

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)

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin is the seeking of our own will instead of the will of God, thus distorting our relationship with God, with other people, and with all creation. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 848)

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23)

The Church recognizes the sinfulness of all of us, the potential each of us has to break the relationship between ourselves and God, each other, and the creation – and that we inherit broken relationships and live in world that creates and enforces broken relationships.

- What is your understanding of sin?

So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)

These verses from Matthew are an illuminating passage. The challenge to us is not that we need to forgive someone or let go of our anger towards someone who has wronged us. It doesn't even say that the person making their gift at the altar has done anything wrong. It just says that if you remember that someone has something against you, you are to go and be reconciled to that person before coming before God.

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What's interesting about this passage is that it doesn't matter what happened—or even if nothing at all happened! It is just focused on the broken relationship. If someone (anyone) has something (anything) against you for any reason, we are to go to that person and do whatever we can do to bring about reconciliation.

This takes away our need to assign blame—who did what to offend? Because sometimes relationships are broken due to circumstances beyond our control or simply because we are part of a group, live in a certain space, are whoever we are that creates the alienation. For example, victims of abuse, rape, racism, bigotry, the miscarriage of justice, etc. can feel alienated from others because of their experience. Ancient battles between countries can leave residual alienation for succeeding generations. So sometimes we end up living in a state of sin—of broken relationships—without having actually done anything intentionally or unintentionally. Matthew calls us to the work of reconciliation—no matter what the cause of the brokenness.

- Where, in our context, do we encounter brokenness that we are called to reconcile? What might be needed to enable us to be reconciled?

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.

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