



## Good to See You!

May 22, 2019

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It was good to see you last night. I hope you found everything you were expecting and more. It was good to see so many of our ruling elders and pastors who came together to discuss Presbytery business at our quarterly gathering. We even had some honest debate about our priorities and our commitments. I was glad for the debate and the respectful way in which it was done.

It was good to see so many volunteers and staff from Wauwatosa Presbyterian Church, who tended to every detail of hospitality and offered an amazing dinner. And it was good to *hear* Angela Oglesby and the Chancel Choir who transformed our worship.

It was good to see so many church members from around the Presbytery, who did not have an obligation to attend as a commissioner, but who wanted to be part of the life of the Presbytery, especially as we dove into the issue of racial justice. It was good to see ecumenical partners from around the region, people of other faith traditions who, too, recognized the importance of last night's conversation.

It was good to see you engaged with one another in fellowship, teasing, planning, wondering, and guided conversation.

But it was also good to see strangers. One man thanked us for hosting Robin DiAngelo, mentioning that he come up from Racine in a car of people. "How did you hear about this?" I asked him. He'd learned about the event from a friend but couldn't trace the chain any further back.

We won't be gathering like this again until September 25. Mark your calendars now, as we will welcome Dr. Bettina Love, an educator, award-winning author, and nationally-renowned presenter, who will continue to challenge us.

In the meanwhile, though, we have work to do. I hope you heard that message last night. The racism that pervades our society runs deep. If you are a white person, it might be so pervasive as to be conveniently invisible...unless you choose to watch for it.

I was struck by Dr. DiAngelo's remarks about the *freedom* that comes from simply acknowledging that we live in a racist nation, where the color of people's skin has been an indicator for political power, educational opportunities, access to housing and healthcare, and social relationships. Simply acknowledging this to be, she explained, frees us from needing to defend at all costs that there's no racism here. Racism?!? Uh-huh, I don't think so. You must be racist for thinking so.

It's never easy to acknowledge that injustice can thrive in our midst, let alone that it has insidiously infected us personally, often without our awareness and undoubtedly without our consent. At some point, though, we can't keep denying the existence of systemic, pervasive, ugly racism. We will exhaust ourselves trying to rationalize or justify or explain or defend, when the reality of racism is painfully evident to everyone except us.

It is freeing for me to realize that I don't have to defend the system anymore. Acknowledging that it's broken enables me to focus on the solutions. Boy, I wish I had them! As daunting as the work of racial justice is, I must begin somewhere. *We* must begin somewhere. It will take all of us together on this journey, if we hope to make any difference. So, I say again, it was good to see you last night.