

## ELCA Task Force on Genetics

Meeting of April 17-18, 2009

### Meeting Notes

Present: Janet Williams, Per Anderson, Carmelo Santos, Robin Mattison, Susan Martin, Linden Olson, Jerald DeWitt, Leland Glenna, Yvonne Marshall, Steven Ullestad, Paul Nelson, Frank Maenpa, Ted Peters, Robert Lebel, Juliette Kahle, Aana Vigen, Richard Perry, Jr.

Advisory Members Present: Louis Dorvilier (Global Mission), Mary Minette (Church in Society, Washington Office), Sandra Schlesinger (ELCA Church Council), and Patricia Zerega (Church in Society, Corporate Social Responsibility)

Guests: Patrick Keifert, Church Innovations and Luther Seminary, and Leonard Hummel, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

Staff: Ron Duty, Roger Willer

Excused: Judith Klusman, Jadon Berry

The meeting was called to order.

Juliette Kahle led devotions, and Yvonne Marshall read a psalm.

Personal updates were given by task force members and guests. Ron Duty introduced new advisory member, Louis Dorvilier, of ELCA Global Mission who succeeds Beletech Deresssa on the task force.

Break

Willer reviewed the meeting agenda, and talked about how we should think of the topics and presentations from the perspective of a pastoral frame of mind as we approach writing the first draft of the social statement.

Ron Duty introduced Paul Jersild's work and his concerns with theological views of the human, which is an area of interest to the task force. Jersild had planned to be with the task force to discuss his papers, but was hospitalized for surgery on a broken ankle. Per Anderson gave a theological analysis of the intent and argument of Jersild's paper, "The Emergent Human Being." This was followed by task force discussion. Roger Willer summarized the concerns of Jersild's paper on "A Relational View of Human Nature." This was also followed by task force discussion.

The task force took a break for lunch.

Ron Duty introduced Pat Keifert, who was asked to address how the task force might move from general principles to particular prescriptions in the social statement. Keifert gave a presentation based on the work of Wayne Booth's *The Modern Dogma and the Rhetoric of Ascent* and of Richard J. Bernstein's *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* that both showed the nature and role of the "modern dogma" in contemporary ways of thinking about science and ethics, and also revealed our modern "Cartesian anxiety" about having a fixed

place to stand when addressing questions of facts, values, and ethics. There was some back-and-forth discussion of these topics among Keifert and task force members. Keifert offered some perspectives about how to use knowledge of the modern dogma and people's Cartesian anxieties (and sense of shame) when writing the social statement. Keifert also was asked to give his impressions of the study, *Power, Choice, and Responsibility*.

The task force discussed responses to the study, *Power, Choice, and Responsibility*, so far from congregations and other groups.

The ethicists on the task force also reviewed the discussion of the study by the 2009 Lutheran Ethicists Gathering, and particularly the response to the papers presentations by Maura Ryan of Notre Dame.

At a dinner break, task force members gave appreciative comments to Ron Duty, who will be leaving the Churchwide organization.

After dinner, the task force members identified two or three key things each of them heard in the day's discussions. The task force adjourned until morning.

On Saturday morning, Kahle led devotions on Romans 2.

Ron Duty introduced Leonard Hummel, who was asked to address questions of pastoral theology and pastoral care in genetics for the task force. His first presentation was entitled "Pastoral Theology Amidst the Chance and Necessity of the Human Gene: The Case of Cancer." This was followed by discussion. His second presentation focused on "A Pastoral Theology of Genetics and Genetic Technologies" This was also followed by discussion.

The task force reviewed its upcoming meeting dates:

November 6-8, 2009

January 22-24, 2010

October, 22-23, 2010

January, 21-23, 2011

It was also noted that Churchwide Assembly, at which the social statement on genetics is anticipated to be considered will be August 15-19, 2011 in Orlando

Roger Willer also reviewed the process and tentative schedule for writing the first draft of the social statement. This will include a June 19-20, 2009, meeting of the Writing Team. Leland Glenna and Susan Martyn agreed to remain on the writing team along with Willer, Per Anderson, and Janet Williams.

The task force then broke into small groups to brainstorm about what considerations or topics they would like to see addressed in the first draft of the social statement. These groups then reported back to the whole task force.

The task force meeting was adjourned.