Minutes for Sacred Ground Working Group meeting

April 25, 2023, at Saint Luke’s Episcopal Church

Present: Skip Jones, Marjy Jones, Tom Stallman, Tom Hargrove, Cathleen Lewis

Skip called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Opening Scripture **–** Mark 4:26-32

26 He also said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, 27and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. 28The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. 29But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.’

30 He also said, ‘With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? 31It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; 32yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.’

Discussion followed. SG members decided these were appropriate lessons for Sacred Ground. “I see Sacred Ground as planting these tiny seeds of truth,” said Skip. “Some people want to get right to reconciliation without first going through the process of learning the truth. This is a process of truth and reconciliation.”

**Opening Prayer** - Collect for St Mark the Evangelist: “Almighty God, by the hand of Mark the evangelist you have given to your Church the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: We thank you for this witness, and pray that we may be firmly grounded in its truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Report of Sub-Committees**

**Engaging the Parish**

1. Reporting to Parish – Sacred Ground Slides now showing in the Narthex monitor, a four-slide series with a QR code allowing easy access to more information about SG.
2. There will be a Webinar on Thursday (April 27) by the national church explaining Sacred Ground. St. Luke’s will send out a notice.
3. The SG Adult Forum on Sunday (April 23) about church’s local support of African American contributions to classical music (Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts) was well received and well attended.
4. Website – Nothing new. Our new communications director is very responsive and acts quickly. Skip suggest he will contact the office to get some more SG content. Skip will seek to add new videos, including Thursday’s presentation. Hargrove suggested removing the item that this tab “is a work in progress” and just start adding new content.
5. New Sacred Ground Circle – Interest from several parishioners and from Interfaith Group. At least five or six St. Luker’s are interested. Two Unitarian Universalist Church members and one Bahia congregant have expressed interest. Skip suggested an organization meeting in May or early June to prepare for the launch of a new SG circle.

**Engaging the Community** (discussion by Tom Hargrove and Skip Jones)

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1. Engaging with the Ghanaian Congregation – Hargrove reported planning for Joint Worship service Pentecost Sunday (May 28) is moving forward. Hargrove will talk to Nick and Ransford about food (St. Luke’s involvement?) and whether SG needs to be further involved.
2. Outreach to Ventures in Community (VIC):
   * **October VIC meeting –** Opportunities for helping at Walt Whitman Middle School. Becky spoke to the United Communities representative. She thought the best way to help would be donations of clothing. They have a “clothes closet” for the children.  Also, helping with the food distribution one day a week. They don’t seem to need any tutoring help. Skip will talk to Sue Webber about this.
   * **Cheryl Fellenz said** St. Luke’s might become involved in her Charles County initiative to promote literacy. Skip will communicate more with her.
   * **September VIC meeting**: Still need to reach out to United Community staff to talk about their Commun1ty+ and Progreso (Literacy & Citizenship center for refugees and other immigrants) initiatives. Skip will try to line up these programs for available Adult Forum slots.
   * **December 7 VIC meeting** - Food Insecurity.

1.     VIC is concerned the COVID-era special funding for SNAP food programs has ended, returning to traditional funding levels.

 2.     VIC personnel testified at the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors on April 11, 12 and 13 about funding concerns for food insecurity. The Director of Hispanic Ministry and Community Outreach at Good Shepard Catholic Church reported requests for emergency assistance has risen every month this year, doubling the number from last year at this same time because of cuts in federal rent relief and food assistance.

 3.     VIC’s Easter Sunrise Service donated its collection plate offerings to a food pantry run by the First AME Church of Alexandria, on U.S. 1.

* + **Any items from VIC meetings this year?**

1. Free-will Offering in Thanksgiving for Spiritual Music – First Reparation Free-will Gift made to Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts. (CAAPA) – Terri Allen & family/friends were here on at Adult Forum on Sunday. She would like to represent St. Luke’s as a partner organization for their organization’s mission. Richard McFarland asked if CAAPA had established a partnership with Fairfax County Schools similar to the one they have with Prince Georges County schools. Terri seemed interested in the possibility. Skip reported he’s having difficulty connecting with Duke Ellington program. [Subsequently, Skip did get a call back from the Assistant Principal for the Arts, and things are on track.]
2. Potential concert by Samantha Williams – Any further info on these plans?

**Engaging the Youth and their Parents** Martha Beckford and Marjy Jones

We have talked to Nick and to the Healys (Youth Mentors). There is an intent to structure a racial awareness/racial justice segment for the youth in the Fall. Marjy willing to continue to work with Nick and the Healys to structure the content of such a segment.

**Racial Issues at General Convention --** Marjy said the Diocese of Virginia is doing a better job putting out regular announcements, including a new appointment for a Diocesan representative to led reconciliation efforts**.**

**Date of Next Meetings – June 6 at 7:15 p.m.**

**Closing Prayer** 1 John 4:16b-21

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. 17Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. 18There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 19We love because he first loved us. 20Those who say, ‘I love God’, and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. 21The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.