

***How do we need to change to tackle the challenges of the present and to take advantage of the opportunities?***

We feel that our community exemplifies many of the ways in which the national organization needs to change in order to stay relevant, while admitting that we still have a long way to go in a number of them. DignityUSA needs to reach beyond traditional gay and lesbian couples to attract people from the full LGBTQI spectrum, including straight people and the growing number of people who reject sexual labels of all kinds. The diversity should include non-Catholic denominations and equal numbers of men and women.

Focusing on social justice and the beatitudes was also recommended. Young people in particular are more motivated to work for social justice than to gather for worship or prayer.

(Mary Burns underscored the need to get more lesbian couples to join our community.)

*(Bob, the following paragraph is from our first discussion but I think is also relevant to this one, if you want to include it.)* A number of the comments centered on the advantages afforded to us by virtue of being a “small church.” This trend is even stronger now. We agreed that our ability to engage in post-homily discussions has been the impetus for our chapter’s survival and growth. We feel the need to share our thoughts about the readings and homilies, particularly from a progressive Christian perspective.

The small size of our community allows us to share a meal after our services. The cookies and punch of the early days has evolved into a full brunch, but the main attraction has remained constant: a chance to join together in fellowship as a community.

***What should the key priorities of DignityUSA be in the next few years? What’s most important to us and what values from our rich history do we want to ensure are carried forward?***

Dialog with the Church (you mentioned this). Some members of the Church have been receptive. Two people in the audience asked why you would want to dialog with them; are we really trying to change their minds? You stated that DUSA is moving to LGBTQI advocacy—to get the authorities to back down from a blanket condemnation of us to a more moderate stance.

Joe and Sharon recommended that DUSA “evangelize.” They travel a lot these days and often meet Catholics who have left the Church. They tell these people about the wonderful attributes of our community, about what we have and what we have to offer.

Dick said that if we do dialog with the Church, we should tell them that we have something to offer *them*.

Tim suggested that if dialog is starting, we should press to work within the Church rather than from without. This would counter an existing campaign by conservative external forces already lobbying to bring back to old ways. He said that some people are being paid to do this work and he cited Father Reese (?) from the National Catholic Reporter. Tim feels that change will only come if the bishops are actively lobbied. Try to influence them....the energy should go there.

Joe Radelet said that DUSA has two ways to go: its own way, or as a voice. If we choose to go our own way, the Church will continue to state that there is no problem with its LGBTQI teachings because “there are no gays.” He said that advocacy is vital.

Deb Schafer agreed. She complimented DUSA for being our voice, alluding to how the media will contact DUSA for its views on matters related to LGBTQI issues and the Church. “It is vital that DUSA and LBC continue to be that voice.”

Steve Makovec encouraged DUSA to reach out to the like-minded groups such as FCM, Call to Action, New Ways Ministry, etc., to network with them.

Lillian said that we should all read New Ways Ministry’s “Bonding Tools 2.0” (?) to get good ideas about how to form alliances.

When you asked if DUSA is worth the investment of money, time and talent, many people responded emphatically that it is.

***Why should people want to invest their life energy and financial resources in support of the desired future?***

I don’t have any notes for this section so I suspect you skipped it except to ask the preceding question.

***What is this community’s guidance to the national leadership as they create a strategic plan for the next few years of DignityUSA’s mission and work?***

“Be fearless.” “Tell the story.” Young people need to hear the story. Women need to hear the story differently.

You stated that DUSA’s young adult caucus is growing rapidly, in large part because it’s on line, a totally different format.

Tim said that Dignity/NYC is struggling and he feels that they need to approach/extend our story to immigrant youths and groups. But are we needed, since many NYC Catholic Churches welcome gay people?

You mentioned about the Rainbow Coalition meeting prior to the DUSA convention....

Deb Schafer relayed how impressed she was with DUSA’s presence at a recent meeting with the Pope. We need to represent the nontraditional (e.g., same-sex-parented) families that are a growing presence in society today. She would like to see more of this.

Phil Flynn stated that DUSA’s appeal used to be primarily as a refuge for us but that this has shifted to us now serving as a refuge for others. We show empathy toward the disenfranchised members of society and offer them refuge and solace. He feels that our role vis-à-vis change within the Catholic Church is probably over. He commented that young people today have highly refined “bullshit detectors.” They are not interested in going someplace to hear someone talk. They will join communities that are proactive, that are about action and getting something done, getting involved to address salient problems.