

Reflections from the CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION

The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 855)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission by Christopher Heuertz & Christine Pohl describes a way of doing mission with the very poor – by becoming friends with them rather than “taking care of” or “serving” the poor or “fixing” whatever makes them poor. Their concepts apply to our reflections on racial reconciliation.

“Friendships are revelatory of truth. Within friendship we learn truths about the other person we couldn’t know any other way except through a context of trust and fidelity. Within friendship we learn about ourselves as we see our love and action through the eyes of another who loves and trusts us. And relationships forged among friends can open into deeper understandings of God’s love and concerns. Evangelism, and even the notion of mission itself, has sometimes been reduced to the words we share with another person, telling them about Jesus, salvation or eternal life. Words are important, but they can also be cheap. If we use words and get words in response, sometimes we think we’ve done mission or evangelism. Ministry among poor and vulnerable people reminds us that words are rarely enough—what each of us needs is to know that we are loved by Jesus, beloved of God. Everything else flows from that. In situations of injustice or despair, words alone are particularly insufficient. People need to be loved and valued by others. They need to see what love looks like.”

- How does the concept of friendship influence or change your understanding of reconciliation?

Reflections from the CENTER FOR RECONCILIATION

The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 855)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation... (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission by Christopher L. Heuertz & Christine D. Pohl describes a way of doing mission with the very poor – by becoming friends with them rather than “taking care of” or “serving” the poor or “fixing” whatever makes them poor. Their concepts apply to our reflections on racial reconciliation.

“Friendships are revelatory of truth. Within friendship we learn truths about the other person we couldn’t know any other way except through a context of trust and fidelity. Within friendship we learn about ourselves as we see our love and action through the eyes of another who loves and trusts us. And relationships forged among friends can open into deeper understandings of God’s love and concerns. Evangelism, and even the notion of mission itself, has sometimes been reduced to the words we share with another person, telling them about Jesus, salvation or eternal life. Words are important, but they can also be cheap. If we use words and get words in response, sometimes we think we’ve done mission or evangelism. Ministry among poor and vulnerable people reminds us that words are rarely enough—what each of us needs is to know that we are loved by Jesus, beloved of God. Everything else flows from that. In situations of injustice or despair, words alone are particularly insufficient. People need to be loved and valued by others. They need to see what love looks like.”

- How does the concept of friendship influence or change your understanding of reconciliation?

“In the Christian tradition, friendship is often tied to love and charity. In more classical or Aristotelian understandings, “friendship requires equality of power and status as well as shared activities, choices, and feelings.”

- What is the difference between friendship tied to love and charity vs. friendship requiring equality?

In his book *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus*, Bishop Mortimer Arias notes that prior to the incarnation of Christ, *euangelizo* had primarily been used in a political context. Before Jesus announced that the kingdom of God had come, *euangelizo* typically referred to the overthrow of an established government, the proclamation of a victory in battle or the return of the emperor. The concept conjured up images of a regime change...The kingdom of God came into conflict with the empire—the kingdom of humanity. It follows that we would see evangelism and mission as life on the frontlines of kingdom-level conflict and missionaries and evangelists as subversives.... What is it that we are subverting, and what kind of subversion are we called to, especially in relation to the mission of reconciliation? Part of the subversion involves restoring relationships to the center of our lives, ministry and mission. Friendships that open into reconciliation validate the message of the good news. Our practice becomes inseparable from our message, and affirming the divine imprint of God in each human being compels us to love as an extension of God’s love at work in us.”

- What does friendship look like as we engage in the spiritual practice of reconciliation?

The mission of the Center for Reconciliation is to confront the history and legacies of slavery and the slave trade in order to build respectful and equitable relationships. We seek to change hearts and minds through collaboration focused on learning, healing and justice.

“In the Christian tradition, friendship is often tied to love and charity. In more classical or Aristotelian understandings, “friendship requires equality of power and status as well as shared activities, choices, and feelings.”

- What is the difference between friendship tied to love and charity vs. friendship requiring equality?

In his book *Announcing the Reign of God: Evangelization and the Subversive Memory of Jesus*, Bishop Mortimer Arias notes that prior to the incarnation of Christ, *euangelizo* had primarily been used in a political context. Before Jesus announced that the kingdom of God had come, *euangelizo* typically referred to the overthrow of an established government, the proclamation of a victory in battle or the return of the emperor. The concept conjured up images of a regime change...The kingdom of God came into conflict with the empire—the kingdom of humanity. It follows that we would see evangelism and mission as life on the frontlines of kingdom-level conflict and missionaries and evangelists as subversives.... What is it that we are subverting, and what kind of subversion are we called to, especially in relation to the mission of reconciliation? Part of the subversion involves restoring relationships to the center of our lives, ministry and mission. Friendships that open into reconciliation validate the message of the good news. Our practice becomes inseparable from our message, and affirming the divine imprint of God in each human being compels us to love as an extension of God’s love at work in us.”

- What does friendship look like as we engage in the spiritual practice of reconciliation?

The mission of the Center for Reconciliation is to confront the history and legacies of slavery and the slave trade in order to build respectful and equitable relationships. We seek to change hearts and minds through collaboration focused on learning, healing and justice.