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Group Study Guide

Living Reconciliation (ISBN 978-0-281-07226-2) is published by SPCK in the UK and Forward Movement in the USA it can be bought from all good book shops.

It is accompanied by a website full of additional resources which can be found at www.living-reconciliation.org.

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Using *Living Reconciliation* as a study book for groups

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.¹

Welcome

The hope that the authors have for *Living Reconciliation* is that you as readers are inspired to live lives of reconciliation. This is not something that is even remotely possible as individuals. Reconciled lives are lived in community, in relationship to God and to those around us.

As a small group reading this book together you are at an advantage! You can inspire one another and build up your community and by doing so you can change the world.

General

In most groups, some will have read the whole book already. Some will read chapter by chapter, and others will come to the group having failed to find time to read the chapter being considered. In order to help, at the beginning of each session we provide you with a single paragraph that sums up the main points of each chapter. It can be read as a reminder for those who have read the book and as a help for those who are arriving unprepared.

For each chapter there is a short video online. This can be helpful in getting your group thinking and talking. The materials are designed to stand alone if you are not able to watch the videos.

Suggested Structure

There is a suggested structure in these notes. You know your group and what will work. These notes provide you with a number of ideas and a shape, but it is important that you use the shape that will work best with your group. The book has eight chapters and this study guide takes you through chapter by chapter to help you study the main themes as a group.

Note to leaders:

By thinking through the themes in *Living Reconciliation* together you will be better prepared to transform the conflicts in your church and communities. However, this is not a quick fix. During discussion, members of your group may want to take sides in disputes, both past and present. Try to avoid this, returning people's focus to the aims and questions set out for each session.

Discussion about conflict and reconciliation is likely to encourage personal and candid reflections. Before beginning the first session, we suggest that you agree 'ground rules' with your group about confidentiality.

¹ Attributed to Margaret Mead in: Frank G. Sommers, Tana Dineen (1984) *Curing Nuclear Madness*. p.158

Chapter 1 – Living Reconciliation

Summary

The book begins with a challenge for all of us to be agents of reconciliation. We venerate great heroes of peace, but they know that reconciliation only happens when everyone gets involved. Reconciliation is a task for all. Reconciliation is impossible to define but it is understood in stories, such as the story of Coventry Cathedral. The greatest story of reconciliation is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who broke the barrier between God and humanity so that in the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to break down the walls that divide us. This victory was confirmed by the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and lives within the church through history and across the world. Reconciliation is not an interest area for some Christians – it is the Gospel. It is not an action; it is a way of being. Despite this every church, right from the time of the writing of the New Testament, has lived in conflict. Conflict can be a healthy sign of vitality, but it can be destructive. Some church conflicts have resulted in war. The Anglican Communion has faced conflicts and has a story to tell. The genesis of this book was in the response of a number of Kenyan theologians to conflict in church and their nation. They understood that Anglicans could not be agents of reconciliation in their communities unless we were living it in our churches *and* when we live reconciliation in our churches we become agents of transformation in our communities. The chapter concludes with an overview of the life of the apostle Peter, highlighting his enthusiasm and his heroic continual failure. We will return to his story throughout the book.

Aim for Session 1

Introduce the concept of reconciliation and enable the group to see it as a task for everyone, individually and as a group.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

Who are your heroes of reconciliation?

What in their stories defines reconciliation?

You may find answers such as ‘Reconciliation is hard’ or ‘Reconciliation is crossing barriers.’ You will find you have a number of responses. Identify about three to five that seem most important to you as a group.

Bible Study

2 Corinthians 5: 11-21

Paul was writing to a divided church, to people who were angry with him and who questioned his integrity.

Discuss

Verses 11-21

You may need to read through the passage a couple of times to work out what is being said. As you do so remember that there is a theme that runs through both 1 and 2 Corinthians. In both letters Paul responds to a challenge to prove his credentials.

This question may help you understand the passage:

- In verse 12 Paul says he is not commending himself. Who is he commending and why?

