

November, 20, 2024

I have reassessed my commitment to Bristol's Equity and Inclusion Committee. The primary orientation of the Committee is to advocate for demographic groups and individuals who have met obstacles and attitudes reducing their ability to flourish within the Bristol community. This is a very good thing to do, and I have put a lot of effort into it in the past. However, it is not my current focus, which is to figure out how to create a cohesive society, grounded in attitudes of kindness, respect, and generosity.

At the outset of this effort I hope to spend a few years in dialogue with religious/spiritual people and groups. My first step in this is undertaking a 6-month program called "Sacred Ground" to become more aware of the effect of my race on my perceptions, and also to learn about the ways my ancestors have harmed people of other races. This is an intensive course.

One of the many readings for tomorrow's meeting was from *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*, by Jim Wallis. It has this description of the very first Churches established after the death of Jesus:

"...now there was a new human community that would deliberately and publically work to reconcile and unite human beings from different races, classes, and genders...

"...This breaking down of cultural and racial barriers became a prime characteristic of the early church, pulling a divided humanity together.

"Many Christians today don't fully realize that racial and cultural integration was an original mission of the first disciples of Jesus." [These concepts] "were a culmination of earlier biblical commands about how the children of God should always be welcoming to 'outsiders'.

"The early church was making a public statement, because baptism was a public event: In this community we will overcome the divisions between Jews and Greeks, men and women, slaves and free. If you don't want to be part of the kind of community whose purpose is to bring people together, don't join this community! Imagine churches in America making that kind of strong statement today. We need to reimagine that reality into being again." [p.106]

This effort is where my mind and heart are, and where my time and attention need to be.

I wish the Committee members well. If you ever have a tied vote, perhaps you can find a compromise that achieves a majority vote.

All the best,

Betsy Blair