**Second St. Luke’s Sacred Ground Circle**

**Notes from 1st Session**

**Sept. 24, 2023**

Present: Susan Harris, Eunice Theobalds, James Reily, Richard McFarland, Marjy Jones, George Omohundro, Sara Overby, Cathy Lewis, Alex Tamberg, Skip Jones

Meeting on Susan Harris’s porch, we began with a Scripture reading from Acts 7:30-34. This is St. Stephen retelling the story of Moses encountering God in the burning bush to the Pharisees in Jerusalem. The passage is part of a broader narrative in which Stephen emphasizes the continuity of the scriptural story with Jesus as its logical culmination. We selected this passage, also used in the first meeting of Rite 13 classes, to emphasize that in opening ourselves to hear the stories of those who have traditionally been marginalized in our society, we are, as Bishop Curry likes to say, standing on sacred ground.

After introducing ourselves and covering some logistical details, we dove into the meat of the matter: why we felt called to join this Sacred Ground Circle. There were many different reasons cited, but also some common themes. Several of the group had taken previous racial awareness training through the Episcopal Church. Others had considered Sacred Ground in the past and were now moved to join the work. Some cited the desire to see how the Episcopal Church is planning to address racial healing and reconciliation in our society, expressing the hope that this would be a sustained focus of the Church. Many in the group were concerned that the progress we had made as a society on racial issues seemed to have slowed or even reversed. All in one way or another talked about their desire to explore what we individually as children of God and corporately as St. Luke’s could do to promote racial healing, building community as a necessary part of that effort.

After a short break, Marjy led us in a theological reflection on the readings assigned for this session (see attached agenda). She chose as a point of departure the point in Jim Wallis’ essay that “we are all created in God’s image.” We explored questions such as how does being created in the divine image speak to wholeness? What about the way we/society tend(s) to treat “others” speaks to brokenness? Where do we have an “aha” moment that calls us up short and makes us think about all persons being created in God’s image? Where is there space for restoring wholeness to this picture? What would it take? What would restored wholeness look like in our society?

As we pondered these questions, we made linkages to the Sacred Ground readings for this week. We also reflected on how our culture addresses racial equality, and how these cultural messages compared to what our Christian faith tells us. We thought about when it was when we first realized that not all people were viewed as being equal in the eyes of society and how that affected our own personal beliefs about racial equality in the eyes of society and in the eyes of God.

We closed the session by responding to the question “What would you offer to God in prayer concerning this reflection?”

Our next meeting will be on Sunday, October 15 again from 3:30-5:30 pm, location tbd (likely again at Susan Harris’ home or at Skip & Marjy’s home).