From this passage and from your own understanding:

- What are the marks that define Christ's work of reconciliation?
- How do they compare with the 'Reconciliation is ...' definitions you collected earlier?

Discuss

Verses 18-21

- If the Corinthian community had taken these words seriously, what would have changed in the treatment of Paul and one another?
- What does it mean for us to live as 'ambassadors for Christ'?

Discuss

We often hold up our heroes as perfect super-humans.

- What makes Peter a great role model?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, who in Christ lived partnership
between human and Divine to the full,
call us, challenge us and commission us
in your work of reconciliation in the world. Amen.

Chapter 2 – Journey into Uncertainty

Summary

The Primates² of the Anglican Communion have committed themselves to a journey of honest conversation in relationship with one another to further the reign of God. This chapter challenges you to set out on the same journey. The first followers of Jesus were called to journey with him and they had no idea of the destination or what they would encounter on the way. This is deeply unsettling for those of us who like to know there are rules and have certainty. Alice Mogwe was someone who trusted rules, but when she left her native Botswana to study law in apartheid-era South Africa, she found laws were not to be trusted. She became a friend of the despised and found that truth was not simple. Laws are needed to give clarity, but truth is more complex and is discovered on a journey. Jesus often felt the demand for truth and responded with parables that communicated the complexity of life. Those who seek truth rather than defend positions are often seen as unprincipled and weak. Living reconciliation must not mean putting aside principles; it means something far more threatening – learning to journey with people who passionately disagree with you and all seeking to discover more truth. In response to the belief that ‘Only the whole world knows the whole truth,’ groups of Christians from across the Anglican Communion journey together under the banner of *Continuing Indaba*. Their stories will be part of the book as we read on. The task for you now is to take the first step on the journey and follow Jesus – even though you are not certain what you will encounter on the way.

Aim for Session 2

Challenge the group to set out on a journey and to understand that if conflict is to be transformed it begins with each one of us leaving our security.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

Imagine you have a journey coming up in the next few months.

What makes it exciting, stressful, comfortable, difficult or wonderful?

First followers

Read Mark 1: 16-20

- What do you think was going through the minds of the fishermen when they heard the call?
- Would you have followed?
- What questions would you have asked before following?

² The Primates of the Anglican Communion are the senior bishops of each province. Some, but not all are Archbishops. They meet on a regular basis for ‘leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation.’

Truth and Uncertainty

Alice Mogwe believed in the rightness of the law until she encountered law in apartheid South Africa.

Discuss

- Have you ever found that something you held as right and true was false or could not be relied on?
- How did you feel?

Bible Study

Luke 10: 25-37

This is such a familiar story but there is always more to be discovered as we consider it from many angles. The aim of this Bible study is to explore different assumptions held by Jesus and the teacher of the Law. For the teacher of the Law there is no difference between clarity and truth. Jesus had a different priority.

Discuss

Verses 25-29

- What kind of answers did the teacher of the Law expect from his two questions to Jesus?
- Did he get an answer to either question?

Discuss

Verses 30-37

Given the purity laws surrounding the priests and Levites of the Temple in Jerusalem the teacher of the Law would have understood that it was right for them to avoid contact with blood or potentially a corpse. The same laws would not have precluded the Samaritan from helping.

- If Jesus was not asking the teacher of the Law to become a Samaritan, what change in his way of thinking was Jesus demanding of him?
- How do you think the teacher of the Law would react to being told to behave like the Samaritan in the story?
- How does this parable challenge the way we think?

Conflict in your Church and Community

If we are to transform the conflicts in our church and community we have to begin by seeing the world in a different way.

The Diocese of Derby commissioned a team to participate in the Continuing Indaba journeys. When the Bishop was recruiting the members he invited Cath to set out on the journey. Cath misheard him when he said 'Will you come on Indaba?' She thought he said 'Will you come to Derby?' Considering Derby was only a few miles away and she went there most weeks she said 'yes.'

The Indaba journey took her to New York and Mumbai, travelling with people she could not have imagined existed with world views so far from her own. The journey was life changing for her and has made Cath an agent of transformation.

