Princeton Theological Seminary

A Periodic Update from the Action Plan Committee

APC - CHECKPOINTS

Recognizing the Voices

The Action Plan Committee would like to express its appreciation for your presence at the “Recognizing the Voices” Seminary-wide forum on Tuesday, December 9, 2008. The Main Lounge was filled with members of the student body, faculty, administration, support staff and community leaders. This event marked the beginning of several venues that are being explored by the Action Plan Committee geared towards a restorative process that will lead our community in further understanding the issues in our midst as we seek to faithfully implement our collective ministry of reconciliation. We are also grateful for the numerous e-mails received thus far and the helpful suggestions in refining our collaborative abilities in cultivating trust and re-establishing confidences.

The Action Plan Committee met on Friday, December 12th to evaluate the event and proceed in exploring means by which we can refine this model. For more information on this process please visit: http://www.cofchrist.org/peaceaward/RJprinciples.asp.

We also concluded that genuine communication will be a key ingredient in our process. Periodically we will be providing the following e-newsletter: “APC- Checkpoints,” as a means of informing the Seminary community as to our collective progress.

December 16, 2008

Newsletter Spotlight

The Action Plan Committee will have an all-morning planning session on Saturday, January 3, 2009. We will continue to explore opportunities that will elicit the contributions of all members of the Seminary community as we acknowledge the urgency to move from talk to action.

In January, 2009 members of the APC will be in the Mackay's Dining Hall with reserved tables for ongoing conversations.

The role and function of the Action Plan Committee

In order to foster deeper learning, cultivate greater understanding within a diverse Seminary community, and embrace the realities of our context, President Torrance has created an Action Plan Committee (APC). This committee is composed of a diverse cross-section of faculty, students, and administrators.

The APC is charged with the following tasks:
- Implementing short-term strategies for constructive dialogue regarding a recent student publication;
- Exploring and recommending processes that will allow us to move forward beyond this event;
- Working with the Office of Multicultural Relations in conjunction with initiatives that are already in process;
- Assisting the community to work toward an institutional environment that goes beyond managing diversity to one that values and capitalizes on diversity in all areas.

Please understand that the Action Plan Committee has had nothing at all to do with disciplinary action with regard to the authors of “The Foreskin.” The disciplinary action was under the authority of the Dean of Student Life. Quoting from the Announcement from the Dean of Student Life dated December 4, 2008 and posted to the intra-net on the seminary website, (continued on page 2)

For more information or to send comments, email ActionPlanCommittee@ptsem.edu
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“... the Dean of Student Life has rendered a decision regarding disciplinary action that the Seminary will take in connection with these acts, and the affected students have been advised of this decision...”

The process for appeal is clearly articulated in the Handbook. The Dean of Student Life does not administrate or adjudicate the appeal process; rather, appeals are made to the Student and Academic Affairs Committee (SAAC), through the Director of Professional Studies who serves as the secretary for SAAC. The chair of SAAC this year is Professor Ellen Charray.

Comments and suggestions that will assist the Action Plan Committee in its deliberations are most welcomed! Please provide helpful suggestions and recommendations as we seek to enhance the Seminary’s ability to create safe spaces for dialogue.

A Message of Hope during this Advent Season

Advent calls us to live a dynamic hope in a time of expectations! I have found that to live in hope is difficult! Being called as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, I have found that it is our human tendency to live in quiet or wild despair. When our efforts to assist downtrodden people in their struggle for justice is met with repeated failures, it is only natural and certainly easier to give up or turn bitter and cruel. Yet, living as a child of God called to be a minister to the whole people of God, I have made it my own reaction to dare to hope in the resurrecting power of God, which is stronger than all the powers of destruction and death in our world.

The act of transforming our expectations to reality encourages me to plead with God—it allows me to protest to God—to hasten the coming of justice and peace, regardless of ethnicity, sex, age, height, weight, etc, to change what seems to be unchangeable, to redeem what seems a total loss. This living hope found in this dream of non-conformity should keep us restless for God’s new world and assured that the powerful love of God shall be victorious.

What are some principles that we can experience in breaking down the walls and building bridges of cross-cultural ministry? Allow me to suggest the following for our reflection:

- We must take the initiative and dialogue. We must listen. Carefully, thoughtfully, without interruption, without hidden agendas, without preconceptions.

- Next we need to think. And talk. With each other. As openly as possible, prepared for misunderstanding and anger, but also for healing, comprehension, reconciliation—friendship. We must push open the question of what is “normal,” and what is considered “normative.” Paying attention to the particularities of our lives—what it means to live in the midst of all our differences—helps open us up to new ways of seeing reality. The aim is not for sameness. Rather difference is approached as a gift, an opportunity to value creation. The differences between us—of race, culture, gender, age, class, nationality, physical and mental abilities—as well as those particularities we hold in common, matter deeply because they make us who we are.

- Most important, we need to pray. “If any of you lack wisdom,” James wrote, “he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). It is just as impossible to know every culture as it is to know every language. And even cultures you feel comfortable with will often surprise you. Admitting our limitations in relating in a multicultural society is the most important cross-cultural skill of all. It opens doors for cultural friends to teach us, and so prevents their feeling patronized. It is important to remember that we relate to others for God’s glory (Romans 16:6), not for meeting our expectations. It is at this point that God uses us the most effectively, and we partake in much needed cultural breakthroughs as a Church.

May you all have a blessed and wonderful Christmas holiday!

-Rev. Victor Aloyo, Jr.
Moderator & Convener
Action Plan Committee