



Pilgrimage Through the Pandemic Reflection Guide

Session 2 – Policy and the Pandemic: Government Responses and Their Impact

Prepare

Read: Psalm 33:4-5: *“For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.”*

Pray: Righteous God, all your ways are just; you have shown your righteousness to your people generation after generation, and you love laws that are just and upright. But we continually look out for our own interests and fail to uphold equity. We do not defend the oppressed. We are silent when we should speak, and we speak for ourselves when we should speak for others. Forgive us where we have strayed from you, and help us to create policies that lead to the flourishing of all people. As we face unprecedented circumstances with COVID-19, give us an imagination for policies that are consistent with your Word, with your heart for the most vulnerable, and with your love of justice.

Listen

Watch: Watch the *Policy and the Pandemic: Government Responses and Their Impact* panel at www.durhamcares.org/pilgrimage. Speakers:

- Jeremy Collins – Director of Engagement, Office of the Governor
- DeDreana Freeman – Durham City Council Member
- Tony Hayes – Tribal Chair, Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation
- Miriam Valle – Programs and Operations Coordinator, DurhamCares

Reflect

Take some time on your own, or with your small group, to reflect on the following questions through discussion, contemplation, journaling, or artwork.

1. DeDreana Freeman said that the way we treat the least of us – the marginalized and oppressed in our society – reflects our values. Similarly, Jesus said that when we care for the least of his brothers and sisters, we are caring for him. This principle is often applied to direct service to people at the margins – feeding the hungry, visiting those in prison, etc. But how is it also important for governmental policy?

2. Jeremy Collins said, “COVID-19 exposes a number of issues that our community groups have been educating on and praying about and working towards for decades... We’re talking about disparities in housing, disparities in healthcare, disparities in economic growth, job creation,



food deserts.” How are the disparities highlighted by COVID-19 like issues we have always experienced in the US, and how are they unique? Why does it take a crisis to reignite these conversations for the larger public? And how might our faith lead us to participate in the policy-making process to ensure that laws are just at all times?

3. Tony Hayes shared that only federally recognized tribes received relief packages, which left out his tribe, the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation (OBSN). During the Pilgrimage of Pain and Hope we learn from the OBSN that the story of their people is muffled and silenced when the story of American history is told through our educational institutions, monuments, and laws. How has COVID-19 exposed the human impact of this marginalized history? How does this show the ways in which worldly governments insufficiently represent God’s justice? What does it look like to live as a part of God’s Kingdom while inhabiting a world of other governmental structures?

4. Miriam Valle, while recovering from COVID-19, shared that some of her family and friends were unable to be tested because, as immigrants, they did not have smooth access to and through the health care system. She was tested because she had someone else with more access advocating for her. Proverbs 31:8 says, “Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” Why do some people have access and others do not? What is the role of people with privilege in advocating for people with less access?

5. Jeremy Collins said, “People who suffer the most quite often show the greatest humanity.” How are you seeing this play out right now? How is this consistent with the life of Jesus?