



NEXT LEVEL MINISTRY
AME7.CHURCH

AME7 SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY PLAN

OUR MISSION

[List the purpose for existing in one sentence. Answers the question of WHY?]

(Example: As a body of Christ, paying our rent to the world, by acts of service through social justice).

(Living through Micah 6:8; **He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God**).

As servants of Christ, our mission is to be repairers of a broken world through loving all of creation, seeking justice for the marginalized, and building community through faithful relationships with our neighbors. We are walking in the light of Isaiah 58:12; "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of future generations; you shall be called repairer of the breach, restorer of the streets to live in."

OUR VISION

With this ministry, our community will look more like a world in faithful fellowship with one another, striving to please God.

OUR VALUES

The values of this ministry consist of being community oriented, people focused, transformational, compassion, game changing.

The expectations of this ministry include developing intentional faith formation among churches, transformative mission mindedness among leaders and parishioners, & the expectation of fidelity to fulfilling the need of community presence.

OUR COVENANT

As members of this faith community, we commit to: *[list in bullet form what the commitment of members within this ministry should aspire to]*

- Ensuring people

As members of the faith community we commit to:

- Serving with the same love we profess Christ to have for us
- Understanding that commitment is physical and requires more than monetary resources
- Using our voice and position of privilege (when applicable) for the advocacy of others
- A willingness to treat others with respect even when we do not agree

OUR ELEVATOR SPEECH (HOW WE DESCRIBE OUR MINISTRY TO OTHERS)

Example: **The AME 7th district is a transformational, progressive, and game changing district. Not only do we display the word of God through our actions, but we also display it through our message.** *We introduce people to Jesus, interpret the Christian life, invite transformation, and invest in God's dream for the world. We are a vibrant, Spirit-led community that welcomes all ages and invites people from all walks of life to follow Jesus and to be courageous risk-takers who promote justice, mercy, and peace. We view practicing our faith, and growing in faith as a lifelong process as well as something we do everyday, everywhere. At First Church, we emphasize building authentic friendships, listening to each other's faith stories, encouraging people to discover, develop and deploy their gifts in service to others, particularly in our downtown community.*

The AME 7th District descends from a faithful community of worshipers in Revolutionary War Era Philadelphia who gathered to provide for an empowering space of worship and self-help when they were denied the opportunity to fully participate in community with brothers and sisters of another race in the. That same fiery commitment was translated as the church in South Carolina found a place in the hearts of slaves and former slaves in South Carolina who wanted to know what promises the word of God held for them beyond systems of oppression. Today that same church seeks to live into that prophetic mantle by creating opportunities for vibrant worship for all people, sharing the good news of God's grace, mercy, and love, while seeking to live out a prophetic call to restorative justice.

OUR STATISTICS

- Location: 490 churches in South Carolina ; churches located in 46 counties
- Membership: 14,500+ total
- 3 Large District Wide Events
- Partnership with Allen University
- Annual Young Adult Retreat: Impact Weekend (spring)
- Emerging Leaders Academy (launch date TBD)

OUR CURRENT REALITY SCORECARD (SWOT ANALYSIS)

OUR PRIMARY STRENGTHS

- Membership (This district has the numbers)

OUR PRIMARY CHALLENGES (INTERNAL & EXTERNAL)

- Internal: Who will lead the effort
- External: What communities get served

OUR OPPORTUNITIES (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

- Galvanize a group or sector or people
- Partnership(s) with local and regional organizations with similar goals

THE RESULTS WE'RE SEEKING (TANGIBLE GOALS WITHIN NEXT 3 YEARS)

- Have affordable housing units throughout the 7th district (long term, which region should go first, buying of land, etc...)
- Food banks (for areas that are in food desert, this is an example of environmental/social economic justice).
- Creating action plans for elected officials within the 7th district (no matter the party).
- Financial literacy sessions (with churches and students at Allen University).

OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR MEMBERS AND LEADERS (CLERGY AND LAITY)

Goal 1: Develop a Core Competency for Community Advocacy.

