



Reginald D. McCaskill speaks about how the community and police can come together as the group listens.



Rev. Delores (Dee) McCullough works as the group's leader in discussions on how to improve community and police relationships.

# Police and clergy hold 'honest conversations'

BY CHANEL DAVIS  
THE CHRONICLE

Clergy members in Winston-Salem and surrounding areas received hands-on training when it comes down to what police have to deal with daily on the job, on a daily basis.

Rev. Nathan Scovens, pastor at Galilee Missionary Baptist Church, called the discussions "honest conversations." Scovens, who is the department's chaplain, also said that it helps the groups figure out how to enhance the relationship between the police department and the community.

"There are two things that jump out today: understanding and appreciation," he said. "What we are trying not to do is to demonize one another because we are one community."

The discussion, facilitated by the Winston-Salem Human Relations Commission, was held on Monday, March 17 at the Alexander R. Beatty Public Safety Training and Support Center on Patterson Avenue.

The "trust talks", as they were coined, were intended to foster lines of communication between police officers and members of the clergy, to eliminate mutual concerns and perceptions that create barriers,

and to increase trust and mutual understanding between police and clergy.

The morning included an icebreaker, and group discussions about stereotypes and misconceptions, the goals and objectives that both groups had and the process and parameters that police do on a daily basis.

The clergy also discovered what happens when a complaint is made against an officer, when and how to use force, and hands-on experience in the department's gun simulator that put the clergy in the same dangerous situations that police would face on the street.

To conclude the workshop, participants gather to find solutions to the problems that face the community when it comes to interacting with the city's police officers.

Some of those concerns were a lack of knowledge, racial profiling, lack of transparency, communication issues, fear, discrimination and lack of accountability.

Some of the solutions included education, street walks and making sure there is diversity in the conversations.

"One of the pastors suggested that

maybe on the fifth Sunday, that we have an officer to come to church stand with the pastor to shake the members hands as they are getting out," said Debra Jeter, from Mt. Moriah Outreach Center in Kernersville. "Just to start and build a relationship besides the clergy to get to know the people. These types of forums won't change anything if we just come in here to talk and pray about it. We have to be proactive and actually do something about it."

**"There are two things that jump out today: understanding and appreciation,"**

Rev. Nathan Scovens

Scovens said that it's important for the dialogue that has cropped up since the incidents in Ferguson, Missouri, to begin at home.

"As I have had to have conversations about Ferguson, and the fears of Ferguson, with my own family, I encourage others to do the same," he said. "When it comes to the church, it's about personal responsibility and making sure that we try as best we can to remain on

the right side of the law.

Police Chief Barry Rountree said that he is glad that the opportunity presented itself for both police and clergy to hear each other out. He said he looks forward to improving the service that is given to residents.

"We do take the feedback that we gain from these sessions, we've used it from our previous trust talks, to do things better and change policies," he said. "That information is not just being placed on a piece of paper."

## Police

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be worried about those statements.

"The older officer (Rose) fell short when he began arguing with the man: calling the man jealous and strange, talking about the man's family and questioning the man's mental capacity," she said. "That was unnecessary police behavior and shows improper crisis de-escalation skills."

A representative with the department said they were "unable to speak about the matter" because it is a personnel matter.

Investigators believe that the video was a part of a national trend titled "First Amendment Audit," according to a media release sent out Friday afternoon from the Winston-Salem Police Department. The purpose of the trend is to attract the attention of law enforcement or military security personnel to determine if those security personnel will infringe on their First Amendment rights.

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, taking photos of things that are plainly visible from public spaces is a constitutional right and that includes federal buildings, transportation facilities and police and other government officials carrying out their jobs.

When in public spaces where you are lawfully present, you have the right to photograph anything that is in plain view, except when you are on private property, where the owner can set the rules.

The release states that Rose approached Goins "because Mr. Goins appeared to be photographing the critical infrastructure of the Police Department facilities."

An email, according to the video and the release, was sent out about Goins early February after he was seen observing other buildings in the area, including the Hiram H. Ward Federal Building, the Forsyth County Hall of Justice, the Forsyth County Sheriff's Office and the Winston-Salem Transit Authority Administrative Building and fuel pumps.

"The point of citizens' rights to record law enforcement is for police-citizen encounters. The point is not to randomly film police departments

just to prove a point about First Amendment and public property," Dennis said. "Doing so just to prove a point can be problematic, especially since the First Amendment is not equally applied across demographics and across contexts."

While it was not released what would happen to Rose, officers will receive additional training regarding encounters with residents that may be engaged in similar activities.

In the release, residents

were also encouraged to call the police or the Department of Homeland Security in the event they spot someone who is videotaping critical infrastructure or behaving in a suspicious manner.

As all creatures, great and small awaken from winter's sleep, we are reminded that April is National Foot Health Awareness Month.

Alternative shoes—don't wear the same pair of shoes every day.

Inspect your feet regularly. Pay attention to changes in color and temperature of your feet. Look for thick or discolored nails and check for cracks or cuts in the skin. Any growth on the foot is not considered normal.

Don't ignore foot pain—it's not normal. If the pain persists, see a podiatric physician.

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