Please join us for Who is Our Neighbor Community Development Seminars in 2019 and 2020. Click here to register for one of five seminars near you.

At the New York State Council of Churches, we inspire congregations to dream big.

Having served as a pastor for 27 years, I know how easy it is for congregations to lose their focus and be self-preoccupied. A revitalized congregation, however, is profoundly interested in answering Jesus’ persistent question, “who is our neighbor?”

Let me be more frank, if you want to grow as a congregation, you need to get out in the community, meet your neighbors, and show you care.

I love the Methodist view that, when pastors are sent to their next assignment, they are sent to be pastor to the whole community and not just a single congregation. John Wesley got out there. He preached to coal miners, worked picket lines, and preached to prisoners. The clerics at the time were quite critical of Wesley for doing all this preaching outside established church buildings. But Wesley saw the whole city as his parish. If a building was not in service of its community, then it was not much of a building and probably would eventually fall apart.

In our time, congregations revitalize through outreach to their communities.

*It’s about seeking the welfare of our whole city by speaking out, showing up, and being present where we convey profound care for all people.

*It’s about revitalizing communities by embracing people and loving them instead of displacing them. It’s about doing justice, standing up to prejudice and Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) attitudes.

*It’s about partnering with many in the secular world who can lend their expertise and resources to build healthy and racially and economically inclusive economies.

*And it’s about repurposing buildings and property to create great worship and community spaces, arts centers, affordable housing, schools, and parks.

If you want to help congregations be an agent for change and a blessing on their neighborhoods, towns, cities and regions, please join us for one of five “Who is Our Neighbor” Seminars to be held in rural, urban and suburban locations across the state in 2019 and 2020.

Click here to register for a seminar and to see a sample agenda.
We also welcome you to be a sponsor for our Who is Our Neighbor Seminars. So far Upper New York Conference, United Methodist Church, Goldstein Hall Attorneys at Law, Pace University Land Use Law Center, New York State Association of Affordable Housing, and Interfaith Dwellings Corporation of New Rochelle. Click here to read an introductory letter and here to purchase a sponsorship.

Come with members of your congregation to consider your mission, build relationships outside your four walls, address barriers in your community, and better use your property to improve neighborhoods, build schools, community gardens, affordable housing, day care centers, arts centers and community spaces…and find the financing to do it.

We will introduce you to people in the religious, government, finance, non-profit, profit, and legal worlds with whom you can partner to build communities of bold hospitality and love where all can flourish.

Join us!

In faith,

Peter Cook

Executive Director

PS. Over the next few months, watch our website, WWW.NYSCOC.org for additional resources. We will also post articles on our Facebook Page. If you have stories, you would like to share about your congregation and community development in your area, write to us at Pcook@nyscoc.org or call 508-380-8289.