

Doctrine of Discovery Series Planning Meeting

June 25, 2014

Cherokee United Church

Attending: Tim Johnson, Gilbert De La O, Becky Montgomery, Don Christensen, Janet Humphrey, Lon Navarre, Perry Altendorfer, Joan Haan, Scott Russell

Next Meeting: Wednesday, July 16, 7 p.m. at Cherokee

For next meeting: Firm up existing co-sponsors and work to get new ones. Add more people to the planning group. Give more thought about what you would like to see happen for the second session, both the content and format. Bring other ideas and questions.

Meeting Summary and Decisions

Series Goals: The Series has three goals: To create interfaith dialogue and awareness around the issue of the Doctrine of Discovery and its legacy; 2) Create a climate for enriching relationships; 3) Deepen the understanding of how our various faith traditions guide our response, and to develop ideas for action steps.

Times: We decided that the Aug. 13 event will be doors open at 6:30, event runs 7-9:15 p.m. (We discussed the possibility of a sage blessing to open the event.)

Co-Sponsoring: To be a co-sponsor, organizations need to do any one of the following three things: 1) help with planning, 2) help with funding, 3) help with publicity. So far the co-sponsors are: Macalester Plymouth United Peacemakers, Clouds and Water Zen Center, and the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. St. Matt's and Macalester Plymouth United Peacemakers will seek sponsorship from church leaders. Gilbert said The GAP (Guadalupe Area Project) alternative high school is a potential co-sponsor.

Publicity: In terms of publicity, we want to bring in new people. Mendota offered to promote the event on its webpage. (We will discuss publicity plans in more detail later, but a draft plan is attached.)

We will use the facilitated dialogue process as part of both events: There was some concern that if Sheldon was there for the screening, people would want to use the remaining time to talk to him. One person who attended the Hamline film screening said the Q&A was more people getting up and giving speeches and it wasn't that helpful. Joan explained the various models of small group dialogue. Don has participated in these dialogues and said the process was efficient and promoted participation. There was a suggestion to do the small group discussion prior to the Q&A so that it could inform the Q&A, and each group could submit written questions.

Age Appropriateness of the film: We discussed the age appropriate range for the film and decided it was recommended for junior high and up. Tim said he was not worried. By the time kids get to junior high they have seen a lot of graphic violence. It's more about helping them process it, help them grapple with it.

Where do we focus? This is the story of colonialism. It affects Central and South America. It is related to slavery. There is no part of the world that is not touched by this issue. How much do we bring in these broader topics? Tim suggested we need to stay in touch with the impact on indigenous populations.

Second Session: We spent a long time discussing what themes to focus on for the second session. We talked about the importance of explaining how the Doctrine of Discovery continues to exist today and how it affects people's lives. We did not come to a firm decision, but the topic of Mendota identity and recognition had a lot of energy. Comments included the following:

- Our systems maintain institutional racism. We shouldn't talk about racism affecting all people of color the same way. Native Americans have been hit the hardest.
- The Mendota Community is still affected by Manifest Destiny. It is not so removed. It is not just a documentary, it is our life. We don't even have federal recognition. We don't have an identity.
- It would be an important part of the second session in the series to talk about the Mendota experience. It would help ground the discussion.
- I feel like I am hearing this Mendota history for the first time. It makes sense to give it attention.
- The West Side has its own history that is relevant. Attitudes and an orientation to claiming land and pushing people off (like what happened in Rondo). [Note: A post-meeting discussion on the sidewalk had this nugget from Perry: Many street names on the West Side are Indian names. This was done to market the land to easterners. They were buying Indian land.]
- What happened in the name of the church? We have to get the word out.
- What about getting Bill Means or Clyde Bellecourt? They lived it. They protested. They would bring a crowd. ... Mitch Walking Elk also would be a good guy to get the crowd going.
- The Native American kids who are not in gangs are on the drums. That needs to be told.
- This is a narrative that creates policy that affects people's lives. There was just a story about thousands of Central American kids trying to cross the border.
- Talking about identity, how would I feel if the core of who I am was totally ignored?
- We should start the conversation we want to have on Oct. 28 at the end of the first session to get people to make the connection.
- There is a lot of hate and anger. A lot of people have hurt our community.
- Mendota needs land as part of the federal recognition process. Mendota is not looking for a casino but a culture, history, and language learning center and a place to care for Dakota elders. It's a grass roots mission.
- We are trying to be visible. Where do we start?
- In downtown Mendota, they dug up a burial ground to put in a major intersection. What mentality put a road through where our ancestors are buried? There is story after story like this.
- There are tensions with other Dakota communities. They do not want to see Mendota succeed. They see Mendota as a threat.
- This fragmentation is the result of the Doctrine of Discovery.
- We want to have difficult conversations as part of this Series.
- How do we want to include the interfaith community?

Branding: We will use whatever title SPIN decides to use to promote the series, but we might sharpen it for the second session.

Honoraria: Ask SPIN if \$200 adequate for Sheldon's honoraria and travel/lodging expenses? What arrangement has SPIN worked out with him in the past?

Revise flyer: Add co-sponsors to the flyer. Refer to the series as a two-part dialogue. Add times. Add link to a web page. Don brought up the use of the words "History" and "Theology" - would they come across as boring/not attract community attendance. The words "story" and "identity" were discussed. (See attached for revised version; title remains as decision was not made.)

After the Series, what next? The goal is to plan additional learning and next steps with support/in partnership with the Saint Paul Interfaith Network/Healing Minnesota Stories.

Can we hold another pre-screening? There was a request to have another showing of the documentary to prepare those organizing the events. There was a preference for August to give groups a chance to get organized and add people. Scott/Joan will bring the request to the Planning Committee.

Get more resources to organizers: There is a helpful printed summary of Steve Newcomb's book "Pagans in the Promised Land." Scott was asked to get copies for the group. Retired Law Professor Howard Vogel has a short essay on the Doctrine of Christian Discovery. Scott will ask Howard for permission to share it electronically.

What is a good number to get for attendance? It's more about getting people to come who are open to the conversation. The max SPIN attendance for any event is around 200, recently the events have run 50-75. Cherokee' Fellowship Hall space can probably hold 100.

Do we offer child care? Cherokee does have nursery space. People would have to pre-register for child care so we could plan accordingly. We did not make a decision on childcare. If we do it, we would need to add the information to flyers, promotional emails, etc.

What to do about refreshments? Yes we will have refreshments, but it is To Be Determined. Becky said she might be able to bring unsold items from the Rosary Society Bake Sale (around the time of the event).