

MEDIATION IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Harry Dieckmann
Donna Timmons

In June 2018, the parish began a process of Congregational Mediation under the leadership of Rev. Peter Gray of Nativity Episcopal Church to facilitate healing and reconciliation. During an initial meeting with Rev. Gray, the Vestry and Search Committee identified goals which emphasized healing through reconciliation, transparency and clarity in communication, the engagement of all members, and the relationships of diverse groups.

An intense communication effort was made to involve as many participants as possible so that voices from all diverse groups in All Saints' and Christ the King were heard. After an educational workshop on understanding the dynamics of congregational conflict and new skills for addressing conflict, the parish was guided through the process. An information-gathering phase identified problems and conflicts through a parish questionnaire, small group sessions and individual phone interviews with Rev. Gray. Next, large group healing sessions used structured dialogue to facilitate individual and group healing. A problem-solving phase focused on specific proposals, which were then submitted to the Vestry for approval. During this seven-month process, approximately half of the households were represented at one or more of the sessions. While the proposals are ambitious and thorough, the implementation will be guided by the Christ-filled enthusiasm of our parishioners. The last phase of implementation began in February 2019 with the Vestry and a Mediation Implementation Task Force prioritizing and initializing agreements from the Mediation sessions.

Over the next several months the Vestry reviewed the mediation agreements and approved their final form during the June Vestry meeting. In keeping with the spirit of effective communication and transparency, a status report from the Mediation Implementation Task Force is a standard Vestry agenda item.

A year-end review of the Mediation Agreements indicates that the congregation has been successful in addressing all the areas. Forty-seven (47) tasks in ten areas are to be accomplished to fulfill the agreement. Twenty-seven (27) of the twenty-nine (29) which were to be done by the end of 2019 have been accomplished, and two are in progress.

Eleven (11) of the remaining eighteen (18) tasks to be implemented during 2020 are dependent on the guidance and discretion of the rector, and five (5) will be addressed during the Vestry retreat. The Vestry is responsible for the remaining two (2).