- **Goal 1-1:** Create Learning Opportunities: Congregations within proximity to one another or on a Presiding Elder District Level should set aside time annually (or as needed) to learn how community advocacy is scripturally based and what churches can or cannot do in relation to tax status & political activity. A clear path should be laid out for how churches can work together to help advocate for the issues that matter most. There is strength in numbers. Churches should make an intentional effort to send representation to local grass roots organizing opportunities and even consider hosting non-partisan workshops.
- **Goal 1-2:** Each congregation should designate or delegate at least two to three members who will attend local government meetings (city/town/county council, boards of education, infrastructure public input meetings) who can report to the local serve as liaisons to local officials to ensure that the church is aware of what changes are taking place in their community. This will ensure that the church creates a proactive profile on what is taking place instead of solely being reactionary.
- **Goal 1-3:** Utilize youth who can help create a web presence to share the faith community's response to community issues that would benefit from more attention and support. Assess and evaluate in progression which platforms are most effective or utilized by the immediate community.
- **Goal 1-4:** Developing Candidates from within the community for public service to ensure holistic representation in matters that impact our parishes in terms of public policy. Those candidates should represent the immediate community but may not be from the same faith community. Churches should have a plan/formula which is applicable for any election setting up a phone back to encouraged members of the community to vote.

Goal 2: Creating Churches that Lead in Green Faith

- **Goal 2-1:** Churches should develop familiarity with the geography of their community to resources for food production, as well as waste management, chemical processing, and public spaces for community use. Community members should learn the community history of their parish and how policy has shaped the current layout of said community. Children's church and Vacation Bible School are great opportunities to teach words and terms that matter in the life of the community such as 'creation justice' and 'green faith'. Within three years members should be familiar with a fair number of scriptures that give call to justice for creation.
- **Goal 2-2:** Leaders should establish set times in the year for preaching and teaching (ex: beginning of spring, near Earth Day or following the Lenten season to relay the Resurrection of Christ w/ the resurrection of the Earth. Those resources should be shared in common or through electronic resources so that they may be utilized in community. Churches should establish two to three ways they can help to green the earth of impact the health of their community, such as sponsoring plant beds in a community garden and volunteering to help with the harvest and share the produce with members. Churches that have
- **Goal 2-3:** The environmental justice institute at Allen University can provide great training on how communities of faith can be shaped in being responsive to greening the earth. Trainings can be annually on a statewide level at Allen or on an annual conference level with annual training. Resources designed for sharing such as; *The Anvil of the AME Church*, and *Encyclical on Creation Justice* by Pope Francis should be used as teaching resources.
- **Goal 2-4:** Utilize the same social media strategy as goal one.
- **Goal 2-5:** Goals can be included in the ministry plan of action which is reported during the time of annual conference. Churches should also give report of how they and parishioners have made their facilities and personal property more sustainable. Those goals should reflect the local communities desire to reduce waste, unnecessary spending, and partnerships with local agencies such as the local power company who may offer credits for the institution of solar power. Lists of any government grants for retrofitting should be shared along the necessary time tables.

Goal 3: Restoring 'Returning Citizens' to Right Relationship

- **Goal 3-1:** Develop a clear understanding of the needs of those returning from incarceration and how they can be contributors to the community. Create an ethos that sees the restoration of those who have cycled through the justice system as God's justice. Churches should have the relationships within community to help integrate those back in society.
- **Goal 3-2:** Local churches should intentionally set aside time to share the rights and requirements of the formerly incarcerated so that they will know what they can do (particularly around times of local and national elections). Often because of the lack of understanding, upon return they lead lives of solitude because of the presumption that they have no rights. Members should be identified who have been away. Churches who have created active prison ministries should also be aware of how their presence creates a bridge for those currently serving time and their reentry back into society.
- **Goal 3-3:** Churches should partner with a list of episcopal approved agencies who are providing service to returning citizens. They should identify how they might be supporting platforms for those individuals prior to their return so as to help shape congregational outlook. Theological support documents which encourage a return to life should be intentionally shared with those individuals.
- **Goal 3-4:** Employ the same social media strategy as the prior two goals.
- **Goal 3-5:** Churches should plan to host expungement workshops with local legal authorities to help returning citizens clear the first major hurdle of finding employment in their new life. Churches should also research and find out what local requirements there are in terms of listing incarceration history on employment applications. Coalitions in some cities have partnered together for initiatives such as 'Ban the Box' which was designed to remove the box on employment applications which required applicants to check the box on whether they had been previously incarcerated. It has been documented that this has led to discrimination by some employers.

ACTION PLAN

Step 1: Set a clear action plan for 3 years and build from it.

Step 2: Specific action per quarter, per region

Step 3: Trainings

Step 4: Social Media Strategy

Step 5: Build the ministry with the social justice project

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Suggested dates to be implemented on the local church level December- November
- Include specific timelines and benchmarks for organization, implementation
- There needs to be sufficient action per quarter

DATES TO KNOW

- **Leadership Development Weekend: January 25-27**
- **Holy Convocation: April 10-13**
- **IMPACT Weekend: April 26-28**
- **ASPIRE 2019: July 7-10**