

RECONCILIATION: TESTING OUR MISSION BY GOD'S VISION
Workshop offered by the Rev. Canon Dr. Titus Presler
Global Episcopal Mission Network Annual Conference
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Workshop Description: "In Christ, God was reconciling the world to God . . . and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" – so wrote Paul to the Corinthians. Thus reconciliation is God's mission, and reconciliation is the mission that God entrusts to us. Yet amid our many mission activities – education, healthcare, water quality, women's empowerment, climate change, short-term trips, inter-religious encounter – how focused are we on reconciliation? In pairs and in group discussion, workshop participants will be invited into the practical exercise of examining their mission activities in light of God's mission of reconciliation and exploring how to realign their work with God's vision.

Note: The outline below touches the main points of the brief presentation made by the presenter prior to the group dividing up into pairs to discuss assigned questions. A detailed presentation on this theme was made to the 'Global Mission Summit' conference in the Diocese of Massachusetts in April 2016 and will soon appear at TitusOnMission.wordpress.com and on the [DioMass](http://DioMass.com) website.

What is God up to? – Reconciliation

Mission = Sending: begins with God's self-sending, but to what end?
Need to ask what overall vision of God in cosmos is: What is God up to?
 what is unifying theme of all the elements of God's mission?
 Kingdom of God? Behold Lamb of God who takes away sin of world?
Reconciliation as in 2 Cor. 5.18: 'In Christ God was reconciling the world to God'
Nature of Reconciliation: healing of relationship, from hostility to friendship

Typical Conversation with Average Episcopalian

Associations of 'mission': evangelism, pastoring, socio-economic uplift
 healthcare, education, hydrology, agriculture, microenterprises
What is the point of these forms of mission? – typical responses:
 they point to God, they express Christ's care,
 we're doing good, we're improving world living conditions,
 we're pursuing 'sustainable development' (current buzzword)
But: These are all penultimates rather than ultimates

Poverty Captivity of Mission & Fix-It Captivity of Mission

In what countries are your mission activities? . . . any in Germany?
 why in Haiti but not in Italy? no mission to do in England?
Mainline churches today focus exclusively on poverty alleviation
 but: Perpetuates superiority mentality of haves to have-nots
 but: Thought experiment: Any mission left if poverty were eliminated?
 but: Mission of Jesus & church focused equally on poor & affluent
Directing some of our mission to Europe, Japan, Aus & NZ would keep us honest

Testing our Mission Activities by God's Omega Goal of Reconciliation

Test all our mission activities by asking the reconciliation question:

Education, Healthcare, Ecology, Women
Pastoral Care, Evangelism, Church-Planting
Short-Term Pilgrimages

Exercise: Divide up into Pairs:

Each partner: Cite one mission initiative you are pursuing in your setting,
the respond to the following two questions:

What is the need for reconciliation that this initiative addresses?
How could this initiative be refined to address reconciliation?

Report on Pairs Exercise:

There were about 35 people in this workshop, so about 17 pairs
conversation proceeded for 15-20 minutes
time did not permit reports from all pairs, but some were able to report:

- D. T. Niles' comment: 'Mission (or evangelism) is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread.' We tend to identify ourselves with the beggar who knows where to find bread. We need to identify ourselves with the beggar who needs bread. That can help us cultivate a truly two-way relationship of mutuality in mission.
- Reconciliation mission needs to attend to the differentials of power at work in the situation. How we try to catalyze reconciliation must be affected by the facts of power: Who has relatively more power? Who has relatively less power? And what about ourselves: What is the power we in mission are bringing to bear in the situation?
- Reconciliation as the vision is an invitation to think about how to begin a pathway to mission. Am I in mission because I want to help someone? Or am in mission because I love Jesus and I want to be in conversation with others about that?
- We undertook a local mission outreach and then were taken aback when people, instead of being grateful, responded to us with mild hostility. This made me ask: Who asked them whether they wanted us there?
- The problem we in the west have with moving from the poverty captivity of mission and the fix-it captivity of mission arises from the post-colonial situation. We need to understand that both sides of the post-colonial relationship are limited. Both the 1/3 World and the 2/3 World have limitations in our worldview.