

## **Jubilee Discussions - Discussion Recording Form - 1**

Date: 2/15/18

Chapter /Community/Caucus : Dignity Twin Cities

### **SEGMENT ONE: RECALLING OUR ROOTS**

Facilitator / Recorder Worksheet

**What was the initial need that Dignity USA was organized to meet and that drove our rapid growth from a local community in L.A. to a national network of chapters? What "fueled" our engine"?**

In the early 1970s there was a need for a place for lgbtq people to meet outside of the bars on Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. Dignity helped to fill that need and grew quickly in its first years. Dignity / Twin Cities was the first of what would become many lgbtq religious organizations in the Twin Cities in the 1970s.

**How did the mission of Dignity evolve over time? What drove those changes in how we did our work? Consider dynamics in the organization, in the Church, and in society. In what ways might your chapter/community/caucus have contributed to this evolution?**

**The theme of our 50th Anniversary Conference is "True to the Spirit, True to Ourselves." In what ways has "being true to ourselves and true to the calling of the Spirit" evident in our history? Your local history?**

For 11 years, 1976 to 1987, Dignity /Twin Cities met at the Newman Center on the campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis on the second and fourth Friday of each month. The liturgies were popular with many lgbtq people who were not Roman Catholic, but looking for a safe place to meet other lgbtq people, or who belonged to a tradition that did not have an organized lgbtq community. The liturgies often had over 200 people attending. Membership peaked at just over 100 in 1987.

1987- Archbishop John Roach requests in a letter that Dignity Twin Cities agree to sign a statement that it is in agreement with Church teaching on homosexuality as a condition of keeping its lease at the Newman Center. Dignity membership meets and decides that its official reply to the archbishop is that it will not agree to make such a statement. As a result, Dignity is not allowed to renew its lease at the Newman Center. On June 26, 1987, Dignity holds its last liturgy at the Newman Center, and moves to the University Lutheran / Episcopal Center, across the street.

Dignity files a complaint of discrimination with the Minneapolis Civil Rights Department alleging discrimination in public accommodation on the basis of sexual preference, prohibited under the Minneapolis Civil Rights Ordinance. Members of Dignity /Twin Cities testify in a public hearing before the Civil Rights Commission July 24, 25, 26, 1989.

November 26, 1990 - The Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission issues a judgment against the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis ordering it to rent space to Dignity, pay \$8,500 in punitive damages, \$10,000 in lawyer's fees, and a \$15,000 fine.

June 25, 1991 - A three judge panel of the Minnesota State Court of Appeals overturns the judgment of the Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission citing excessive state entanglement in church affairs, and violating the Church's right of religious freedom.

August 29, 1991 - The Minnesota State Supreme Court refuses to review the decision of the State Court of Appeals, effectively ending the dispute between Dignity / Twin Cities and the Archdiocese.

**Locally, and nationally, how has Dignity changed lives for the better? Changed the Catholic Community? Impacted the LGBTQ social justice movement?**

About the same time the Archdiocese challenged Dignity / Twin Cities' lease at the Newman Center, internally, the membership itself was being challenged to consider its participation in a church marked by misogyny, patriarchy and hierarchy. In the late 1980's the chapter moved away from liturgies always being a Mass presided over by an ordained priest, to new liturgical forms and having female presiders. Worship leaders were now both unordained members of Dignity, and leader from other faith traditions, both male and female. However, throughout its 43 year history, Dignity / Twin Cities has always enjoyed the services of diocesan clergy who encouraged and blessed the community.

Members of Dignity / Twin Cities, and the organization itself, has challenged the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to reconsider LGBTQ Catholics as full members of its faith family.