Discuss

- How would you feel as a group about doing something or going somewhere that might take you out of your comfort zone?
- What might that be?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, author of truth,
sustain us as we journey into uncertainty
and together enter deeper into your story. Amen.

Chapter 3 – Companions

Summary

You do not set out on the journey of reconciliation on your own; you have companions with you. However, this can be where the challenges begin. The people you walk with on this journey are not chosen by you and they can be very different to those you would pick to be your friends. They may not be the people you would choose to travel with or they may not want to travel with you. This means we all have to cross cultural barriers. Those who took part in the Continuing Indaba pilot conversations found they had to travel with people who were very different to them. They needed to see the world through the eyes of their companions. You have the opportunity to do the same in your context. It was no different for Jesus and his companions who walked through Jewish, Samaritan, and gentile Palestine. This is illustrated by the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well in John 4. As they speak they unpack cultural perceptions eventually focusing on the issue of where to worship – the issue that divided their communities. Jesus was challenged to locate the place of worship. His response to redefine the question and say true worship was not about place but ‘Spirit and truth.’ He resisted the temptation to defend his party line without minimalising the differences and in doing so displayed the value of diversity. Forming a journeying community requires us to leave the comfort of our own culture and enter the safe place of others. This takes time and commitment. Many parishes in the Episcopal Diocese of New York took the time to tread this path, breaking all kinds of practical and emotional constraints to spend weekends with one another. Wealthy and poor people from urban and rural areas stayed in one another’s homes and worshipped in one another’s churches. The effect was transformational for individuals and for the diocese. It moved people to move from careful politeness into direct personal relationships.

Aim for Session 3

Challenge the group to enter the cultural world of others.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

Share stories of cultural miscommunication in stories, films and from your lives.

*When have you been in a place where you have felt you did not know what was going on
-how to behave (to sit or to stand) – while everyone else seemed to know?*

How did you feel?

Bible Study

John 4: 1-30

Like last week, we are looking at a familiar story. We want you to focus on the cross-cultural aspect of the encounter between Jesus and Photine.

Discuss

Jesus is alone, tired and thirsty in a strange place.

- When Jesus asks Photine for water who has the power?
- Does the balance of power change as the story goes on? How?

Photine is often portrayed as sinful, leaving one husband after another. However, women rarely had choice over who they could marry and men held the power of divorce.

- How do you know if the woman is sinner or sinned against?
- *If* Photine was a victim of unjust structures how would this change your interpretation of Jesus' answer to her?

Discuss

Verses 39-42

When the disciples return they are astonished to see Jesus and the Samaritan woman talking to one another but Photine is the one who recognises Jesus as the Messiah.

- What effect did the conversation have on the people of Photine's village?

Discuss

Verses 43-44

- Would Jesus have been recognised for who he is if he had not crossed cultures?

Crossing Barriers

It shook the world when Nelson Mandela donned a Springboks rugby jersey to present Francois Pienaar with the 1995 Rugby World Cup. It was an iconic moment that symbolised the breaking down of barriers and new way forward as he donned the dress of the former oppressor. The moment inspired the film *Invictus* with Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon.

Discuss

- What other moments in history can you think of where people talking and smiling together has been shocking?
- Is there anyone people would be surprised to see you talking to and laughing with?
- What could you do this week to encounter someone from a different culture?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God,
you desire your people to be one as you are One.
Teach us that oneness in your likeness is full of the joy of diversity.
We ask this in your name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Chapter 4 – Encounter with Power

