

2018 Michigan Good Food Summit

Breakout Session #10: Growing Michigan's Faith-Based Good Food Movement: An Interactive Workshop

1:45 pm

Speakers: Rev. Nurya Linda Parish, Plainsong Farm & Ministry; Rabbi Nate DeGroot, Hazon-Detroit; Ryan Cumming, ELCA World Hunger Program

Parish:

- Faith values inform community work

Cumming:

- Relief-related
- Shelters for victims of violence
- Shelter for LGBTQ
- Help with laundry and food for poor
- Backpack program for kids
- Youth Group fundraising
- Some advocacy for Christian-faith communities in NY and DC working with UN and 16 branches working in different states.
- Sustainable Development
- Clean Water in Hospitals, Refugee Camps.
- Helping inform churches that their church is a part of this work.
- Also helps promote their work to get more funding.
- "Lutherans are very backward," Cumming said. "We do things in gratitude in what God has already done. So, it gives us a different take on things.
- Are more concerned in building relationships in communities. This limits us — we don't work in community we don't have relationships in.
- We have indirect help efforts — we may help another org. with their operation.
- Organizations who come from the outside sometimes bring more harm than good.
- We have a long and complicated history about seeking justice. It began with Martin Luther seeking economic justice in the Christian faith community, but Lutherans have done a poor job upholding that over time.
- We aim to work politics to seek justice for communities.
- We don't have a good history with Jewish and other neighbors in our community. We don't have that. We have a lack of diversity like most protestants that makes it hard to establish relationships with the communities we're hoping to work in.

DeGroot:

- Creation Story: 2 versions: God speaking world into existence and Garden of Eden.
- Offered a 3rd creation narrative: God existed and was love and light, but was lonely and created us for company. First, God tried to fill his infinite light and love a vessel, but this

space wasn't strong enough to hold all of it so it fractured into infinite pieces. We and everything in the universe are the broken shards of that vessel.

- Jews are asked to Heal and Mend those vessels so that the container may hold that light and love again. This is the mandate of all Jews and informs my work.
- Once vessels are reconstituted into shapes that can hold the light and love we know they are capable of.
- We call this the "Messiah."
- I don't believe this could exist within our imperfect world.
- We'd need a sustainable world where people are fed and taken care of.
- Garden of Eden represents the perfect space.
- We believe that the natural world has divine and we can make a better world
- We base rituals on the Sun and Moon instead of calendars and infuse the physical world with the divine that we know is present.
- We want to connect our Earth-based inheritance in Detroit.
- Reconstitute history of Jews and blacks in the city of Detroit like there used to be in the past.
- Detroit: Food and Water "Farm to Belly" dinner + discussion.
- Suburbs: Meeting groups that learn and implement green action into their own communities.
- Eastern Market: Single largest annual Jewish program in Detroit.
- Looking to help city based urban-based projects and revive history of Jewish food connections to Detroit.
- To be Jewish means to care about the environment and sustainability and live a life according to those values.

Divided into small groups to discuss...

- Challenges which faith-based communities might face
- Assets which faith-based communities might bring

Groups who shared their discussion:

- **Group #1:** Christian & Jewish members in this group felt the communities they serve are connecting with the values first, then to the faith.
- **Group #2:** Needing to engage more authentically with the community and improve the quality of the work being done and share the credit as groups versus individual members wanting credit.
- **Group #3:** Old members/old ways of doing things focused on saving souls more than helping people's sufferings and pains. Preach less and heal more.

“These ideas like the backpacks for children initiatives underscore Social Justice traditions in faith communities,” **Cumming said.**

“I see my religious values as the same as secular justice values. Some may gravitate towards values they’re already working in,” **DeGroot said.**

Divided into small groups to discuss...Imagining how secular values can be address by faith-based communities as religious values.

Groups who shared their discussion:

- **_____ Effort:** Use church-owned land for community garden, pay local farmers to work on community gardens
- **Green Effort:** Experiential-learning, immersing selves in places where similar efforts are in practice
- **Legal Effort:** Legal amendments to land use
- **Fair Effort:** Education efforts in food systems, mission trip strategy

DeGroot: Could infrastructure for ritual-fit foods for faiths be implemented, like factory farming kosher meat?