

***“O God, who created all peoples in your image,
we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world.
Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship,
and show us your presence in those who differ most from us,
until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”***

Dear Friends,

Nearly eight months ago, in the aftermath of Charlottesville, I extended an offer to those who might want to casually meet together to talk about matters of race in our church, our community, and in our country. Besides me, thirteen different parishioners came to at least one of the meetings which were held at the Rectory. A couple only came once, about half a dozen came every time, and the rest were in-between. The oldest member was in his eighties, the youngest in his twenties, the rest were in-between. Five identify as black (either African American or from Island backgrounds), eight as white (Caucasian or European), and two have blended race families. The last “official” meeting was in May.

It is hard to describe how much I enjoyed these conversations. We spent a lot of time simply listening to one another’s stories, which were so interesting, enlightening, and informative. The group was quick to form a trust that allowed us to share from the heart – and for us to ask questions among ourselves that we might not have had the chance to ask before. We heard stories from the past and ones from the present. And I think we all realized both how very much we are alike and how much we want to be able to help make our church, our society, and the world a better place in which to live.

We chose a name for our group: A Circle of Friends, which says it all. We put up a Bulletin Board in the Parish Hall (on the northwest side by the Books). We hosted a couple special guests from the Quaker Meeting which broadened our conversation – and the possibilities for what we might do in the future. At our May meeting, we talked about several things we might be able want to pursue here at Christ Church.

We have already started with some of the suggestions; the first was the use of a beautiful little collect that is found in our Book of Common Prayer on page 840 tucked away in “Thanksgivings: *For the Diversity of Races and Cultures*”. It is the one at the top of this page; I have started using it as the collect at the close of the Prayers of the People (which fit so beautifully with the recent Feast of Pentecost). When the summer schedule begins we will use it at the conclusion of the service with everyone saying it together. We are also keeping the Bulletin Board current: there is so much every week in the news that we are clipping and posting – and perhaps sparking new conversations.

There are several other ideas we will continue to discuss and pursue. Some are simple, others quite interesting! Some just for the Christ Church congregation, others for reaching out into our community and other places of worship. I am putting Sunday June 24th following the 9 am service in the Parish Hall on the calendar for our next meeting; so mark your calendar and do join us! We would love to hear your voice as we continue to dream about what God is calling us to do in our own individual lives and in the life of our church. As the collect says so well, “*enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship*” – we invite you to widen our Circle of Friends.

Peace,

Mother Lisa+