

St Luke's Sacred Ground Working Group
Meeting: Dec 5, 2023

Present: Skip Jones, Marjy Jones, Richard McFarland, Tom Stallman, Tom Hargrove and George Omohundro

Meeting called to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Parish Library

Opening Scripture – Canticle D: A Song of the Wilderness (Isaiah 35:1-7,10)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, *
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
It shall blossom abundantly, *
and rejoice with joy and singing.
They shall see the glory of the Lord, *
the majesty of our God.
Strengthen the weary hands, *
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to the anxious, "Be strong, do not fear! *
Here is your God, coming with judgment to save you."
Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, *
and the ears of the deaf be unstopped.
Then shall the lame leap like a deer, *
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness *
and streams in the desert;
The burning sand shall become a pool *
and the thirsty ground, springs of water.
The ransomed of God shall return with singing, *
with everlasting joy upon their heads.
Joy and gladness shall be theirs, *
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Skip reflected that our nation is still wondering through the desert of racial justice. Progress has been made, but much must be accomplished.

Opening Prayer - Dismantling Racism in My Family of God (Xavier University)

Dear God,

- In the effort to dismantle racism, I understand that I struggle not merely against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities – those institutions and systems that keep racism alive by perpetuating the lie that some members of our family are inferior and others superior.
- Create in me a new mind and heart that will enable me to see brothers and sisters in the faces of those divided by racial categories.
- Give me the grace and strength to rid myself of racial stereotypes that oppress some in my family while providing entitlements to others.
- Help me to create a nation that embraces the hopes and fears of oppressed people of color where we live, as well as those around the world.
- Help me to heal your family making me one with you and empowered by your Holy Spirit.

Adapted by Debra Mooney, PhD from Pax Christi

Report of Sub-Committees

1. Engaging the Parish -

- a. Second St. Luke's Sacred Ground Circle is up and running. (Richard and George are two of its 7 members, along with Eunice Theobalds, Sara Overby, Cathy Lewis, Susan Harris and James Reily.) We've completed five sessions and have invited those participants to also join in the Sacred Ground Working Group meetings, if they so choose. **Skip will speak with Nick about formally commissioning this new group.**
- b. Possible book discussion, open to all parishioners – Ideas include
 - James Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*,
 - Grace Ji-Sun Kim & Graham Hill, *Healing Our Broken Humanity*
 - Miguel de la Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins*

Tom H. suggested these book discussions would work well with the Adult Forum, with the understanding that not all AF participants will have read the book. Skip will provide his notes from *Healing Our Broken Humanity* for possible use as handouts for Adult Forums meeting early next year. Perhaps volunteers could lead discussion of individual chapters. Subsequent discussions with other Sacred Ground alums indicates there is still a desire for a separate book discussion among people who would commit to reading the book.

2. Engaging the Community Tom Hargrove and Skip Jones

- a. Engaging with the Ghanaian Congregation – Any follow up to plan additional interactions with the Ghanaian community? **Tom H. will speak with Nick about having another combined service, perhaps at Pentecost, and this year St. Luker's could cook.**
- b. Outreach to VIC – Any updates?
 - **United Communities:** Still need to get UC personnel to the Forum in the Fall. **Skip said he would contact Nicole Freewalt and Ivana Escobar to determine availability for future Adult Forums.**
 - **MLK Day events -- Anne Hargrove is seeking to identify Black leaders to organize future events. Tom H. reported that there currently is no African American chairperson for this UC program. It is unlikely that UC will have a program in 2024, but should be working toward a formal program of some sort in 2025.**
- c. Reparations project – We need to make a proposal to the Vestry for 2024's special offerings. There was a suggestion from a parishioner that we look to support a student of color from a local high school who is interested in pursuing studies in music. If there is an interest in doing that, would we switch away from supporting a Duke Ellington student or switch away from supporting the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts?

We discussed possibly including a scholarship for a student in financial need in the study of the performing arts at West Potomac or Mount Vernon high schools, possibly seeking a recommendation from the music director at the schools. George O. said he'd contact the high schools to see if a music scholarship is possible.

- d. Potential interest in forming an interfaith Sacred Ground Circle – There is interest among some members of the interfaith group that Marjy and Skip have been attending to form or join a Sacred Ground circle. The Sunday afternoon time frame did not work, however.

Engaging our Youth

- a. Marjy will speak with J2A folks about possible local tours of places like the slave jail on Duke Street in Old Town.**

Racial Issues at Diocesan or National Level

- a. Report on Diocesan Racial Justice and Healing Pilgrimage in October.** This 5-day trip entailed visits to Civil Rights sites in Memphis, Birmingham, Selma and Montgomery, accompanied by prayer and reflection at each stop. Marjy said there were 38 on the bus. Went to the National Civil Rights Museum at the Loraine Hotel in Memphis where Dr. King was killed, an Underground Railroad Slave Haven in Memphis, the 16th St. Baptist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Selma Voting Rights Museum, one of the Selma to Montgomery March National Park Historical Sites, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, which also includes a lynching memorial.

- b. Any updates from the Executive Committee? **George reported the committee is still working, but no firm proposals for racial reconciliation. He will contact the Diocesan Racial Equity Committee to see if they would be willing to come again in the New Year to update us on progress.****

Date of Next Meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6 at St. Luke's in the Library.

Closing Prayer DECEMBER-- For non-discrimination with regard to social services

“O giver of all good gifts, you have differently blessed and differently challenged your children. Some of us have handicaps for which we need the aid of social services, and some of us find our quest for such aid hindered by the complication of racial discrimination. Help us to overcome barriers of all kinds that prevent your people from functioning fully and freely, and let us never tolerate the denial of equal services to anyone because of their race. Amen.

Diocese of West Virginia, Commission to End Racism, Yearly Cycle of Collects