

Kentucky Council of Churches Annual Assembly 2017

Delegate Report

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The focus of the 2017 Kentucky Council of Churches Annual Assembly – **privilege** – is not a new issue, nor is it new to me. As a sociologist I regularly teach about the ways that privilege in race, gender, socio-economic status and such plays out in our lives, and I often use my own socio-economic background and my race as examples of my own privilege in the classroom. That said, I was not certain how much “new” I would get from the speakers and events at the assembly. I quickly learned just how much God had in store for me as the speakers began, and have returned home challenged to disrupt much of the comfort my privilege has provided.

Mr. Jack Jezreel of JustFaith Ministries drew on the work and words of Pope Francis to call us to heal the ruptures in our society by encounter that goes and creates kinship, not a distant charity. A workshop led by Rev. Dr. Charisse Gillett, President of Lexington Theological Seminary, invoked the words of bell hooks to call us to not fall prey to the current ahistorical mood, but rather to take stock of where we are and where we have been and where, particularly as it relates to systematic entrenched privilege, we have yet to go. Using the words of Isaiah, Rev. Traci Blackmon called us to become repairers of the breach in which we currently live (in either our privileged or less privileged positions) by “putting skin in the game” and engaging in behaviors that strive for reparations. Finally, on Friday morning, Rev. Dr. Miguel De La Torre of the Iliff School of Theology called us to reside with the people who live in hopelessness, who live in despair, in what he called “Holy Saturday.” Too often, our Eurocentric frameworks rely on a narrative of order and purpose that allows those of us in comfort to call those in despair to have hope and trust in the order of things. We opt to live in Holy Sunday, having skipped the Holy Saturday that entrenches the lives of others. Rather, we need to practice a faith that lives in ambiguity, that looks for the actions for now, that is now the hands and feet of Jesus walking in the breach we seek together to repair.

I am yet grappling with the (new to me) awareness that it is privilege that allows me to think about my privilege only when I CHOOSE to do so. It is privilege that I can walk away from the breach when I feel I cannot go on. From the Assembly and the words of those gathered, I know I must listen to the call to go. To go not to lead, but to listen, to go to ask, to go to be vulnerable, and to go to repair the breach together.