



Clapham Servants

Overcoming the proximity gap between the church and the local community through conversations of consequence

Living Love, Leading Peace

Through our two readings, we engaged in discovering and learning about leadership during racially tumultuous times.

Wrestling with Race - Part One: A discussion of race in America today based on Martin Luther King Jr's *Letter from Birmingham Jail*

Wrestling with Race - Part Two: This gathering provided the opportunity to examine leadership during difficult racial times, with a discussion based on Nelson Mandela's *Long Walk to Freedom*

These discussions generated interest for a community reading of the Letter from a Birmingham Jail that featured race and reconciliation leader Dr Emmet Price and Bobby Warrenburg. The gathering drew 200 people at the North Shore Community Baptist Church on April 4th, the date of Martin Luther King Jr's assassination.



Dear Friends,

Since stepping into my new role last fall, I have realized how great the forces are against our vision of a core of believers overcoming the proximity gap between the local church and its community. There is an enormous pull on the time and attention of churches and their people to focus on their own concerns, rather than on demonstrating the Lord Jesus' self-giving love for those in their community and workplaces--especially those who are different from ourselves.

At the same time, I have become acutely aware of just how awesome the God of the Bible is in empowering us when we allow Him in. He enables us to move into our communities in His name with grace and confidence.

Public Square Forums January-June, 2019

January

- **Letters from Birmingham Jail**, Hastings House, hosted by North Shore Baptist Church

February

- **Long Walk to Freedom**, hosted in a private home in Beverly.
- **Letters from Birmingham Jail**, Thayer House, hosted by Medway Village Church

March

- **How Much Land Does a Man Need**, Hastings House, hosted by North Shore Baptist Church

April

- **Long Walk to Freedom**, Thayer House, hosted by Medway Village Church

June

- **Character in An Age of Image** with excerpts from Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Francis Fenelon's *Telemachus*, Beverly Public Library, hosted by North Shore Baptist Church.



The pushback the prophet Isaiah felt from the people of his day was just as strong and resistant as in our day. For over 40 years he was sustained in his work by God's sovereign shepherding, which filled him from encounter (6:1-4), to confession, (6:5), to cleansing (6: 6-7) and finally to being sent out with confidence. (6: 8-9).

My conviction is that as we are sustained by this same theological vision and that in the name of the resurrected Jesus we will see the walls of unbelief fall before us. The response to Public Square Forums and related events suggests that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we are beginning to emerge as a salt-and-light Jesus movement in public places.

Our Clapham Servants Core Mission

Making the Lord Jesus Christ known through a core of believers by overcoming the social, relational and spiritual proximity gaps between local churches and our communities remains our core mission. Our primary vehicle for making the Lord Jesus Christ known is exceptional "conversations of consequence" at Public Square Forums that engage people in timely, culturally relevant issues through readings of weight and value.

Generating Community Impact through Conversations of Consequence

Our winter theme, "Live Love, Lead Peace," was meant to help bring down the walls of racism through a series of events. Our core team engaged 24 people from the town of Beverly with Martin Luther King Jr's **Letter from a Birmingham Jail** followed by Nelson Mandela's **Long Road to Freedom** with 18 people.

Led by United Way's Sarah Bartley, these readings generated interest for a community reading of the *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* at the North Shore Community Baptist Church on April 4th, the date of Martin Luther King Jr's assassination (see sidebar, p.1).

Character in an Age of Image

Here are a few of the mentoring gems stimulated by the reading of *The Prince* and *Telemachus*. (And yes, I have received permission to make these public.)

❖ Lois shared her deep anguish when her boss “threw me under the bus”. Discerning the boss’ deep insecurities, she maintained a good working relationship through grace and kindness. This was a great example of “leading upward.”

❖ Alex discussed a seemingly impossible moral conflict concerning a woman employee. By focusing on the well-being of the employee, his team found a true win-win outcome that honored both company values and national law.

❖ Ann, a small business owner, described regularly facing client pressure to cross what for her are ethical no-go lines. She recalled leaving a meeting with one potential client convinced her courage had cost her the contract. She was surprised when her company was awarded the contract despite – or perhaps because of – having stood her ground.

❖ Ken compared the historical context and high-level duplicity in *The Prince* with the present day. Ken’s conclusion: In the 21st century, as in the 16th century, lying and cheating generate short-term gains. It is honesty and trust that generate long-term success.

In the town of Medway newly installed Pastor Funwayo Mafuleka worked with our team to host *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* and *Long Walk to Freedom*.

Our spring theme, “Rethinking Wealth”, was a response our nation’s current grappling with fresh debates over capitalism, socialism and widening inequalities. Wealth-creation lifts families out of poverty, saves lives and improves well-being for millions in our modern global society. Yet, an obsessive accumulation of wealth with self-promoting greed threatens societies and cultures.

Tolstoy’s *How Much Land Does a Man Need*, coupled with “Workism” from a recent issue of *The Atlantic* launched us into considering the personal and political ramifications of wealth and income disparities.

Mentoring Conversations of Consequence – a new initiative

In June at the Beverly Public Library, our team paired nine mentors with vast leadership experience (see list [here](#)) with eleven young men and women professionals. Sarah Barley and I moderated our conversation of consequence on the character of leadership in an age of image using Machiavelli’s *The Prince* and Francie Fenelon’s *Telemachus*. (see side bar) The feedback from the younger crowd was immediate: When is the next event? Can the conversation last longer?

Q Ideas

Selecting timely, compelling reading of relevance to current topics of importance is vital for stirring conversations of consequence. To resource ourselves with Christ filled thinking about challenging culturally issues, we have joined **Q Idea**. In April, I traveled to their national conference in Nashville. With 2000 people from across the nation,

Upcoming Events

Visit publicsquareforum.org for future events

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we interacted on Christ-filled presentations on topics that included climate change, artificial intelligence, capitalism and socialism, and abortion.

On the Horizon

During the summer we will be co-hosting our first greater Boston area moderator retraining with the First Congregational Church in South Hamilton; planning for Mentoring Conversations of Consequence with Richard Wallace of NSBC; setting the schedule with church partners for the remaining 2019 Public Square Forums; teaming up with the Chinese Bible Church in Lexington for a series of adults-teen conversations of consequence on topics such as faith and freedom; and preparing for this October's Historical Missional Mentoring trip.

With Gratitude

Over the last six months, I have had the privilege and personal joy of working in support of pastors, church leaders, and educators on events that together have directly touched more than 300 people in New England.

Our core partners have been North Shore Baptist Church (Bobby Warrenburg, Sarah Bartley, and Richard Wagner), Medway Village Church (newly installed Malawian Pastor Funwayo Mafuleka), Lexington's Chinese Bible Church (Lois and Alex Koh) and the Mockler Center for Faith and Ethics in the Workplace at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (Inaugural Dean Ken Barnes).

I look forward to hearing your reactions, advice, and thoughts as we move forward.

In the grace and love of Jesus,

Jim

Dr. James F. Longhurst
Founder and Executive Director