Minutes for Sacred Ground Working Group meeting

September 5, 2023, at Saint Luke’s Episcopal Church Board Room

Present: Skip Jones, Marjy Jones, Tom Stallman, George Omohundro; Tom Hargrove, Cathleen Lewis, Chris McFarlane and Sue Webber.

**Skip convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. with the following Scripture from Exodus 34, verses 5-7**

5 Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

Discussion followed. We decided that it is important to tell the truth about the past. The group went round the table commenting on this. We rejected any notion of a Biblical statue of limitations unto the fourth generation. Cathy noted that any attempt to conceal the sins of the past amounts to obstruction.

**Opening Prayer** - Skip gave a prayer for racial harmony: “Creator of all people, in our amazing diversity of size, shape, color, and giftedness: guide us, by your grace, to recognize the beauty and fitness of all whom you have made in your own image. Give us gifts of humility and generosity of spirit to recognize in all people, the face of our Savior, Jesus, and to practice his commandment to “love one another,” toward the end of bringing harmony and peace among persons of all colors, origins, and abilities, for the sake of your Kingdom Amen.”

**Reports:**

Chris reported on the St. Luke’s concert initiative. His attempts to reach Samantha Williams to provide and evening program on African American Spiritual music have been unsuccessful, so we still have one of the four slots for this season to fill. Chris suggested reaching out to our scholarship winner, Ms. Aniyah Hughes, to give a jazz flute performance. The first concert will be Nov. 12.

Skip and Marjy reported about the “All about Love” meetings in Baltimore July 9-11 about evangelism, environmental justice and social justice. Skip and Marjy spent much of their time at the social justice discussions. Skip attended the “What Comes Next” about the path from Sacred Ground to social justice, where the bottom line was that racial justice is our Gospel work. “Justice is what love looks like in public” was the closing mantra of the session (see slide deck on the St. Luke’s Sacred Ground page). Marjy went to a discussion from a Chicago group (Tell Me the Truth About Racism) on how to have anti-racism discussions via storytelling with children as young as 4. Chris asked for details so he can incorporate this into the St. Luke’s teaching program.

They both attended a lunch focused on discussions on how to implement church-funded reparations. Presenters reported there is “a lot of energy” for and against reparations. The presenters asked what participants would like to the newly formed Episcopal Coalition for Racial Equity and Justice accomplish. Suggestions included a budget to support Sacred Ground programming, materials for engaging youth on racial justice issues and a truth-and-reconciliation process for the Church’s involvement in Native American boarding schools.

Hargrove reported about the early version of the Adult Forum schedule and encourage SG members to attend adult forums, especially upcoming discussions with Sacred Ground themes: Sept. 17 and the aftermath of George Floyd with a video prayer by Presiding Biship Curry, Sept. 24 and the National Episcopal Church video on “Exposing the Doctrine of Discovery,” and Oct. 22 and Oct. 29 and a two-part discussion on a video by the national church’s Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility. George suggested crafting an Adult Forum to redefine and discuss guilt. In an era of anti-woke conservatism, he said it’s important to impart that: “I’m not attacking you. But this is about us.”

Skip says a half dozen St. Lukers are interested in the next Sacred Ground group, and about six others are possible from various local groups like Baptists, Bahia’s and Universalists. Next informational group is meeting at St. Luke’s on Sept. 10 (the coming Sunday).

George predicted “push-back” will start to grow as the Diocese increases discussions about reparations. “I don’t expect this to go down easy.”

Next meeting Nov. 7 (unless Hargrove is committed to working the election polls requiring the meeting to be held Nov. 14.)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.