

Living Water - A Vision for Monroe County, New York from the Greater Rochester Community of Churches



The Greater Rochester Community of Churches offers the vision of ***Living Water*** for Rochester and Monroe County.

In the history of Monroe County, New York, the one constant has been water. From early flourmills to great industries, water has been a womb for our creativity. Water gave energy for production and a highway for commerce. Water made the earth burst with food.

A dynamic community grew on the banks of the Genesee.

- We pioneered freedom for slaves
- We pioneered rights for women
- We pioneered the Social Gospel
- We pioneered interfaith relations
- We pioneered the Community Chest
- We pioneered community-based help for the developmentally delayed
- We founded great educational institutions
- We became an international leader in knowledge-based economy
- We developed the largest collection of lilacs in the world
- We brought forth new technologies producing great corporations
- We produced music and dance and graphic arts rivaling the best in the world
- We created a community abounding with voluntary associations

This is living water. Water of the Spirit. It's in our veins. It's not simply who we have been. It is who we are.

The Greater Rochester Community of Churches offers the vision of ***Living Water*** for Rochester and Monroe County. Many have already helped to form it. The vision itself is alive, and GRCC invites you to refine it.

Our vision begins with this fact: the river is not divided between suburb and city nor is the canal divided between farm and industry.

Living Water unites class, geography, creed and race.

Now we are pioneers again, but today in a new wilderness. Like our ancestors we need to rely on the water, the land and the spirit of the people.

Here is what a county which draws from the *living water* of our heritage might become:

Monroe County decides to live up to its own character.

Monroe County abandons the politics of division, both in the political chamber and in the media. A new era of cooperation begins.

Monroe County decides to claim its educational heritage. Voluntary and community projects emerge to raise the educational level of both children and adults. In houses of worship and after-school programs, many of the most gifted of our people offer their expertise for the common good. Literacy in the county grows dramatically.

Monroe County expands the electorate. Voter apathy ends when voters understand the issues. They learn to vote smart. They hold elected officials accountable.

Monroe County spearheads a move at the state level for tax fairness and reduction of waste. Large political contributors no longer dictate policy.

Monroe County pioneers a cooperative health care system. Experiments in competition, which drove up the cost to all, give way to innovative, cost-effective, preventive approaches available to all at reasonable cost. The work force becomes healthier. Employers see that it is to their advantage to assist such a system.

Lead paint is abated throughout the county, and safe, affordable housing is available to everyone.

Rochester's corporations create a diamond attraction in New York State. Pooling their expertise, they open an imaging center that delights thousands of visitors with Rochester's inventiveness and showcases the products of our companies.

Restorative justice grows and punitive justice recedes. Criminals are expected to make restitution to their victims. The crime rate drops as drug treatment replaces incarceration. This saves the county money and creates a treatment regimen copied by other communities.

People are paid a living wage.

The community says no to violence. The murder rate drops along with the poverty rate as new courage emerges to uncover crime.

The experience of working together prompts people to consolidate services to save money.

Mass transit links suburb and city and the fast ferry with the Finger Lakes region.

Monroe County continues to be a model of interfaith cooperation and understanding.

Life in the county so advances that we become an attraction to businesses. Even though our taxes are not the lowest, the quality of life, improved health care, civic harmony, wealth in the arts, natural beauty and commitment to broad-based education attract people again.

The Greater Rochester Community of Churches will continue to draw upon the *Living Water* which formed us. We will pray and work for this vision to be realized. We ask of our partners in the religious community first, and then others in Monroe County: Is this a vision that can direct us? What part will you play in advancing it? We await your response.

