

Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy

Meeting Agenda – Annotated Minutes

Friday, April 12, 11am PST / 2pm EST

1. Attendance:
 - a. Bishop Singh
 - b. Bishop Anne
 - c. Dora
 - d. Susanne
 - e. Brant
 - f. Sarah
 - g. Ruth
 - h. Reuben
 - i. Not coming: Lallie, Guy
 - j. Unsure: Andy, Jose
2. Prayer to ground our work today—Dora
3. Housekeeping: Basecamp app and training update – Sarah & Guy - 10 mins
 - a. Multiple functions – primary utility: threads for discussions
 - b. Application available for phones, other devices
 - c. Posting will still occur on extranet site
4. Sharing / Discussion: Reflection on our own experience and practice of the theology of social justice advocacy—Brant – 45 mins: bullet points
 - a. Civil rights – people stepped up, what would I do? What about now? It is a time for action – what we are doing now is what we would have done then. Hate crime context
 - b. It is not natural to reach for theology to address issues of social justice. And yet is teaching about social justice as a lawyer.
 - i. Lawyers typically deal with justice –
 - ii. Whereas social justice – larger systemic patterns, patterns of injustice – those patterns need rules to be changed, how do we address this? Lawyers typically deal with justice – is this different from social justice?
 - iii. Relationship between individual and community within a system context; with in the system that exists for example, study hard and work hard and learn and play by the rules. And yet may recognize that the rules of the system don't work as well as we want to believe. Our "system" is one of meritocracy, and the system doesn't live up to that.
 1. Moving that into the theological realm: how does an imperfect human system of meritocracy fit into the salvation equation? We carryover our reward/merit system often into God's world.

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- iv. Discovering a church he believed in – Desmond Tutu e.g..
 - 1. There is nothing you can do best – or so good, that can make God love you more. Nothing you can do so badly to make god love you less
 - 2. Moves you away from merit perspective
 - v. Justice at the individual level vs social level – and the theology
 - 1. You hear that social justice is not part of the church – relationship with god – leave politics out of it. Hard to grasp how you divorce yourself from this in a church/theological context.
 - 2. Arguing for increased empathy for other groups
 - a. Lazy, don't care – others are
 - b. Want to demand empathy and yet we can't convince people of empathy. Asking questions like:
 - i. Who are the people I don't understand?
 - 1. How could they have voted for that person?
 - 2. Personal story – some anonymous white man – what I had been accusing others of ... doing myself
 - vi. I've focused on race – individual part ... persistent racial disparities ... no missing that fact ... have to have an explanation for that ... 2 explanations: merit based resource allocation or racism
 - 1. How inequalities are produced
 - 2. The two narratives – they are so ubiquitous
 - a. Only two? Self rationalizing creatures – like narratives which tell that we are doing well ...
 - b. If you are white and see discrepancies – meritocracy is attractive, if you are black ... racism is attractive
 - 3. So much emphasis on meritocracy ... presence of blackness makes whites believe meritocracy – what makes me comfortable, I can live with it.
 - vii. Sean King asks two questions: what moves you to tears, what you care about?
 - 1. Find that out. Then discover what you do that brings you joy?
 - 2. Do what you love that you can do to care about
 - 3. Its about vocation
 - 4. There's joy at the end of it ...
5. Moving to questions: summary
- a. Thank you for visions that are large, provided humbly and thoughtfully

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- b. What does it mean to have empathy, what it means about the group we turn away from. Power imbalances in our systems. Can we uphold the dignity of every person AND name these imbalances of power?
 - c. The role of meritocracy allows pushing the concept of systemic racism away, especially for those of us who are white.
 - d. In response to only race and meritocracy as narratives sources of social injustices, we need more narratives than these two.
 - e. How do we die to false narratives? We may need to die to the social constructed narrative, die to individuality. Let a narrative of humanity rise. The Passover narrative, the easter narrative. What must be left behind in these narratives? How about the American narrative?
 - f. How to create the space for empathy encounters in our churches, in our communities? Will that allow for the space for the narrative of humanity?
 - i. Let us not only think of the Israelites but also the Canaanites.
 - g. Their children, our children construct/narrative. Whiteness as the norm, normal.
 - h. Race is a deeply important entry point for the work we need to do. We as a church have fought the good fight re: women's ordination, LGBTQIA issues.
6. Follow-up – 5 mins
- a. Next time to be presenter: Sarah*
 - b. Next meeting – 2nd Friday of each month –
 - c. Next time, meeting minutes: Ruth
 - d. Next time, prayer: Reuben
7. Closing prayer – Dora.