

Community Engagement Director

Submitted by: Beth Walker

I thought there was a Director of Community Engagement under the By-Laws but could not find one in to encourage, facilitate and recognize the work of engaging the community beyond our walls in the ministry and mission of our congregation-in other words, making sure we are welcoming those interested in sharing in our ministry and mission and keeping our congregation open to their presence when the invitation is accepted.

List of the members currently serving on your ministry or leadership team:

- ❖ This position does not have an official ministry team, but the work of this is done through our Pastor, Volunteer Coordinator and Members. This year I would like to recognize a few people for outstanding work for their contribution to our Congregations engagement in the wider community:
 - Rev. Michael Caine is serving on the Board of Directors of POWER, CCORD, the Philadelphia Association of the UCC's Committee on Ministry, and the Joint Venture Ministry Team (JVMT)
 - Suzanne Cole has faithfully and effectively maintained our Congregations Web Page and Facebook presence.
 - Janice Smith whose skills as a carpenter provided us with the courage and know-how to create our Christmas Story in the courtyard.
 - Barry Evans is serving as the Chair of the Recognized Community Organization CCORD (Center City Organization for Responsible Development-Recognized Community Organization) in reviewing development plans in the center city of Philadelphia, river to river, Walnut Street to Spring Garden Street.
 - The Saturday Breakfast Ministry Team (under the oversight of the Outreach SLG - Chaired by Clark Dingman) inviting in many volunteers who share our concern for and desire to care for those without a stable home environment through serving breakfast and whatever we have available in our clothing cupboard.
 - The members of the Joint Venture Ministry Team who engaged our neighbors in the plans for construction of a building to provide supportive housing for 34 chronically homeless individuals.
 - Gerry Woodroffe who faithfully attends Association and Conference meetings on behalf of Old First.

As you look at your goals for 2019, what were you able to accomplish? Please be as specific as possible.

- ❖ This is a new position for me and it took me a year to get clear on what the work is about and where we might grow it more.

Where is your group or ministry area stuck? What 2019 goals were not accomplished? What is your group or ministry area pondering?

- ❖ I would like to encourage us to think of ourselves as Ambassadors for this Congregation... for a Community of Faith that is mission focused on living out the inclusiveness of God's love for all and the importance of caring for each other and, in particular, those on the margins.

What do you hope to accomplish in 2020?

- ❖ We have a draft plan for 2020... it is ambitious. It includes welcoming new members, providing training in talking about faith and encouraging us to expand our individual engagement with the world through our faith community. We have some plans for use of our Courtyard as a stage for expression of the Redemptive power of Love during Lent and Easter and the Wonder of God's Love in the Christmas Story. We also plan to continue to work on building a network of care with other faith communities focusing on our mission to care for those who are on the margins, the homeless. If you would like to participate in finalizing the plan, or just want to see it in its current format, just ask me, I can send you a copy.

What are the ways that the church can support your team in achieving your goals?

- ❖ Attend the training when offered. Help with planning of events and programs. Help with construction and installation when needed. Help with web-based and social media communications. Think of yourself as an Ambassador of Old First in the community you encounter and, where you can make connections, make them.

The church will be 300 years old in 2027. How do you see your ministry evolving in the next seven years? What will it take to achieve those goals?

- ❖ Community engagement is ongoing. We need members who are interested in this outward focus both as a way of sharing information about what our mission is but also as a way of inviting people to join us. Here are a few ways that this will likely evolve:
 - More social media/internet based expressions of Old First as a community of faith.
 - Using our properties exterior as a stage upon which to tell the story.
 - As our use of space changes, thinking of how we can use the new space in different and exciting ways to engage both foot traffic and those in vehicles to come visit us or become involved in our mission and ministry will always be a consideration.
 - Networking with other groups/communities who share our concern for the marginalized and who recognize the importance of coming together to help others and advocate for caring for all people and changing systems that are broken, racist, dehumanizing and simply unhealthy.