

Leap of Faith

Saturday, February 15, 2020

MEETING NOTES

KEY DATES AND ACTION STEPS

- **Share Sample Admin. Council Resolution with your Church Council.** If your Admin. Council is prepared to vote Yes to going through a Discernment Process, please let David Braden (debraden@gmail.com) or Sue Laurie (susanq89@comcast.net) know so that we can keep track of the status of each church.
- **Trailblazing the Liberation Methodist Church: March 6-8, 2020** at UMC of Preston Hollow, near Dallas, Texas. <https://um-forward.org/>
- **Conference Listening Session: Saturday, March 7, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Faith UMC in Dolton**
- **Leap of Faith Third Gathering: Saturday, March 14, 2020 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Northbrook UMC**
- **Homework:**
 1. Video: Deconstructing White Privilege with Dr. Robin DiAngelo, <http://www.gcorr.org/video/vital-conversations-racism-dr-robin-diangelo/>
 2. Video: Vital Conversations – Justice, <https://vimeo.com/344600799>
(10 min. segment: 30:23 to 39:42)

Attendees: 5 Faith Communities; 13 People

Co-Facilitators

David Braden
Sue Laurie

Broadway UMC, Chicago

Satia Grange
Rev. Alka Lyall

First UMC, West Dundee

Adrian Hill

Northbrook UMC

Nancy Bartell
Phil Braden
Alice Lonoff

North Shore UMC

Lisa Goodale

Unaffiliated

Julie Bruno

Wesley UMC-

Aurora

Rev. John Bell
Emmy Lou John
Herb John

See the following Handouts:

- “Sample Admin. Council Resolution” Handout
- “Defining Intersectional Theology” Handout
- “Diversity Wheel and Axes of Privilege” Handout
- “What is Intersectionality, and What Does It Have to Do with Me?” Article

Devotion

What do you think of when you hear: “Good news to the poor,” “Release of the captives,” “Recovery of sight to the blind,” “Let the oppressed go free.”

- Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated
- Anti-establishment
- Chronically ill
- Seen and Unseen
- Outside circle of love
- Elderly
- Immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees
- Having sight for the long view – climate change
- Indigenous peoples, e.g., Council of the Three Fires--comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations--the Miami, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Sac, Fox, Kickapoo, and Illinois Nations; Roma; Lumad

Video: Vital Conversations – Justice, <https://vimeo.com/344600799>

- Rev. Jay William’s Reflections on Intersections and Liberation
- 10 min. segment: 30:23 to 39:42
- “Equal rights for others does not mean less rights for you. It’s not pie.”
- “To be Queer is to be non-conforming, non-complicit, non-conventional & non-compromising.”
- “The architecture of oppression that killed Jesus is the same architecture of oppression that killed the UMC.”
- “Jesus is the Word of God. The Bible gives us clues to Jesus, who is God-consciousness, but the totality of Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God, always transcends what we find written in human words.”

Video Group Reflections: What does it mean to be a “Justice-centered” Church?

- The bible is not the Word; Jesus is the Word
- Using various translations of bible in study and remind ourselves that the words are those of the person interpreting what they thought Jesus said
- Queering the church; when you bring the focus of intersectionality toward one group or another, then what happens to the other components?

- Some prefer liberating and justice language.
- What does “queering” the church mean?
- Use of “all” in some ways discounts minorities. When it is said, “I don’t see color,” I hear I don’t see you. From the video, the reminder of our past was helpful. The UMC has continuously been an oppressive organization. Humans have continued to oppress. The UMC “allowing” different churches to leave as if the UMC is a parent. “Lineage of oppression.”
- Do we have to leave everything behind?
- Not telling anyone who they need to be. Celebrate individual and all of who they are.
- Question all our assumptions.
- There is enough. Let’s stop competing.
- Belonging v. Justice-centered: I once longed simply to belong at church. But does belonging inhibit the work of justice? Meaning does our desire to belong cause us to protect the status quo of our communities for fear of losing our sense of belonging?
- How does our experience of being on the margins foster justice-centered church? Starting to realize that’s where Jesus is.
- Justice-centered church will not be comfortable. Does being Christian mean we are not meant to be comfortable?
- What does it mean for us all to be free? Privileging queer, trans, POC, women. If the gospel is about freedom, it’s about being who we are without qualification.
- Justice-centered church rather than established denominations. Justice is more about ideas that transcend. (Good Samaritan story)
- People with privilege listening to those on the margins. Learning how privilege can advance justice.

