

## WtC Meeting Notes, 11.3.21 “Living Our Values in the World”

Present: Treva Burger, Lisa Dutton, Margaret Thompson, Andrea Barsevick, Andrea Parry, Nancy Anderson, Linda Bernstein, Ryan Hurd, Carla Campbell, Shobhi Kanal, Latifah Griffin-Rogers, Eric Foster

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We reviewed briefly process meetings that occurred over the last 2 months and the Excel sheet on Actions items. **Leadership did buy-in to the process. Representatives from Board, MET and other leadership groups attended the meetings.** The file is organized differently on different tabs. It is a guide for who can do what. We ranked the top **17** out of about 30 recommendations. Excel file shows scores, so we will focus first on the higher ranked items. But lower ranked items will still be attended to. We will re-evaluate after additional chapters (even though there will be more recommendations from those chapters, too).

These are not one-way assignments (i.e., top-down). Rather, groups can give us their feedback on how they will execute, change, or even reject the tasks. Buy-in is important. Staff, Board, MET were involved in assignment decisions because higher level support is needed, but language can be changed by whoever is executing at their discretion. CSD, for example, will look at the curricula that have been used for years, but now with a systematic lens from WtC. Different pockets in the life of the church will have these conversations.

“Living our Values” overlaps less with other chapters, and there are explicit and practical things to do discussed in it.

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Comments on the levels of oppression:

Personal: We have to be willing to change to do this work. Change seems to effectuate resistance, even if it is about having services outside, inside again, or on zoom. But certainly, changing for anti-oppression work will bring out similar resistance. The need to be kind can actually be a barrier to anti-oppression work because we are not always cognizant of our biases (or, to be sure, want to know about them). Even when a lot of work goes into change, people can subsequently be resistant to tweaking that change because they are so invested in the work already done. Having a good heart doesn't mean people always do the right thing.

Interpersonal: Different levels of investment or experience may make people unsure of how to proceed. So there is a need to make clear how things work, even if the protocols are not set in stone.

Demographic differences are often a barrier, due to differences of experience and culture. Informal moments, even small fleeting ones, in the life of our church can make a big difference in people's experience of and sense of integration into the church. We also need to be aware of making assumptions about identity when meeting new people. Wait and be receptive to who people really are.

Institutional: Important to lift up zoom and sanctuary participants, to integrate these media so that everyone experiences almost the same service. The auction is a formal structure in the church that does not necessarily serve many people. It should be looked at in light of equity and inclusion. (It is unclear how the online version may have changed these dynamics.) Long-timers maybe should let newcomers have a chance to bid first, or at least instruct them on how the parts of the auction work. (Here's an idea: how about everyone donates the amount they would spend at the auction, and then divide that

sum equally among all participants so that everyone has the exact same amount to spend...!! Think about this...)

Cultural: Some people have much more influence than others do, on various dimensions. Their perspective gets outsized attention and results. It was a norm at one time that little children should be seen and not heard in services, but we have made an important effort to rectify this so that everyone understands this is OK (hey, we like kids! And no shaming parents with noisy kids, either!)

USG actions to promote education and competency in WtC issues: we're doing some things on this:

- at least one educational opportunity for all leaders once per year;
- ERC's work with Lenape on land acknowledgement;
- The upcoming Trans Inclusion workshop; and
- Some people are participating in Beloved Conversations (through Meadville).

Make connections between spirituality and justice work at least quarterly in worship, ASD offerings, SGM. Have a service related to anti-oppression (item T1.3 in our list). Hello, people! Justice and spirituality are related.

To privilege those affected most by our justice work, we should try to focus on **getting a significant number USG congregants to support a few targeted initiatives:**

Fair funding, raise the wage, and voting rights are **some possibilities identified**. Listen carefully to marginalized groups within the church and include their voices; continue to afford them the opportunity to lead whenever they are willing to do so. The process of this effort is also important. That is, who decides what is important? UUJustice PA can overwhelm with the number of SJ issues. So perhaps the congregation needs to focus on fewer issues, even as we invite people into discussing any of them. USG's covenant invites people to participate in SJ efforts, and the church also has a covenant to provide opportunities to participate in SJ events and efforts.

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Next meeting, December 1 (first Wednesday), we will move on to the "Religious Professionals" chapter.