Notes from 6.3.20 Presbytery Forum

Present were:

Kathleen Splitt

Stephen Earl

Suzie Harder

Jimmy Shelbourne

Stephen Niles

Karen Moritz

John Duling

Wendy Wait

Jeff (Heretage)

Duane Westing

Sue Babovec

Zac Wolfe

I was late entering the conversation today. When I signed in there was discussion about resources to learn more about race relations. The following were suggested:

* White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson
* How to Be Anti-Racist by Ibram X Kendi
* Just Mercy – book is good, and the movie is available for free for the next month on many major streaming services
* Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria by Beverly Daniel Tatum
* On Netflix – American Son (hard to watch)
* Also on Netflix – When They See Us – a documentary with 4 episodes on the Central Park 5

Zac suggested that if/when we watch the videos that we should find a trusted person of color and ask them about their experiences. Black people don’t want us to speak for them or take their voice and generalize it. They want to speak of their own experiences. It is not just an issue. It is personal.

Jeff – Heritage –

* Congregation is mostly crickets is his sense. “My guess is that Heritage is mostly left of center.”
* One staff member expressed fear about driving across town
* “I wish I did more than talk. I feel complicit for not doing more.”
* Blacks don’t want us to take their voice, says a friend of his.
* In college Jeff worked at a Quik Trip. A frequent customer was a small black youth who never gave Jeff any trouble. One day two police officers came into the store while he was there, and one of them push the young man hard and spoke to him in demeaning language. Finally he let the young man go and he ran out as quickly as he could. Then the officer said, “I just broke every constitutional right that kid has and he is too dumb to even know it.” Jeff has never forgotten that as it was painful to witness.
* We need to do more.

Stephen Earl asked, “Is educating our white peers a part of that, of DOING something?

Jeff replied, Yes, but nothing will change until we do more than talk about it. Teaching about it won’t change anything.

Zac – We have to preach differently – liberation theologies. If we aren’t doing anything to change things we are complicit in the oppression. We, unlike people of color, have a choice about whether or not to do something about it.

Stephen Earl – James Cone’s book God of the Oppressed; A Black Theology of Liberation

Duane Westing –

 One member was disturbed about the riots and protests and invited Duane to come and pray with him. Afterward he sent Duane two quotes:

* “Above all, do not harm”
* “All that is required for evil to win is for good people to remain silent.”

Stephen Niles –

* Son is in the national guard in Lincoln and has the task of deploying units. They are tasked with deciding who is peaceful and who is not.
* Concern in Clarkson is more about the destruction of property than about the issue behind it.

We need to be willing to listen.

Kathleen Splitt – It occurs to me that we need to listen until we are able to hear. The experience of the oppressed is so radically different from our own that we cannot hear until we have listened intently and significantly. It isn’t so much a matter of willingness to listen, but a matter of ability to hear.

Stephen Niles – shared that he taught his family that the difference between listening and hearing is with hearing one can continue on as before, but with listening action follows.

Karen Moritz –

* Lives in downtown Lincoln right in the midst of some of the violence on Sunday morning early. She was awakened by the sound of breaking glass in the building next to where she lives. She then decided to march in the Black Lives Matter peaceful march that afternoon. Last couple of nights have been more peaceful demonstrations.

Stephen Earl – “I went out at 10:00 Sunday night because people were afraid and running from rubber bullets, etc. Even though people were running they never let up in their message. …..There is something we need to hear in out of the violence.”

Karen Moritz – Martin Luther King said, “Violence is the language of pain.”

Duane Westing – was at a meeting with farmers recently. Farmers are hurting with the low price of grain, and the market being down, and the problem of meat plants shutting down. Don’t forget the farmers in your prayers.

Karen Moritz closed the forum with prayer.