

RECONCILING

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:20-21

Even with the best research, the strongest relationships and the most worthwhile risk-taking, there will still be deep resistance to genuine reconciliation. That's because genuine reconciliation requires a completely changed attitude to those who have been our enemies; a total transformation that is difficult for all of us. So why should we bother? Because in the Beatitudes, God promises that peacemakers – those who bring the true peace of reconciled relationships and flourishing of life – will be blessed.

Peter tells Christians in what is now Turkey that when the Church is reconciled, it will be a witness to the world. As we journey towards reconciliation, we can begin to handle diversity creatively and sincerely. We learn collectively to approach difference with curiosity and compassion, rather than fear. We begin to flourish together in previously unthinkable ways. Reconciliation transforms alienation into a new creation, not only restored but reinvigorated. I think that one of the greatest challenges of our time is whether we have the courage to seek such a remaking of our world.

RESOURCING

Carry each other's burdens.

Galatians 6:2

Outside's can't do reconciliation: it has to be people who are doing the fighting. They are the ones who can bring ongoing transformation and the daily renewal of relationships. But outsiders can resource others, strengthening them and building their capacity.

After the ascension, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to resource the Church. Reconciliation is never something done by one hero. It is something done by whole groups of people working together, in the knowledge that God's Spirit is with us as we seek to support each other on the journey towards reconciliation

PRAYER

Let us remember those who have died for their country in war; those we knew, and all who have given their lives for freedom, justice and the hope of peace.

As we look forward and seek the way of peace and reconciliation, you might like to say this prayer:

Lord, strengthen our hearts, hands, and minds, to work together for peace; to see you in one another, and to seek your kingdom above all things; that your will may be seen to be done, and your Kingdom come, through Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings. Amen.

*The Liturgical Commission of the Church of England
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To conclude the 100 days of peace and hope the **Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby** has written the following Six Rs of Reconciliation to reflect on as we pray for peace, hope and reconciliation in our time.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S SIX RS OF RECONCILIATION

RESEARCHING

...and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God with us'.

Matthew 1:23

Pursuing reconciliation requires research. Research is there to demythologise a conflict and say what the real problem is. Very often it's a complicated problem that needs to deal with the hard questions of justice and inequality. That can only be done by being present with those who are suffering. We have to listen to what they are saying without judgement. We have to be in the middle, sharing their pain and anguish. We have to be caught up emotionally, to weep, protest and lament. Because that is what Jesus Christ did with us. The reconciliation between God and human beings came through God sovereignly becoming human. He moved from God 'out there' to God 'with us'.

RELATING

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Reconciliation is not a mechanistic process; it's relational. If you find yourself involved in reconciliation as a method, it won't work. In John 3, we read that God sent Jesus because he loved the world, not because he'd worked it all out and thought it would be a good thing to do. Reconciliation is affective: our affections have to be involved. That means you build relationships with some pretty odd people. But, equally, you build relationships with the most amazing people. There is a sense of deep emotion. We have to love those in the conflict – the bad and the good – for that is the pattern of God to us.

RELIEF

Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:15-17

I remember walking around Nembe, in the Niger Delta, with a warlord who was deciding whether or not to keep me captive. I looked up and saw an oil company production facility about three miles away with enough electric power to supply most of that region, with helicopters coming in and out, fresh water, food, and a doctor. Then I looked back at the warlord's town where there was sewage running down the street and children playing in it. And I thought: 'If I had grown up here, I would be like this man,' because it was a mixture of horror and cruelty and inequality. What the people in that town needed most was water, electricity and hope. Relief is essential in the process of reconciliation.

Jesus, when he came, brought hope, life and healing. And he did not leave us to work alone: he created the Church, so that through partnerships, systems and imagination, we might be able to offer relief and hope for the long-term, not just today.

RISK

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:5-7

The risk of the incarnation was huge. If we take seriously the humanity of Christ, we take seriously his vulnerability: the vulnerability of a baby, the vulnerability of a man on a cross. Jesus himself took the risk of crucifixion and we know from Gethsemane the cost, pain and fear of that.

There is an obvious risk in reconciliation: you can easily get caught up in fighting. But that's not the primary risk. The primary risk is failure. Reconciliation always involves bringing people together and when that goes wrong the outcome is often worse than before you tried. But behind that risk is the hope of something great – of restored relationships and the flourishing of whole societies. After all, it is through the risk of the incarnation that we see the glory of the resurrection.