygienists, and nurses to provide treatment to the community's underserved. Members of our churches have gotten to know one another through volunteering together, providing meals for volunteers, praying for our patients, etc.

If it not for the Holy Conversation Project, First Presbyterian Church of South Lyon most likely would not have gotten involved as a founding member of the health clinic. We would not have considered adding an offsite Vacation Bible School to our summer schedule. The Holy Spirit has breathed new life into our congregation through our Holy conversation with God and our community. A one-time fading church, we have been blessed with new life. We are no longer the old building at the corner of 10 Mile and Pontiac Trail, rather we are the church that is actively seeking new ways to serve the community of South Lyon through Jesus Christ.

The purpose of the Holy Conversations Project is not to grow the size of the congregation, or to increase the congregation's giving. These are just mere side effects of engaging in the project. The purpose of the Holy Conversations Project is to go outside of the walls of the church and re-introduce the church to God's people living within your community. Who are they? What are their needs? How can the congregation engage and serve the needs of the community? This is the conversation that awaits you.

Application

Holy Conversations: Finding the Spiritual Connection to Your Community

Presbytery of Detroit

Congregation: _____

Name of Contact: _____

Email address: _____

Phone: _____

Congregations submit the following:

- Last 10 years of weekly worship attendance (see Statistics on PCUSA web site)
- A one page statement discussing the current condition of the congregation and its current ministry in relation to the community
- A statement of the congregation's commitment to enlarge or strengthen the ministry of the congregation to its surrounding neighborhood

Submitting the application and required documents implies the following commitments:

- A commitment to recruit a leader who will oversee this project.
- A commitment to recruit 7 to 10 people, including pastor (installed or transitional), session, deacons, and members at large to serve as the leadership team for your church.
- A promise to share the results verbally or in writing with the Presbytery of Detroit. This will include any ministries initiated, and actual results of the ministry (such as number who participated, and outcomes attained).
- A promise to buy copies of the book Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice (Gil Rendle and Alice Mann) for the members of the Team.
- A commitment of the session to attend a team retreat at the beginning and end of the Holy Conversations Project.

Submit to the Rev. Dr. Richard D. Brownlee by August 1.

Fax #: 313-345-7250

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