Summary

Many people celebrate diversity by travelling to different countries to experience ‘authentic’ food, music and dance. In cities with China Towns or Italian quarters we don’t need to travel very far for the same experience. This is wonderful, except where the barriers that define communities also signify inequality of wealth and power. Every political system seems to find a way to justify why some people should have more power than others and at times Christianity has been used in this way. It was used to justify slavery, the rigid defining of social class and Apartheid. If we are to live reconciliation we will come up against entrenched power. This is what happened to Jesus. Many revolutionaries destroy power, but few resist the temptation to construct new power structures to their own advantage. Jesus offered an alternative, redefining power. This was demonstrated in his encounter with a powerless gentile woman. When challenged by her to heal her daughter he initially treated her with contempt, but when challenged again he discovered that power is to be shared by all. He taught that great leadership is servant leadership. All too often our church life descends into hierarchies of power that become so familiar they are almost invisible. The key to challenging such structures is to engage in genuine mutual listening. Such listening is only possible when those in power deliberately show they are ready to listen, breaking customs and taboos to challenge the way things are done. It also requires those who expect to be ignored to find their voice and speak and in order for that to happen there is often a need to construct processes of listening – of shared and facilitated conversations – with trained facilitators.

Aim for Session 4

Help the group to think about the power dynamics of their communities and discover ways in which these can be challenged.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

Are there clear boundaries separating people who live in your town/city?

Why do people choose to live in one place rather than another?

What gives people the power to choose where they live?

Discuss

The hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful* is one of the most popular of all time. What would your reaction be if you were asked to sing the full version including the verse:

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high and lowly,
And ordered their estate.

Bible Study

Read John 13: 1-17

Another familiar story encourages us to consider the implications of challenging power.

Discuss

Verse 3

Just take a moment to consider the words 'Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power.'

- When people are offered power what do they seek to do with it?
- If Jesus knew he had power and you didn't know the rest of the story, what would you expect him to do?

Discuss

Verses 6-9

Peter was dismayed by the idea of Jesus washing his feet.

- Why do you think Peter was so upset?

Every year on Maundy Thursday the Austro Hungarian Emperor and Empress would wash the feet of 12 men and 12 women who had been specially washed and clothed for the event. They used ornate solid gold jugs and bowls made by the leading silver smiths of the generation. The act of service had become an act of identifying themselves as the incarnation of Christ and rightful heirs of his power.³

- How did the imperial re-enactment of the foot washing transform the message Jesus intended?

Verses 12-14

- How does the command in verse 14 contrast with the act of the Emperor?

Discuss

Any re-enactment of the foot washing in John 13 is very complex and difficult. The danger is that those doing the foot washing appear to take on the role of Jesus and so assume power over those they are serving. In cultures where foot washing is not a common action it may be humiliating to be encouraged to remove shoes and socks and be subjected to such a strange event. The result can be to reinforce the power dynamics between those who wash and those who are washed.

- How would you design an event that enabled all to participate in following the command of verse 14?
- Who would find this challenging in your community?

³ <http://www.hofburg-wien.at/en/things-to-know/silver-collection/tour-of-the-silver-collection/foot-washing-ceremony.html>

Mutual Listening

Discuss

- When have you felt that you have not been listened to?
- Who in your communities are least likely to be heard?
- What needs to change in your community so all speak and listen?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, who in Jesus showed us power
marked by humility and service,
sustain and uphold us in and through your strength
as we walk the difficult path of following Jesus' example. Amen.

Chapter 5 – Transforming Conflict

Summary

Conflict is a normal healthy part of human behaviour and we should not be surprised to see it in our church. But conflict can be destructive. John Mark Oduor likens the unhealthy response to a drum beat of war consisting of blame, the call for outside judgement on the opponent and the whipping up of fighting spirit. The result is violence and despair. In response he calls for a new drum beating out a message of forgiveness. This drum requires the building of relationships where conversation is possible in a shared place of meeting where uniqueness and diversity is celebrated and forgiveness can lead to belonging. Conflict has been part of the church ever since Peter discovered that the Holy Spirit had come upon the gentiles as well as the Jews. For some the acceptance of gentiles without their full conversion to Judaism was a step too far. The elders in Jerusalem tried to solve the issue at a council that issued a wise middle way solution, but this appeared to have little effect and the conflict escalated. The Letter to the Ephesians was written when the balance of power in some places had shifted and the gentile church was about to impose itself on the Jewish minority. In the letter it is made clear that there is only one Christian community, that has to embrace diversity in a single body. The alternatives of forcing uniformity or separating into two are incompatible with the witness of Christ. In the Anglican Communion there has been great pressure to ensure uniformity or to split. Three African dioceses faced this over their completely different attitudes to women priests. They considered separation as the best option, until they witnessed a remarkable reconciliation among a community in Kenya. They understood the way of Christ and committed themselves to walking together, valuing one another and seeking to discover Christ in one another.

