

Transformation Grant

Midyear report

Submitted by C. Katovitch on behalf of Downtown Presbyterian Church (Rochester)

2/18/19

- **What were you hoping to accomplish?**

Our goal was to build connections between ourselves (the congregation) and our neighbors. Areas of particular outreach included young adults and those living on the streets. We hoped to use this opportunity to step out beyond the congregation, as well as explore new ways church can happen.

- **Who was touched by your project or program?**

Already in these first few months, our potential for connection has blossomed. We have established a relationship with a local organization that brings many in the Rochester community together for shared outreach to our neighbors on the streets via a monthly cookout (The Boomtown Brothers), and have created a Meetup and facebook page as a way of spreading the word about future Church Without Walls gatherings. The Meetup quickly reached the maximum participant limit for a small group (50 people), so we expect to use some of our Transformation Grant to purchase an upgrade so that we can have an unlimited meetup.

- **How did this grant energize or transform your congregation or community?**

Although preliminary planning only allowed us to have one outdoor event so far due to the Rochester winter, that gathering proved to be a wonderful time for those present to meet and break bread and share communion with our homeless neighbors. Participants shared about what a joyful time this was, and many have shared their enthusiasm about coming spring/ summer activities.

▪ What did you learn from this project and what are your next steps?

Already we have learned (I believe) about the power of simply showing up and being present. We have seen how all ministry is reciprocal - never a matter of simply “helping” our neighbors, but rather— as the great writer and activist Fr. Gregory Boyle says— of “letting ourselves *be reached* by them.” We all have so many gifts to offer each other.

Next steps include:

- * Re-connecting with the Boomtown Brothers when their cookouts-for-the-hungry begin again (April-October), to see what we can contribute;
- * Establishing an unlimited Meetup group;
- * Publicizing upcoming gatherings via the Facebook page;
- * Exploring interest in other CWW events, including sharing a time of reflection in the abandoned subway (a peculiarly meaningful sacred space), “guerrilla gardening,” chalking, park cleanups, etc.

▪ *For Congregations:* Please share a story of where you saw God in this project.

We see God in the promise that shines forth in so much interest in the meetup group (the surprise of 50 people filling up the group practically overnight), and the potential for connection in the Spirit with those gathering themselves together to be present to our most vulnerable neighbors in Rochester.