

MEDIATION IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

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In June of 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.

By involving as many participants as possible the 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 began an information-gathering phase identifying problems and conflicts. Two large group healing sessions used structured dialogue to facilitate individual and group healing. Next the problem-solving phase focused on ten proposals each with specific tasks. During this process, approximately half of the households were represented at one or more of the sessions. The mediation proposals contained ten broad areas with each subdivided into specific implementation tasks. After prioritizing the proposals and implementation tasks, the Vestry approved the ten (10) agreements and forty-seven (47) tasks in June of 2019.

A year-end review of the Mediation Agreements for 2019 indicated that of the forty-seven (47) tasks, twenty-seven (27) of the twenty-nine (29) which were to be done by the end of 2019 had been accomplished, and two were in progress.

At the end of the 2020, thirty-eight (38) of the forty-seven (47) tasks were completed with only 4 pending and 5 postponed due to Covid. Of those completed tasks, thirty-two (32) are recurring or ongoing. That indicates a significant systemic change in response to the congregation's proposals from two years ago.

The Mediation Agreement addressed transparency, increased communication with the youth, improved dissemination of information through enhanced internet capabilities, and provided for congregational input on major decisions.

It is noteworthy that Communication and Decision Making was the highest priority section based on the congregational responses. Many areas of conflict arose from the church's communication and decision making practices. The Vestry recognizes the importance of not only an annual review of communication effectiveness but also as a continuing practice. Also, 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.

In a time when congregate gatherings are not possible or are limited, the church leadership recognizes both the challenges and the responsibility to sustain a vibrant and healthy relationship with and amongst all congregation members.

For a detailed status report on each of the Mediation Agreements, please visit our website www.allsaintstupelo.org.