



OVERVIEW FOR 2017 TO 2018

The purpose of the New York State Council of Churches is to embrace a spirit of ecumenism and hospitality to live into God's call to do justice and to love our neighbor. Pointing to the Kingdom of God on earth, we envision a world where the marginalized are freed from poverty, where prisoners can be restored to live happier and healthier lives, and where we can help people of all ages grow in their Christian discipleship. We represent 7,000 congregations across New York from our eight partner denominations which include American Baptist Churches, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, Presbyterian, U.S.A., Quakers, Reformed Church of America, United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church.

ADVOCACY

We advocate for and with the poor and disenfranchised in the public square.

Legislative Briefings

We offer the best actionable information possible to help congregations and their denominations lift up their voice in the public square at the state and national level. We also encourage our denominational partners to work together on an ecumenical and interfaith basis and with secular partners. We provide trusted information and connection. We partner with grassroots organizers by offering our presence, participation, and leadership.

1. We hold legislative briefings 2 to 3 times a year.
2. Monthly check in calls convened by a Social Witness Commission beginning in January 2018.
3. Publication of information about events, legislation, and denominational, ecumenical, and secular resources. Also provide resources to give theological grounding to our work and tie to the National Council of Church's policy and theological work.
4. Offer information on our web page for issue areas.
5. Further develop a model with a consultant to help congregations do advocacy.
6. Show up to and speak at actions (i.e. Coordinating with the People's Campaign, showing up on strike lines, and demonstrations across state)
7. Continue to organize New York delegation in Washington as part of Ecumenical Advocacy Days and encourage Council members to participate.

Legislative issues we profile will change as new developments and opportunities occur. At the moment, these are the areas on which we are working.

1. Preserving and improving health care laws and policies
2. Ensuring Federal and state budgets and tax policy help the poor and disenfranchised
3. Union protections (Defeat of Constitutional Convention Amendment on November 7)
4. Immigration reform including restoration of DACA. Tools for churches to participate in sanctuary movement and other immigrant related activities.
5. Implementation of state Raise the Age legislation and addressing other issues related to mass incarceration.
6. Environmental justice including support of New York Re-News
7. Childcare
8. Advocacy for Affordable and Supportive Housing
9. Public education funding (rural and urban)

Collaborations

1. Re-Entry Ministry

Help congregations develop ministries to assist people re-entering society from prison under the auspices of the Northeast Ecumenical Re-Entry from Prison Network.

Sponsorship of regional conversations and/or conferences on re-entry in the Spring and Fall of 2018.

2. Supportive and Affordable Housing Ministry.

Formation of the Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative. Collaborative will make grants for consultants to help local churches secure funds to build supportive and affordable housing. 50% of grant money for New York City and 50% for the rest of the state. Partners in the collaborative include the Collegiate Corporation, Enterprise Partners, Presbytery of New York City, New York State Council of Churches, Banana Kelly, the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, Bronx Clergy Task Force, Kingdom Faith Developers and others.

CHAPLAINCY

We certify and support chaplains in state institutions.

1. Publish a guide for prison chaplains and local churches to be approved by the Chaplaincy Commission.
2. Foster connection between local churches and prison chaplains
3. Continue with certification process for chaplains in the state system
4. Offer financial and planning assistance for annual chaplain's conference sponsored by the New York State Protestant Chaplain's Association. Conference was October 10 to 12, 2017.
5. Continued visitations to chaplains in their institutional settings
6. Offer support to chaplains through good working relationships with state agencies employing chaplains.
7. Publish helpful resources for chaplains and local churches on prison ministry.

EDUCATION AND WORSHIP

We help people of all ages grow in the Christian faith.

1. Bridging the Urban Rural Divide Collaboration. We held first conference in July of 2018 in Johnstown. The Council will hold two regional conversations on Bridging the Rural Urban Divide in Johnstown, Western New York and lower Hudson Valley. The Second Annual conference will be held in late June 2018.
2. United Nations Trip for high school youth, February 20 to 22, 2018. Program is on resistance and activism for high school students.
3. Publishing of resources and events for faith formation and worship on website

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