Updates on the Status of Denominational Changes

Protocol

- Protocol has been released and blessed by most of the council of bishops. Not a lot of confidence in this plan despite rumors. Remember, the Protocol is one of over a dozen plans. No guarantee that Protocol will pass.
 - Would create 2 or more denominations. Sense that the UMC can continue.
 - When WCA leaves and creates own denomination; remaining church will get to vote whether anti-gay language stays in the Book of Discipline.
There is no guarantee new General Conference will vote to remove the anti-gay language or *Discipline* will change.
 - WCA gets \$25M to leave and create own denomination.

- Without some commitment to create fully inclusive church, it's not worthy of support – we are creating two conservative denominations.
- **We need to be having the conversations about what it means to be Methodist/Wesleyan or to be our individual churches. We need to be defining our values.**
- There is still hope even in death. We are a people of the resurrection.

Grandview Church in Lancaster, PA voted to disaffiliate (because they are inclusive)

- Lots of questions about finances. We don't know. Grandview was given the number of \$500k (because there have been exits by conservatives in eastern PA)
- We would rather be in short term financial debt than long term moral debt. (Darryl Stephens)

March 6-8, 2020: Gathering hosted by UM Forward in Dallas, TX. National gathering to talk about what a liberationist Methodist church looks like. There is information on the UM Forward website.

Northbrook UMC administration council voted to go through discernment process about disaffiliation. Sermon series during January on “The Way of Integrity,” using the curriculum from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.¹ New sermon series during Lent, “Into the Wilderness,” will explore Wesleyan identity, congregational core values, and taking leaps of faith. Feedback that churches wanting another way have more power than we realize. Conference Leadership was expressed surprise about impatience with the denomination and Conference. If we're prepared to leave, we have power. We are in a holy Saturday period.

Encouragement to take risks and have conversations. People have strong fear of the unknown and the work that is required. Invite people into the discussion and to help people process their fear. We are equally fearful.

A lot of the information control is because of the clergy. These meetings have been more laity. If you have the opportunity to go to listening posts, go. It's an abuse of power when episcopacy and cabinet promotes the Protocol. The small group who created the Protocol were not representative; self-appointed. The Protocol is a “precarious” compromise, where the drafters have indicated it should be adopted without amendment because any amendments may kill the plan.

¹ Leaders Guide, The Way of Integrity, https://www.gcsrw.org/Portals/13/Curriculum/GCSRW-Integrity%20Project-Leaders'%20Guide_v3-1.pdf?ver=2018-11-15-140147-223.

Wesley UMC – Aurora is going to do a training on how to have good conversations. Recommending home groups, share a meal, with facilitators that will meet monthly.

Action Plan

- **Send in your updates.** Send Sue and David your updates on where your congregation is at in its process of discernment.
- **Leap of Faith Fifth Gathering: Saturday, March 14, 2020 at Northbrook UMC.** The March Meeting will continue our conversations related to intersectionality and liberation. We will have guest facilitators to lead us, **Rev. Lois McCullen Parr** and **Rev. Charles Straight**.
- **We need help with invitations.** Personal invites help increase the likelihood that guests will come. Once details are confirmed for our next gathering, we will send out a flyer. Please consider who you might invite from your own church, but especially who you might also know from another church that you think should be at our next meeting.

Google Docs

- As requested during the meeting, a Google Docs folder has been created to host the flyers, handouts, and notes from Leap of Faith gatherings
- Anyone with the link below should be able to access the Google Drive Folder:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18wiqrWpT3pSggAJJ1P3czAfpZC93Y8kK?usp=sharing>

What is “Leap of Faith”?

The purpose of this gathering is to bring together local churches and communities in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference that are considering leaving The United Methodist Church denomination. We know that many members of our local churches are no longer willing to remain a part of the denomination that refuses to embrace fully LGBTQ+ persons and their families. **We are inviting local churches in Northern Illinois to consider going through an official discernment process—modeled on the process developed in the New England Annual Conference—to determine whether they desire to remain or leave the denomination.**

While we do not know what is going to happen at the 2020 General Conference, we as local congregations can go through an intentional process to determine our values and prepare for what comes next. We can pack our bags and line up at the door—we won’t know all of the “doors” available to us until after General Conference 2020, but we can rest assured that we’ve done the work to make informed decisions.