

Chapter or Community: Dignity Detroit

Segment Three:

Discerning the Path Forward

1. When we last met we talked about key challenges and opportunities we saw ahead. Those were:

- Maintaining/increasing number of engaged members, younger members
- Continuing to have a worship space in a Catholic setting
- Learning more about what our membership wants/needs from us
- Responding to the current political climate as it affects LGBTQIA life
- Enhancing our online and other media presence to reach those looking for a spiritual home
- Taking advantage of funding by optimizing Mass offerings, Amazon Smile, Kroger Bonus Program and online payment of offering or other donations
- Look beyond our organization to other local resources and alliances

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

The Council (2018/2019) met for a strategic planning session on 6/23/18. An annual calendar is being developed. Service Projects and charitable donations will be reevaluated based on recent year's experiences and to better focus our efforts and resources. A budget is being developed based on expenses of the past two years. These efforts will help us stay on track to reach goals. We will also be sharing more of our financial information with the membership as we suspect most have no idea how many expenses go into providing Mass every Sunday, decorating for seasons, updating vestments and linens, etc. Ways to contribute using automatic contributions through one's checking account and the rewards programs listed above will be described in the newsletter.

We have updated and reorganized our website, with the help of Logan Bear. It is now possible to renew or become a member on that site. The log in information for our Facebook page has been reestablished and will be refreshed weekly. Advertising copy for the local gay paper has been revised.

A Survey Monkey tool has been created to query our members/attendees and will be deployed soon.

Welcoming those in attendance who we do not recognize as "regulars" and finding out how they learned about us will be helpful in maximizing outreach. Offering a variety of opportunities for persons to contribute to our chapter as liturgical ministers or other projects will help to create more engaged members.

We can take advantage of the expertise present on the Board of Dignity USA and other chapters in reading their responses to these questions on the D-USA website. The recent visit of the Board was very informative to the membership. We will publicize attendance at the national meeting.

2. What should the key priorities of Dignity USA be in the next few years? What's most important to us; what values from our rich history do we want to ensure are carried forward?

It will still be important to speak out as expert witnesses to national, world and church events. Informed Board members should maintain contacts with media personnel.

It will be even more important to serve as consultants for the chapters and members as they face challenges.

Our witness to the fact that "You can be gay and Catholic", and "Love is love", and speak to the truth of our lives and relationships will still be needed.

3. What resources do we need to fuel our "engine" (passion and purpose) in the future? Why would people want to invest their life energy and financial resources in support of this desired future?

The value of community is a powerful one. Focusing on activities that build community will be important, as well as increasing engagement and willingness to participate. A few Council members can't maintain all the activities. For many of us, this is our only spiritual community.

Informing members about local, national, and international issues in a way that motivates them must be prioritized. Using the newsletter, which is distributed to a wider audience than just the membership, will help with this, as will the website, and Facebook. Quarterly membership meetings should be an opportunity for two-way conversation with attendees, though attendance is not great.

We need to mentor/partner the next generation of Council members. Finding new candidates has been very difficult and in at least one case, Council members basically abandoned their office and the organization part way through the term. Thorough job descriptions need to be developed where there aren't any, so each officer is clear on their duties.

4. What is this community's guidance to the national leadership as they create a strategic plan for the next few years of Dignity USA's mission and work? Consider topics such as key commitments to mission, key goals, investments, financial resources, volunteer and leadership resources, talent recruitment and partnerships/outreach.

The hand-out provided from Dignity USA Board when they visited was very helpful in highlighting the mission and successes of Dignity USA in its first 50 years. "Speaking truth to power" and being "A prophetic voice for LGBTQI Equality in the Church and Society" will continue to be of paramount importance. Helping chapters by sharing successful membership-increasing strategies and recruiting "stand alone" members outside of chapters can help all of us to be more effective. Hosting conferences with expert speakers and opportunities to share has proven effective in the past. National Board members attending conferences held by other groups such as Call to Action and New Ways Ministry, as well as meetings with ecumenical participants and international points of view. Sharing insights from these assemblies with the rest of us is helpful for us. Visiting Chapters should continue to be a priority. When useful,

forming partnerships with other groups with related goals (like Equally Blessed) has been fruitful. When the value is less than the effort, knowing when to pull out is important, too.

We were impressed to see that Dignity USA had submitted an amicus brief with other faith and civil rights groups to the US Supreme Court in the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, recently decided, as well as comments on other cases. We suspect you will need to do more of this type of activity, best done at the national level, with the replacement member for Justice Kennedy surely swinging the Court further to the right.

Dignity USA needs to have an Executive Director. It has been blessed to have such a talented one in Marianne Duddy-Burke. Employing a tech expert may prove to be important going forward as well. Fundraising efforts, to date, have been appropriate. We would have to see a break-down of the budget to comment on more specific line items. Glenn Crane, from our Chapter was the national Treasurer until recently.