

Community of Hope

The idea of establishing a pastoral ministry in Lower Manhattan grew out of prayerful discussion of Executive Director Dr. John Scibilia and Metropolitan New York Bishop Stephen Bouman. Within six months after Sept. 11, it became apparent that there needed to be a pastoral presence at Ground Zero. The Metropolitan New York Synod (MNYS) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America responded and called the Rev. Dr. Rip Hoffman to be pastor of lower Manhattan. Pastor Hoffman had previously served as Assistant to the MNYS Bishop for 15 years.

In late March 2003, the Rev. Hoffman began his work as pastor to Lower Manhattan. Pastor Hoffman spent his first several months meeting individually with Lutheran pastors in Manhattan, as well as the other clergy that serve congregations in lower Manhattan.

It became clear to him very quickly that this ministry should not be focused on Ground Zero but on the lower Manhattan area as a whole. He made contact with other organizations and agencies that were doing work in the area. Since Pastor Hoffman had previously served in both the New England and New Jersey Synods, and knew many of those pastors, he spent time in these first few months meeting with pastors in these two synods that served congregations that had people that commuted into New York City.

In September 2003, three things took place that would greatly impact the work of this new ministry.

- 1) Pastor Hoffman met with a group of people from Advent Lutheran Church (2501 Broadway, Manhattan) who lived and/or worked in lower Manhattan. They talked about life in lower Manhattan and identified some of the issues they thought the church needed to address.
- 2) Soon thereafter, Pastor Hoffman announced that he had come up with a name for this new ministry, Community of Hope, and that this ministry would have two foci: to develop a new congregation for people who live in lower Manhattan, and to be a ministry with people who work in lower Manhattan.
- 3) More recently, Community of Hope formed a working partnership with Koinonia-NYC, a Lutheran service and community ministry based in New York City. The first fruit of this partnership has been a worship service at noon on Tuesdays in the LDRNY office space.



22 Cortlandt Street • 20th Floor
New York, NY 10007
1-866-864-1600
www.LDRNY.org

LDRNY MISSION STATEMENT

To respond directly and encourage and facilitate response from others to the needs of persons and their families affected both directly and indirectly by tragedy or disaster.



Community of Hope-NYC

22 Cortlandt St., 20th floor New York, NY 10007-3107
The Rev. Dr. Robert A. Hoffman, Pastor
212 669-6115
kantonen@aol.com
www.communityofhope-nyc.org

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Programs and ministries



Tuesday

Noon Worship: Comfort and Renewal Center

22 Cortlandt St. 20th floor

A service of songs, lessons, and prayer based on the Taizé style of worship.

Led by Pastor Hoffman and staff from Koinonia-NYC

Wednesday

12:10 pm. Bible study

Comfort and Renewal Center

Life Transformation Groups: Based on the model of Neil Cole's best-selling book, "Cultivating a Life for God." People read the Bible daily and meet with two other persons (at a mutually agreeable time and place) to consider their reading, faith journey, mutual support and prayer. Interested persons should contact Pastor Hoffman.

A note from Pastor Hoffman

I met Jerry for the first time when he came to the Comfort and Renewal center to talk about signage. I invited him into my office and offered him a seat. We got to talking a bit. I found out that Jerry lives on the Upper West Side. His office is in Tribeca. As we talked, I noticed Jerry staring out the window that overlooks Ground Zero. I invited him to take a look and we both walked to the window and looked into "the pit." Jerry just stood there looking for about 20 seconds and then his story began to pour out of him.

"I've never seen it from up here. . . It was all so unreal. We saw it all from the office. A few of us walked down here. We had all seen disaster movies before. That is what it looked like. It was just like watching a movie, except this was really happening. . . Nobody really talked about it very much. Maybe we thought that if we didn't talk about it, we could all forget it. . . I know that every time I am on the subway now, and we make a stop between stations, and just sit there, the subway gets very quiet. I just know that people are wondering if something really bad happened again.

"You know, most people I know carry extra money with them now. They hide it somewhere; an extra \$100 bill, maybe two. Just in case. Something might happen. Who knows? You have to have some extra money. It's not the same anymore. A lot of people won't admit it."

After a while, we returned to talking about the business at hand. As Jerry was about to leave, he held out his hand and I shook it and he said, "Thanks for listening to me before." As I looked at him I could tell something just occurred to him. He smiled and continued, "That's why you are here, isn't it?" And I said, "Yup."