

The Leading Edge: A National Conference for a Multicultural Multiracial Future
April 2010

Building on the success of three annual national conferences for leadership in multicultural congregations at the Middle Church, the Middle Project will assume responsibility for these three-day conferences for clergy, seminarians, and other congregational leaders. The conferences educate and equip leaders with practical tools for growing and sustaining prophetic, inclusive and just communities in which congregants rehearse a vision for a just society and the common good.

The conference curriculum focuses on deepening participants' understanding of systems and on developing their abilities to teach competencies to congregational leaders; create a vision for a just society; lead change; manage conflict, difference, and resistance; embrace and navigate cultural diversity; access current literature and resources; and impact the discourse in the public square.

Core Components

1. Leading with Vision for a Just Society

This component will explore the theological and ethical framework for decision-making from the perspective of the marginalized and deal with the ethical dilemmas posed by competing values in complex systems.

2. Understanding Narrative Leadership Theory: Using “Story” to Communicate Vision.

Recognizing that individuals, congregations and places are texts, participants will learn and practice weaving their congregation's story with the biblical and other holy narratives in order to communicate a vision for a just society. Review of case studies will be a part of this session.

3. Structured Story-telling

Participants will share their current congregational narrative and the “preferred future narrative” that is their goal.

4. Deepening Understanding of Systemic Injustice and Congregational Ethics as Speaking Truth to Power.

Participants will engage in an analysis of systemic racism, classism and gender injustice and explore the ways a progressive theo-ethics can empower congregations to address justice issues in public ministry.

5. Worship through the Lens of Learning

Worship will focus on congregations as instruments for justice.

6. Understanding the Dynamics of Change

Participants will examine the nature of change and explore tools to assess readiness for change in their context. They will create a change process that supports the emerging vision of the system.

7. Managing Change and Embracing Conflict

Using case studies they have brought from home, participants will be coached and will coach one another other in triads on a plan for change and a strategy for dealing with resistance and conflict.

8. Leading Social Justice in the Public Square.

Participants will be challenged to explore their skills in the service of the common good, to explore a focus for social engagement, to apply a personal ethic to view social justice from the perspective of the marginalized and to create an action plan that gathers information, organizes resources and people and uses power constructively to create change.

9. Leadership Styles and Building the Team

Participants will examine concepts of group process, group decision making and team building and explore leadership and communication styles and facilitation of multicultural groups and power sharing. Concepts like emotional and social intelligence will be explored.