Minutes for Sacred Ground Working Group meeting

February 21, 2023, at Saint Luke’s Episcopal Church

Present: Skip Jones, Marjy Jones, Tom Stallman, Tom Hargrove, George Omohundro, Martha Beckford, Becky Littlepage, Chris McFarlane, Cathleen Lewis

Skip convened the meeting at 7:04 p.m. and read Isaiah 58: 6-12, noting the theme of the fast that God chooses seemed appropriate for the eve of Lent.

6 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?  7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?  8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  9 Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.  If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, 10 if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.  11 The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.  12 Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Skip also gave an opening prayer for harmony, from the West Virginia Diocese’s Prayers for Racial Healing: “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.”

Follow-up on our reparations proposal

1. The reparations proposal was accepted by the Vestry. Skip has been in touch with Teri Allen, CEO of the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts (CAAPA), the organization that was the first recipient of the St. Luke’s reparations payments. He will invite her to attend a St. Luke’s Adult Forum to discuss CAAPA’s mission.
2. Subsequently, it was established that Teri would visit St. Luke’s on Sunday, April 23.
3. The other organization approved by the Vestry for our first reparations payment is the Duke Ellington School for the Performing Arts. A gift offering will be made to the School on the Sunday closest to Juneteenth. Skip will also reach out to Lee Jackson, Finance Director of the school, to see if he or some member of the staff would also be able to come to Saint Luke’s on that Sunday.
4. Chris McFarlane suggested presenting Samantha Williams (cultural history of spirituals) as one of the first new series of concerts at St. Luke’s.

Follow-up on our action item of engaging the broader St. Luke’s community on Sacred Ground

1. Stephanie Kay is new communications director. We will be working closely with her for future SG activities.
2. Chris talked to Sue about the monitor in the Narthex and was told that we can run images but no sound, so we can not the Bishop Curry video about Sacred Ground. Skip asked what could we do with the monitor for Juneteenth? Chris suggested some strong images and pithy quotes. Marjy suggested we create perhaps three slides showing “What is Sacred Ground?” Martha will try a test, creating 3 slides.
3. Subsequently, Martha came up with four great slides and is working with Sue Bentley to get them added to the rotation of the slides on the TV screen in the Narthex.
4. Tom H. and Skip will meet with Nick about a congregational meeting/joint worship with the Ghanaian congregation that also worships at St. Luke’s.
5. Subsequently, a joint worship session has been scheduled for Sunday, May 28, to be followed by a joint “Love Fest” fellowship between the two congregations.

Follow-up on our action item of engaging St. Luke’s Youth & Parents on Sacred Ground

1. Skip suggested we meet with Nick about engaging the youth and their parents on Sacred Ground issues. The J2A program had social justice portions, and a new group of mentors have been picked. We (Martha and George) will approach them to suggest implementing SG materials.
2. Subsequently, Skip and Tom H. met with Nick and previewed both material from the Boy Scouts on “Citizenship in Society” and from UNC “Talking about Race with Kids” for possible use in this regard. Nick suggested we work with the new J2A Leaders to create a Sacred Ground/Social Justice set of meetings for Fall 2023.

Follow-up on our action item of engaging the broader community on Sacred Ground issues.

1. Becky attended October Ventures In Community meeting and explored congregational involvement with VIC for programs teaching literacy at Walt Whitman Middle School. She will follow-up with school leadership to identify concrete opportunities, perhaps in assisting with tutoring.
2. The December VIC meeting on Food Insecurity was designed by Anne Hargrove. Anne and Marge Scherer (St. Luke’s reps on the VIC Steering Boards and to the monthly meetings, respectively) will monitor upcoming VIC events that might be of interest to Sacred Ground.

Reports on Diocesan Activities of Interest

1. George reported the new Bishop is keeping the Triangle of Hope issue (Covenantal relationship among the Dioceses of Virginia, Liverpool and Kumasi (Ghana) to address the legacy issues of the slave trade) under his control and has also appointed new assisting bishops. Progress is being made for a Diocesan reparations program. Skip suggested the Diocesan reparations effort under Lee Hill would be a great topic for an Adult Forum. George will follow up on that.

Closing Business

1. Next meeting on April 25 at 7 p.m.
2. Skip concluded with a prayer at 8:08 p.m.