



VISIONEERING
WICHITA

Visioneering – Racial Diversity, Opportunity & Harmony Ecumenical Forum/Focus Group

March 6, 2007

Meeting Notes

This forum/focus group was designed to:

To seek faith-based guidance and assistance on what role the faith community can play in advancing positive race relations in the Wichita region.

- To share survey results, and determine
 - How you might use this information internally (within own congregations, faith community)
 - How you might help the RDOH Alliance to involve more faith leaders in increasing the dialogue around positive race relations

End-in-Mind: That faith leaders will begin strategies to promote community dialogue regarding positive race relations

Attendees: Rev. René Tario, Rev. Sammy Rivera, Rabbi Michael Davis, Rev. Dr. Cathy Northrup, Pastor Junius Dotson, Pastor Kevass Harding, Pastor Carol Meredith, Brian Black, Lavonta Williams, Margarita LaFarelle Hunt, Susan Leiker, Charles Maxey, Rev. Martha Sanchez, Deann Smith

Brenda Dietzman made presentation to meeting attendees, who had the following comments and suggestions:

- Wondered about the size of the sample; team explained that sample was representative – plans are to increase numbers on next survey, but most important thing is that it be demographically representative.
- ‘Interfaith’ issues (doctrines) may challenge interfaith, cross-denominational dialogues, but should focus on the highest values of every faith, the common ground – “issues of the heart.”
- Discussions should be framed as “Civic’ vs. ‘Theological”

Possible roles for faith leaders:

All agreed that the role of faith leaders is vital

- Faith leaders have ‘platforms’ to educate people
- Develop new, unexpected relationships
- Developing trust
- Become ‘agents of change’

- Consider long-term efforts
- Look for opportunities to 'dialogue' and create space
- Talk to own (faith community) groups
- Sponsor/host 'Congregation-to-congregation' events, i.e. "pulpit exchanges"
- Provide a 'Safe Environment' for conversations about race to happen
- Promote 'diverse work force' via networking within faith community networks
- Promote 'people of faith' to serve in elected offices
- Stay focused on 'racial diversity, opportunity and harmony' issues
- Personally reach out to others
- Promote 'round table' discussions
- Challenge/empower members of our congregation to promote positive change
- Listen to 'stories'

Next Steps

- Schedule another luncheon gathering to talk about next steps and actionable plans re: "interfaith roundtable discussions"
- 'Widen' circle – Each one begin/continue conversation, and invite "Influential" others to the table
- Become 'Vision Partners'