

## Newark Presbytery COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION CORPORATION Presbyterian Transformation Commission Work Team Report

- The Presbyterian Transformation Commission hosted the first engagement and planning session for congregations located within the City of Newark on Saturday morning, March 7 at Memorial West Presbyterian Church.
- The purposes of the meeting were to share information about the role of Newark Presbytery's new 501c3 non-profit organization -- Community Transformation Corporation -- discuss specific community transformation opportunities within Newark, and engage the congregations in identifying and prioritizing mission initiatives for the CTC.
- A total of 26 individuals (*see attached participant list*) representing the following seven congregations participated in the session:

*Clinton Avenue  
Memorial West*

*Elmwood/Central  
Roseville*

*First Hispanic  
St. Paul's*

*Third Church*

- Participants discussed their ideas for how the CTC would have an impact on not only their congregations, but partnerships and collaborations among the various churches as well as the Presbyterian witness in Newark. Specifically, participants indicated they hoped the CTC would:
  - Serve as a catalyst for greater collaboration and improved partnerships among the individual congregations
  - Lead to improved trust and respect among the congregations
  - Help foster shared understanding of the churches' existing missions and ministries
  - Create opportunities for congregations to share resources and perhaps shared worship services (e.g., consider "progressive services" that take place in more than one sanctuary)
  - Support the creation of several new/expanded mission initiatives that could be shared among multiple congregations, including:
    - Youth and Young Adult Ministry
    - Immigrant Ministry
    - Multi-lingual Worship Services
    - Health Ministry
    - Ministry pertaining to issues of aging
- In breakout groups, participants began to identify both issues and initiatives that could serve as key areas of focus for the CTC

### **Engaging the Community**

- Perceived Challenges/Obstacles to Congregations Proactively Engaging Their Surrounding Communities:
  - Many congregations are "commuter" congregations and are disconnected from their immediate neighbors and neighborhoods
  - Congregations often can be too exclusive and too focused on "doing their own thing", which can be divisive

- Violence and gang concerns
- Existing language and cultural barriers
- Suggestions for Overcoming the Challenges:
  - Gain a better understanding of the community (participants indicated that assistance from the CTC would be beneficial)
  - Offer bi-lingual worship services
  - Be open, flexible, with a loving and compassionate spirit; not being possessive
  - Develop the "Presbyterian" Brand so that everyone clearly knows what Presbyterian stands for
  - Embrace a view of mission as missionary work
  - Become passionate about your mission to help develop the community

### **Immigrant Ministry**

- Challenges/Issues Among Immigrant Population:
  - Many immigrants lack documentation to establish their legal status, such as driver's license and social security number
  - Language remains a barrier
  - Some immigrants struggle with emotional disorders due to isolation from their families back home, constant fear of deportation, concerns over becoming a crime victim without adequate legal protection, and increased family tensions between non-English speaking parents and their bi-lingual children
  - Emotional issues are leading to an increase in alcohol and drug abuse among immigrant populations
  - Access to quality education is a significant issue; parents often are not able to fully participate in their child's education due to language barriers; individuals without documentation are prevented from seeking higher education
- Suggestions for Overcoming the Challenges:
  - Increased availability of ESL courses
  - Counseling programs to deal with emotional challenges and issues of alcohol and drug abuse
  - New educational options that focus on both children and parents – e.g., a Presbyterian Charter school
  - Advocacy/Empowerment

### **Youth Ministry**

- Challenges:
  - Attracting youth into congregations that presently do not have any
  - Addressing difficult issues facing many youth and young adults, e.g., gang violence, ex-offenders
- Suggestions for Overcoming the Challenges
  - Offer youth-friendly worship services
    - Featuring a youth pastor
    - Consider a separate service

- Better understand the needs/concerns of youth segments to better target mission focus
- Develop relevant ministries to engage youth, such as:
  - Recreation
  - Dance and Music Ministries
  - Tutoring/Teaching
  - Support groups around teen issues
  - Socialization/socializing
- The ultimate goals are to:
  - Empower the youth and self-esteem
  - Evangelize to youth
  - Strengthen their faith
  - Create community connection
  - Create responsible citizens
  - Grow our churches through the youth/attracting their parents/families
- Participants expressed an interest in continuing to work within their breakout groups to further develop mission initiatives related to the three topic areas (see *the breakout group participants listed below*)

**Engaging Community**

Gretchen Brown  
 William Brown  
 Annie Brown-Cheatam  
 Cynthia Edwards  
 Shari Taylor  
 Rolnald Perez  
 Eduardo Soto  
 Rev. Deborah Oosterbaan

**Immigrant Ministry**

Yolanda Pozo  
 Ana Pozo  
 Carmen Rodriguez  
 Rev. Valdir Reis  
 Meredith Hilman  
 Rev. Robert Burkins, Sr.

**Youth & Young Adult Ministry**

Vicky Andrade  
 Elizabeth Valdes  
 Kimberly Grafton  
 Rev. Al Johnson  
 Paul Trautman

**Participant List:**

1. Victoria Andrade, Roseville
2. Gretchen Brown, Elmwood
3. William Brown, III, Elmwood
4. Rev. Robert Burkins, Sr., Elmwood/PTC
5. Annie Cheatham, Third Presbyterian
6. Cynthia Edwards, Clinton Avenue
7. Rev. Doris Glaspy, Roseville/PTC, Mission Council
8. Kimberly Grafton, Memorial West
9. Rev. Javan Higgins, Memorial West
10. Jim Hill, PTC, Kearny, First Arlington, NP Board of Trustees
11. Meredith Hilman, Memorial West
12. Karen Jackson, Elmwood
13. Rev. Alfred Johnson, Clinton Avenue
14. Celia King, PTC, Maplewood, Prospect
15. Rubens Oliveria, St. Paul's
16. Rev. Deborah Oosterbaan, Memorial West
17. Rolnand Perez, First Hispanic
18. Ana Pozo, First Hispanic
19. Yolanda Pozo, First Hispanic
20. Valdir Reis, St. Paul's
21. Carmen Rodriguez, First Hispanic
22. Eduardo Soto, First Hispanic
23. George Spina, Memorial West
24. Shari Taylor, Roseville
25. Paul Trautman, Third Presbyterian
26. Elizabeth Valdes, First Hispanic

**Support Staff:**

Dr. Kevin Yoho, General Presbyter, Newark Presbytery  
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