

Countdown to Community Justice Camp is on

By Colleen Sym - Social Justice Coordinator, St. Mark, Orangeville

Published: February 2010

Related Topics: Social Justice, Spirituality

The journey began in May 2008 when Bishop Bird accepted the invitation of the Anglican Church of Canada to host a justice camp.

To date there have been four Justice Camps. Each has followed the same basic outline. Bring together a diverse group of people of faith, to date predominantly Anglicans, and spend a week getting to know each other, becoming trusting of each other, worshiping and learning about justice together. The week gets divided up in this way:

- Day 1 Building the Learning Community
- Day 2 Introducing theme and concepts
- Day 3-5 Engaging the world through immersion experience
- Day 6 Reporting, integrating and celebrating

Community development is the theme of our camp. Community development in its simplest form is a process of meeting, trusting, naming and acting. When people come together as community, develop trusting relationships, name the justice issues to be addressed and together take action for change, transformation of the unjust structures of our societies to just communities is possible. This is the mission of the Church.

Dr. Christopher Lind has written that "a formal secular definition of justice would be to give to everyone that which is their due. In contemporary Christian theology, another way of thinking about justice is to understand it as 'right relationship'". Community Justice Camp is about the creation of communities where we are in right relationship with each other.

Peter Clutterbuck, a leading social activist around the province's poverty reduction strategy and Executive Director of the Social Planning Network of Ontario says, "The Niagara Anglican Diocese has been at the forefront of our cross-community poverty reduction campaign, most recently joining low income advocates in a major event calling for increased social benefits to allow people to eat healthily. Justice Camp is another example of how the Diocese and the Anglican Church supports building leadership for the creation of a more just and equitable community and society."

Day 1 - Building the Learning Community

Community Justice Camp will get underway on the evening of May 9. Participants will come together to share a meal and start to build the learning community. There will be a welcome and overview of the week by The Rev'd Canon Terry DeForest, Chair of the Planning Coalition and introduction of the key support volunteers for the week. As well, we anticipate an address by Bishop Bird regarding his personal learning goals and expectations of the week.

The learning goals for Community Justice Camp are to have participants acquire new skills and to build their capacity to become leaders in the justice mission of the Church. This will be done through

considering the concepts of charity vs. justice, their strengths and limitations as they relate to outreach; learning tactics for discerning and interpreting local needs in a way that leads to action; learning techniques for grass roots organizing and developing a justice-oriented approach to outreach; striving to be prophetic, and; sharing best practices for community building, advocating and lobbying on the many issues of social justice we find in our world.

The approach to learning at the camp will be to educate for social transformation through critical analyses and hands-on experience. It will be an opportunity to learn from each other and to experience in community the interconnection of faith, theology and spirituality with real people's lives and struggles.

An important part of the participants' work on the opening night will be to map their personal justice journey and identify their personal learning goals. These will be revisited in a process of evaluation on the final day of Camp.

Day 2 - Introducing Theme and Concepts

Session 1: What is community development?

- Introduction
- CD in 3D

Introduction to community development

Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) defines public justice as the political dimension of loving one's neighbour, caring for creation and achieving the common good. Public justice is particularly the responsibility of government and citizens. It involves seeking out and implementing just policies that allow everyone to live in dignity and participate in community.

Using the CPJ *Dignity For All: the campaign for a poverty free Canada* as an example, we will explore what the concept of "community" means to us and reflect on how seeking the elimination of poverty is about developing a better national community for everyone.

Facilitator: Karri Munn-Venn, Socio-Economic Policy Analyst with Citizens for Public Justice

Inspired by the Old Testament call "to seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God," (Micah 6:8) and driven by the belief that, working together, we can build a better world, Karri is an enthusiastic advocate for positive social change.

Karri has over fifteen years experience in the international development community and a strong background in policy analysis, network coordination, and government relations. She currently co-chairs the Global Economic Justice Program Committee of KAIROS and sits on the International Affairs Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. She was also the Coordinator of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation's Americas Policy Group for several years. Karri has lived and worked in Brazil and Ecuador and travelled extensively throughout Latin America. She has seen many issues—poverty, insecurity, environmental destruction—that have been a part of the Latin American reality, gain prevalence here in Canada. As a Policy Analyst with CPJ, the focus of Karri's work is on poverty reduction, taxation, and other socio-economic issues.

