

“Uneasy Lies The Head That Wears The Crown”*

For a first time effort, the racial, ethnic, and religious dialogue, Love Your Neighbor: The Road Less Traveled © (“LYN”) was very successful. Held on Saturday, February 9, 2008 at First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, TN, the dialogue was in prayer and in partnership with Presbyterian Women, Synod of Living Waters and the Outreach Mission Unit, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. The projected attendance was 30 – 40 people and 32 attended; prior to February 9th there were prayers for no snow, and on the 9th God delivered sunshine and 57°!! The LYN dialogue facilitator was Ms. Claudia Torrey, who resides within the bounds of Middle Tennessee Presbytery and is the current Vice Moderator of Issues, Justice, and Peace for the Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women (“PW”), Synod of Living Waters.

Dialogue attendees included Mrs. Mary Weber, PW Moderator, Synod of Living Waters (from Harrodsburg, KY); Mrs. Betty Jean Donaldson, PW Moderator, Presbytery of Transylvania (from Nicholasville, KY); Mrs. Dean Vandegrift, PW Moderator, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley (from Birmingham, AL); Ms. Anna McIlwain, Past PW Moderator and Coordinator of Peace and Justice, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley (from Talladega, AL); Mrs. Dorothy Kelso, Eastern-Elect Cluster Leader for PW, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley (from Sylacauga, AL); Ms. Jessie N. Williams, Coordinator of Missions for PW, Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley (from Birmingham, AL); and Ms. Mary Ellen Ausenbaugh, PW Moderator, Presbytery of Middle Tennessee (from Silver Point, TN). Within the total group of dialogue attendees there was diversity of race, ethnicity, age, gender, and geography!

The LYN dialogue consisted of four discussion leaders and the biblical foundations were Leviticus 19:18, Micah 6:8, and 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – 19. Attendees were divided into four discussion groups, each group with a discussion leader, covering the topics of cultural geography; immigration; being “the other;” and race, ethnicity, and reconciliation: Dr. Reuben H. Brooks of Nashville, TN (“Encountering Your Neighbor: Bridging the Cultural Gap”); The Rev. Patrick Handlson, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Cookeville, TN (“Welcome the Stranger”); The Rev. Christopher Joiner, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Franklin, TN (“The Good, The Bad and The Ugly”); and The Rev. D. Calvin Kim, Associate Pastor, Nashville Korean Presbyterian Church of Nashville, TN (“Desire to Understanding”).

Throughout the day, attendees heard the spiritual and reflective music of talented pianist Laura K. Rosser (www.laurakrosser.com), a 25-year-old M.A. /Ph.D. candidate at Vanderbilt University (located in Nashville, TN), and also had the opportunity to purchase handmade items made by Presbyterian Women of the Sudanese American Nuer Presbyterian Church (Gallatin, TN) and St. Andrews Presbyterian Church (Nashville, TN). Background music during lunch showcased The Rev. Dr. Ernest B. Newsom, Pastor of the Sudanese American Nuer Presbyterian Church, and his saxophone.

The title of this article, a quote from Shakespeare, reflects the underlying “burdens of leadership.” There was definitely shared leadership in making this dialogue possible, and such was acknowledged and appreciated by attendees via their evaluation responses:

- “My session ‘Desire to Understanding’ was developed from the perspective of reconciliation. How clever!! The approach made us think how the two actually can indeed merge if you begin with the realities of truth and

human nature. An excellent dialogue with great participation. An 'A' for our presenter who made it all possible. Let's Do This Again---And Tell Many, Many Others!"

- "Such a well-organized day---treats-drinks-lunch-music!-displays WOW! My discussion group was very thought provoking. It was a day well spent. Thanks!"
- "The group leader was very knowledgeable in the topic we discussed. A lot of good ideas were supplied by the participants. Time element was good. Small groups. Very well planned."
- "Hope to do something similar fostering dialogue around issues in our Presbytery. Would have enjoyed being able to participate in more than one group. Enjoyed the music...Thanks for the refreshments and lunch!"
- "From my personal perspective this meeting should create more dialogue that could be a vehicle for healing and forgiveness. In the years to come more younger persons can be influenced to bridge the gap among older and younger Americans."
- "The day was great. This was a great idea....Hope you will do this again; [i]t has been quite informative."
- "...I appreciated the efforts of my small group facilitator to prepare scriptural references and an outline of discussion.... I'm impressed by the distances people traveled to support this event—these are important topics and I'm glad we're talking about them. Next

time—maybe longer small group time, shorter all together? Thank you for hosting.”

- “The reflective music was fantastic!! A beautiful way to start a Saturday morning. It was a little difficult to talk with each other over lunch because of the wonderful music !

*Henry IV, Part II by Shakespeare.