



FAITH IN DETROIT

Most would agree that “It’s a New Day in Detroit.” Catholic sisters and brothers of religious communities, many of whom have been serving in the city for decades, recognize it also. They understand that new problems demand new solutions. Old models of ministry may not effectively address today’s challenges—of poverty, foreclosures, water shutoffs, racism, joblessness, and failing educational and transportation systems. These challenges call out to the faith community for a new response. Faith in Detroit is just such a response.

Faith in Detroit is a gathering of women and men who are members and associates of Catholic religious communities who live and/or minister in the City of Detroit. It has a mailing list of close to 100. It began in January 2013, when a group of Sisters of Mercy met to talk about ministry in Detroit. At the same time, an IHM IHMs was meeting to talk about the commitment to Detroit. The Mercies and IHMs soon recognized the value of inviting other religious communities in Detroit to join, in order to determine the need for and direction of the group. It has since grown to include members and associates of the Basilians, Capuchins, Daughters of Charity, Dominicans, Franciscans, Holy Cross Brothers, Home Visitors, Jesuits, Sisters of St. Joseph, as well as the IHMs and Mercies. We began by learning what religious are doing across the city, identifying the variety of ministries, organizations, community groups, neighborhoods and local leaders with whom we are engaged. The questions asked were: “What is the call of Detroit to us at this time? What are the issues? What is our role? What should we be doing to help? Should we be doing anything together?” Finding answers to these questions has become the ongoing group process.

Faith in Detroit meets quarterly on Saturday mornings at the Samaritan Center on Connor, hosted by Holy Cross Brother Francis Boylan. Attendance ranges from 25 to 35. The meetings include prayer and reflection, conversations about significant issues, and commitment to action. At the Feb. 14 meeting, Jesse Cox of Marygrove College led a discussion on racism and how to build Martin Luther King’s “Beloved Community” in Detroit. Other consultants to the group include Lila Cabbil of the Raymond and Rosa Parks Institute, Linda Campbell of “The Peoples’ Platform,” and Gloria Lowe of “We Want Green Too.” Our black brothers and sisters share their insights and challenge us, while we listen and learn.

Over the last few months, Faith in Detroit has developed and affirmed a statement that represents its mission and vision. The statement reads:

FAITH in DETROIT: Listen, Participate, Collaborate

Following the call and example of Jesus, we are Catholic women and men vowed religious and associates who live in and/or minister in Detroit. Called “Faith in Detroit,” we commit to listen, participate, and collaborate:

- *To **listen** to the concerns of Detroiters, especially those suffering from “serious unjust situations, instances of profound social inequality and conditions of poverty.” (Pope Francis*)*
- *To **participate** in neighborhood and citywide actions to effect positive social and environmental change*
- *To **collaborate** with other groups committed to the empowerment of people and to systemic change for the common good.*

Through contemplative listening and dialogue, we desire to be a significant voice with the vulnerable, the poor, children and elders. We recognize that the basic needs for water, food, housing, education, jobs, health care, transportation and safety call us daily to serve the common good of all life.

As followers of Jesus, we seek a Detroit where all are one:

- *where racism is recognized, dismantled and healed,*
- *where government is inclusive of and accountable to the people,*
- *where public planning reflects the common good,*
- *where quality education is the reality for everyone,*
- *where opportunity is accessible to everyone,*
- *where compassion for suffering people and our planet is never sacrificed to feasibility or profit,*
- *where voices of mercy, peace and justice resound.*

We believe in the gifts of others and welcome their perspectives. We are persons of a global community who embrace our interconnectedness with all creation.

* Pope Francis, Address to Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, June 16, 2014

The Faith in Detroit listserv has become an active and effective tool used by the members to share information about what is going on in the city, and where religious need to influence, speak out and witness.

Faith in Detroit has also designed and produced a bumper sticker which reads, “Faith in Detroit: Listen, Participate, Collaborate.” The phrase “Faith in Detroit” has a double meaning. We *have* faith in Detroit, and we *are* Faith in Detroit. To obtain a bumper sticker, please contact one of the members.

In the beginning, it was not clear whether the group would continue. But people keep showing up on Saturday mornings because they are finding community, support, and inspiration in each other. Keep your eyes open, not just for the bumper sticker, but also for the human signs of Faith in Detroit.