Karri has a Master's Degree in International Affairs from the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs (Carleton University) and an Honours Bachelor of Arts Degree in International Studies and

Political Science (York University). She speaks French, Spanish and Portuguese. She and her family are members of Knox Presbyterian Church, Ottawa.

CD in 3D

In the second part of "what is community development", campers will join their immersion groups and together create a play-doh sculpture that shows what community development means to them. After an opportunity to view each others sculptures, each group will be asked to report back on what their sculpture means and what the contributions of the group members were to the process of creating the sculpture. The sculptures will remain on display throughout the camp.

Session 2: From charity to justice

We believe now more than ever, in these tough economic times, that we, as Anglicans and all people of faith must look to the future as people of hope standing in solidarity with those experiencing injustice. Through acts of charity so many of us work with devotion at trying to meet the needs of those individuals at the local community level through the operation of community centres, daycares, breakfast programs, thrift shops, food banks, overnight shelters, hospitality programs and other social services. We know that we cannot do enough. Because charity is not enough.

This interactive workshop will have participants explore the concepts of charity vs. justice, their strengths and limitations as they relate to community development and Church outreach efforts. Through Bible study and reflection, we will review how the gospel calls us to transformative justice. Participants will develop tools to enhance their community development efforts by adopting a justice-oriented approach.

Facilitator: The Rev'd Canon Maylanne Maybee, Deacon, Coordinator for Justice Education and Networks, Partnerships Department, Anglican Church of Canada. Maylanne was born into a diplomatic family and spent her childhood in Australia, Washington DC, and Beirut Lebanon as well as in Ottawa. She received a degree in French Language and Literature from Trinity College, Toronto and studied education and theology at Oxford University.

When Maylanne first became involved in urban ministry in the early 1980s—working in a Toronto neighbourhood of low income people—a deep recession was affecting all of Canada. Food banks were a new phenomenon and downtown Toronto churches were opening shelters to accommodate those in "crisis". Within a short period Maylanne was convinced by the evidence—and with support from her peers, made a personal decision to stop putting energy into "charitable" responses to poverty and homelessness, and set about instead to seek systemic and long-term solutions that had a greater potential to make a difference in people's lives.

Session 3: Being right is not enough

This workshop will talk about the building blocks of community organizing to increase social justice.

Many people who work for social justice feel that injustice can be corrected by doing good research, having the facts and presenting them in a clear and eloquent way to decision-makers. When the decision-makers (in government or in business or even in our own institutions) say 'no' to us we often go away feeling we didn't do a good enough job, or feel frustrated because the decision-making system isn't 'fair'. We have been raised and conditioned to believe that government and organizational decision-making is 'fair and rational' and... it's not. That's why there is injustice—because the people who hold

decision-making roles can make decisions that benefit some and do not benefit others.

To hold decisions-makers accountable we have to organize a base of community or collective power that backs up our definition of what is 'right' and demonstrates to decision-makers that if they are not 'fair' they will lose their jobs, lose votes, lose profits, lose support. The workshop will use participatory activities to illustrate the principles of community organizing.

Facilitator: Mike Balkwill is a community organizer (the job Obama made famous) with thirty years experience.

Day 3-5 - Engaging the World

At Community Justice Camp the goal is to engage with the people who have lived experience of injustice and with those who devote their time, talents and skills to fostering change. People like our Immersion Group leaders who will be facilitating face to face and hands-on encounters in communities across the Diocese that embody a justice focus over a charity focus, including urban, suburban/town and rural sites and dynamics.

The goal of the immersion days at Community Justice Camp is to engage your head, your heart and your hands in local justice issues. Here's what we have been working on... Biographies of the facilitators will be available at www.justicecamp.ca.

Poverty

Jessica Duarte and Jacquie Keefe will be leading a group whose focus is on poverty. Their group will be exploring issues related to poverty and poverty reduction in Hamilton. They will explore such things as homelessness, issues facing the working poor, the unemployed and those living on social assistance. Potential site visits include St. Matthew's House, Salvation Army, Welcome Inn, Mission Services, Good Shepherd Centre, Hamilton Food Share.

