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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 30, Folder 2, Jewish-Christian-Muslim Family Workshop,
1990.

M. Scott Peck
Bliss Road
New Preston, Ct. 06777
~
203-868-7400

January 22, 1990

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
45 East 89th Street
Apt. 18F
New York, NY 10128

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

I am delighted to know that we will be together at the Jewish Christian Muslim (JCM) Family Workshop which will be held at the Maryknoll School of Theology from 9 a.m. February 17 to 5 p.m. February 20, 1990.

The reason I am writing to you is that in organizing this exciting workshop with Ronnie Heifetz, its program design has been my primary responsibility.

For several reasons, it is critical that you be in attendance for the entirety of the workshop. As Ronnie Heifetz's letter indicated, therefore, you should plan to arrive for registration late afternoon or evening Friday, February 16. Food will be available that evening. You will be free to depart at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, February 20. Since the workshop will be intense and likely to be exhausting as well as exhilarating, however, you are welcome to stay over that Tuesday night. Room and board will be provided for those who choose to do so.

Please find enclosed an information sheet concerning travel expense reimbursement, another giving directions from the Hartford and New York City areas, and a schedule for the workshop.

I would like to say some things about that schedule. You will note that most of the first two days will be devoted to community building and the third day to issues. That order is of very deliberate design. A group of strangers or acquaintances are not even ready to deal with issues - much less issues as dynamic as

the ones we will be addressing - until they have come to know, respect, and care for each other. The Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) employs a method to facilitate such preparatory work which it calls "community building." In other words, it will be our task to build ourselves into a community before we intellectually try to solve problems.

I am, therefore, also enclosing a copy of a letter which FCE routinely sends out to all of the participants in its workshops, many of whom have not been as well prepared as you have been by Ronnie.

Feel free to dress casually. For reasons of confidentiality, tape recorders are not allowed, but some participants do bring a notebook. Floor sitting is encouraged for the nimble, and you may want to carry along your favorite cushion.

I will be away from now until the Workshop, but feel free to contact my Executive Director, Kathy Fitzpatrick, at (203) 350-2247 if you have any problems or questions. If she does not have an immediate answer, she will obtain one for you.

Both my wife, Lily, and I are very much looking forward to being in community with you.

Best wishes,

Scotty

Scotty

MSP/shp

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
79 JOHN F. KENNEDY STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

January 18, 1990

MEMORANDUM

To: Jewish-Christian-Muslim Family Workshop Participants
From: Ronald Heifetz
Re: Attached Paper

Some of you have requested the concept paper I wrote that engaged Scott Peck, myself, and others in a long and animated discussion last summer, resulting in the design of this conference. I send it to you and I look forward to your feedback. However, please understand two things: first, these are simply my ideas, and not the focus of the conference. At most, I would hope that these ideas would serve as a springboard for our discussions. Second, since this is not my area of scholarship, I wouldn't bet that these ideas are right. They are simply my initial attempt to make sense of a complex set of historical, religious, and ethnic relationships.

I look forward to working together.

Community Building Workshops

A group of people do not become a genuine community easily or accidentally. There are certain principles which a group must learn in order to develop themselves into a community and then maintain that community. Indeed, an important reason for your participation in the workshop is for you to learn these principles through the experience of struggling with a group of your fellow human beings toward the goal of true community. You may wonder why we do not simply tell you these principles beforehand. The major reason is that passive learning, while easy, is almost invariably shallow; experiential learning, on the other hand, although demanding, is infinitely more profound and rewarding.

Still, there is one principle you do need to know beforehand. Genuine community is always inclusive. The greatest enemy to true community is exclusivity. This takes two forms. One is groups who exclude other because they are the "wrong" religion or "sinners" or divorced or gay or poor or black, etc. Such groups are not communities; they are cliques and invariably impoverished by their inbreeding. The other variety of exclusivity results when individuals exclude themselves from a community because it is in some way difficult, demanding, or uncomfortable. In so doing, they deprive the community of their unique gifts or talents and help to force the group back into the mold of clique.

This is one of the reasons you have been asked to attend the entire workshop from beginning to end. If things are not going to your liking, please express your dissatisfaction rather than withdrawing. You should be prepared to "hang in there" through periods of anger, frustration, wanting to leave, anxiety, doubt, depression, and even despair. Such "desert periods", while stressful, are perfectly normal in the initial phases of these workshops - indeed, a necessary part of the community building process. And remember that you have no more and no less responsibility than any of the other participants for the success of the workshop - for succeeding in building true community.

Thus, real community requires commitment of its members. You should, therefore, be prepared to commit yourself to being on time for all workshop sessions. You should also commit yourself to participating emotionally. You will not be required to speak unless you are so inclined; non-verbal participation can be as powerful as other forms. But you do need to be attentive and involved.

You will find this attention and involvement is likely to be exhausting. Be gentle with yourself and do not schedule up your free time if you can help it. You will probably need that time for rest, reflection, and integration of the experience.

These words are not meant to frighten you. There will be no chains or shackles! Commitment cannot be legislated, and you will not be prosecuted for breaking it. In fact, participants in the community building process, while often surprised at how demanding it is, are also routinely surprised by its gentleness. And it is an old rule that we get out of community in proportion to what we put into it.



Jewish-Christian-Muslim Family Workshop

Participant List

Jews

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