

St. Luke's Sacred Ground Circle Finishes its Initial Meetings; First Ideas for Action

The first Sacred Ground circle at St. Luke's completed its initial set of meetings on June 21. We met twelve times over the August 2021 to June 2022 period. The circle was commissioned during the October 17, 2021 worship service. At that time, Senior Warden Richard McFarland, on behalf of the congregation, commissioned Martha Beckford, Tom Hargrove, Dixie and Monty Hougen, Nick Hull, Charles Kinney, Becky Littlepage, Chris McFarlane, Marge Scherer, Marge and Tom Stallman, Brian Tringali, Susan Webber and Marjy and Skip Jones as ministers seeking to further the church's vision of Becoming Beloved Community through engaging with the Sacred Ground race dialogue. Richard asked for the prayers of the St. Luke's community to support these persons in this ministry.

We are now working on a report to present to the St. Luke's family, recounting what we have learned and putting forth some ideas for next steps. Initially, circle members have identified three areas where we perceive the Holy Spirit is calling us to do further work on the issues of race and racism: 1) engage the parish with what we have learned (Nick Hull and Chris McFarlane); 2) explore opening a dialogue on these topics with the broader Fort Hunt community (Tom Hargrove and Skip Jones); and 3) engage in some way with teens and their parents of our Parish and of our community on issues of race (Martha Beckford and Marjy Jones). Parishioners interested in working with us to explore any of these areas can contact the listed sub-committee chairs.

After the meeting, in a discussion with Kate Weber-Petrova, another idea surfaced. One of the things we learned during our readings and discussions is that people of color historically have been excluded in various ways from participation in certain activities that would allow them to build personal and intergenerational wealth. This includes the creators of Spirituals, who were generally unable to seek or obtain copyrights to their compositions. Thus, the idea we had was to bring to the Vestry the proposal to commit to a process of providing compensation each time St. Luke's used such music in our worship services by making a contribution to a charity that supports minority communities, and ideally minority composers and performers, in some way. Kate noted this was a well-timed discussion, as she had just chosen a number of spirituals for use in the worship this Sunday.

As a reminder, *Sacred Ground*, a film-based dialogue series on race and faith, is one tool that supports the Episcopal Church's long-term commitment to racial healing, reconciliation and justice under the banner of Becoming Beloved Community. The race dialogue series is an attempt to be responsive to the profound challenges that currently exist in our society, focusing on the challenges that swirl around the issues of race and racism, as well as the difficult but respectful and transformative conversation about race. It invites participants to walk back through history to peel away the layers that brought us to today, and to do that in a personal way, reflecting on family histories and stories, as well as important narratives that shape the collective American story. It holds the vision of beloved community as a guiding star – where all people are

honored and protected and nurtured and beloved children of God, where we weep at one another's pain and seek one another's flourishing.