Environment

Susan Curran and Bill Mous will be leading a group whose focus is on the environment. Using sustainable methods of transportation (walking, cycling and mass transit) this immersion group will explore how people have advocated for environmental justice in their community, and learn how to be empowered to do so in our own; recognizing that our faith calls us to action that is both local and global, individual and corporate, responsive and prophetic.

Food Security

Blair Richardson and Janice Toth will be leading a group that will acquire a deep and comprehensive understanding of the extent to which food insecurity exists in Canada; its social costs, its relationship with poverty and its root causes. Through face to face encounters with policy-makers, academics and social service agency staff, participants will explore then critique solutions to food insecurity and hunger.

Housing

Murray MacAdam and Dennis Hurst's group will learn there's no place like home... people in our society

who "couch-surf", live in a shelter, or in a rundown apartment, know this only too well. In the housing and homelessness immersion group you will meet the faces behind the housing crisis issue first-hand, including low-income tenants, community centre workers, homeless shelter staff, housing advocates, and non-profit housing providers. And by visiting a housing co-op and swinging hammers at a Habitat for Humanity build, you'll be part of the solution.

Aboriginal Justice

Val Kerr and Ellie Johnson will be leading this group. The First Nations immersion experience will look at Residential Schools and the aftermath of these schools, First Nations Land Claims, Native Friendship Centers as well as other service agencies serving First Nations people in and around the Niagara Area. We will travel to Brantford to visit Six Nations Reserve and the Residential School there.

Welcoming the Stranger

Deirdre Pike and Bill Carrothers will be leading a group that explores how we create inclusive and equitable spaces in our communities for those who are marginalized for a multitude of reasons. Through engaging in local newcomer programs, support places for people who are economically marginalized, and LGBTQ Positive Space training among other opportunities, participants will return to their communities with a fuller understanding of what it means to live, walk, and work from an anti-oppression framework.

Building Neighbourhoods

Diane Baltaz and Sue-Ann Ward will be leading a group that as a learning community will visit the Working Centre in Kitchener, the Dragon Centre, Jamesville Community Centre, McQuesten Community Centre, Wesley Centre, and STAR in Hamilton, to tour facilities and speak with a variety of stakeholders about grass roots community building efforts that strengthen residents' connections to economic opportunity, positive social networks, and effective resource sharing. Hands on opportunities will include food preparation and enjoyment as part of a community kitchen project. The group will also have occasions for discussion with members of neighbourhood Community Planning Teams, as well as with representatives from the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and the Hamilton Community Foundation.

Empowering Communities and Coalition Building

David Derbyshire will be leading a group that will gain an understanding of the Asset Based Community Development model. The group will explore how the communities have been attempting to build social capital within a number of neighbourhoods in the City of Hamilton. The group will explore the origins and development of a number of "local planning teams" made up of residents, service providers, institutions, places of worship, business and industry who are working together to focus on the strengths that exist within a neighbourhood and how they can be brought together to address the challenges. With the permission of a couple of these Community Planning Teams the group will gain a better understanding of how they are working to make their neighbourhoods a better place to live, work and raise a family.

Day 6 - Reporting, integrating and celebrating

Sharing our Learning and Collecting the Wisdom

This is the opportunity for participants to report back on their experience, share their learnings and apply them in a way that allows them to use their skills as agents of change.

Each Immersion group will identify a problem or issue they encountered in their immersion experience and formulate a solution. The report back to the camp plenary will be through the presentation of a community development project by each group that incorporates the learnings from the plenary sessions Sunday and Monday and from their immersion group experience.

The Immersion groups will each design a community development project that will identify:

- the issue;
- the goals of the project;
- community development methods to be used;
- the necessary resources to carry out the project;
- how the project will engage and support the empowerment of the community;
- how it will accommodate diverse needs, and;
- the expected outcomes.

Each group will have 15 minutes for their presentation. No PowerPoint presentations allowed. Extreme creativity encouraged.