

Dignity/Buffalo Community Reflection for the Jubilee Year

On Sunday, March 11, 2018, thirteen members of Dignity/Buffalo gathered to reflect on the Chapter's origin, on who we are today and to consider what the chapter should be. The reflection was in response to a call from DignityUSA to prepare for the Jubilee conference in 2019.

The day was organized around three activities. To reflect on our history, individual members were asked to share their personal history with Dignity/Buffalo. To reflect on the chapter is today, we engaged in a brainstorming activity identifying our "favorite things" about Dignity/Buffalo. To consider what the chapter should be, members shared their thoughts, ideas or dreams about what Dignity/Buffalo might do in the years ahead.

I. Instead of addressing the chapter's history in a chronological order, we asked each participant to reflect on what brought them to the door of Dignity/Buffalo the first time, what was going on in their lives at the time, what they found in Dignity and why they became active members. We had several reasons to use this approach. First, our most senior member, Glen, had already written a history of the chapter, much of which predates most the participants gathered. Second, the chapter can be understood as the intersection of the histories of individual members. Third, even though these stories have been shared before, it was a good ice breaker to start a day of reflection. Glenn enriched the activity by reading articles from old newsletters written by deceased members of their experiences with Dignity/Buffalo. Notes were not taken of this discussion.

II. To evaluate what Dignity/Buffalo is today we used a brain storming activity. Participants were asked to brainstorm on their "favorite things" about Dignity Buffalo. Everyone wrote their ideas on Post-it notes placing them onto a common board. After collecting the notes, we looked for patterns. We organized the 83 notes into common themes: 27 of the notes emphasized social activities – potlucks, Christmas gift exchanges, picnics, wine and food; 23 of the notes reflected spiritual or liturgical themes – reflections, Masses, table prayer, etc.; 18 of the notes reflected community and family – sharing, love, support, respect, foibles and laughter; 12 of the notes focused more on outreach – pride parade, interfaith services, AIDS outreach, Dignity/USA. At first some of the comments such as "fresh young coconut" defied easy categorization. However, with reflection they often led us to remember special moments in the life of the chapter.

III. After Dinner, everyone offered suggestions what Dignity might do differently over the next five years. Although we discussed each idea and how it might be implemented, we agreed the list was a starting point for future discussions.

Proposed Suggestions

1. Use social media like "Meetup" to advertise Dignity functions.
2. Take advantage of resources of DignityUSA to resurrect the webpage.
3. Renew participation in Gay Pride.
4. Hold more frequent, even weekly, liturgies.
5. Engage the Bishop on issues of social justice.
6. Post activities on the Buffalo Pride Center calendar.
7. Encouraged all local participants to become members of DignityUSA.
8. Direct outreach to non-participating members, e.g. phone invitations etc.
9. Regular Business/Membership meetings – maybe three a year.
10. Renew our effort for regular non-liturgical social activities.
11. Develop a presence on Facebook.
12. Renew connections with Dignity/Integrity Rochester and Dignity/Toronto.
13. Outreach to Silver Pride group.

A future membership meeting will be held to prioritize the ideas and development plans for their implementation.