Aim for Session 5

Help the group to consider how conflict can be transformed.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

‘The church must be diverse because humanity is diverse; it must be one because Christ is one.’

Andrew Walls

Think about the worldviews of those you meet on the street.

Think about what people wear and how they behave where they shop, eat, and congregate.

How many different cultural groups can you identify in your community?

How many of the cultural groups you have identified in your community attend your church?

Are churches in your town/city/diocese culturally divided?

Bible Study

Ephesians 2:11-22

From verse 11 we understand that this letter is addressed to gentile Christians living in Ephesus contemplating separation from Jewish Christians. Paul reminds them that Christ united them with people of Israel.

Discuss

Verses 14-18

Our Eucharistic prayers celebrate the saving work of Christ in reconciling sinful humanity to God. This is our hope and the foundation of our faith. But this passage offers an additional perspective.

- What is the emphasis in this passage?
- What did Christ do to break down the walls that divided people?
- When do Christian churches put up walls rather than take them down?

Paul uses a different building metaphor in verses 19-22.

- What would it mean for our church to build a community that includes all, rather than building walls that divide people?

Church and world

John Mark Oduor identifies 5 features of a drum calling people to war:

- Silence in the face of injustice
- The refusal to accept any responsibility
- The adoption of cultures that encourage people to fight
- The call for outside forces to administer justice
- The call on God to destroy the enemy

The alternative drum he proposes should beat out the message of love, forgiveness and grace. The strings that enable that to happen he says are:

- Relationship
- Face to face conversation
- A place of meeting – a fellowship
- The valuing of diversity and the uniqueness of all
- Forgiveness and belonging

How could the drumbeat change in your community and in our world?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, who set the drumbeat of love at creation,
guide our feet in the rhythm of your footsteps,
that we might live the complex dance of reconciliation together. Amen.

Chapter 6 – Risk

Summary

The abandoning of certainty and comfortable secure positions is a risk. Taking down the walls exposes us to the potential of rejection and failure. When Hagar ran away from Sarah she was confronted by God who commanded her to return. The turn from flight was met with the reconciliation with Abraham – but not Sarah – and the blessing of her child. God asks us to take risks as we journey with one another. Where this has been applied in the Anglican Communion people have walked with those they disagree with to develop relationships. The process is especially risky for those in leadership. They have to trust God and they have to trust the people of God and be open to a future they cannot control. This was the way chosen over the dispute about women bishops in the Church of England. A process was developed that helped synod members to engage with one another across normal divides. Such processes demand that truth is told and this can be very frightening. The relationships formed between three dioceses from Tanzania, the USA and England could have been destroyed by the realisation that there were gay Christians among them. It was when they understood the story of Christ through the eyes of indigenous Christians that they could be honest and open with one another. Only when we are honest with one another can we approach truth together. Jesus took a great risk in entrusting the church to Peter the unreliable enthusiast. Peter had misunderstood, fought against and denied Jesus. Jesus asks this frail human if he loves him with all his heart. When Peter replies that he loves Jesus as a brother, the question is asked again and then for a third time. Despite this he is handed the responsibility for the future of the Church. We who are imperfect and who fail are the inheritors of this call.

Aim for Session 6

Encourage the group to step out in confidence and take risks.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

What are the biggest risks you have taken in your life?

*Do you know of stories or films or from your own experience
where people have risked a friendship by being honest with someone?*

Bible Study

Genesis 16

Abraham is known as the man of faith but in Genesis 16 he and Sarah lose their trust in God and seek a short cut to gaining an heir. The story is shocking to us, but it is not unusual in the history of the world.

The rivalry between the two women is not unusual either. Kenyan theologian Emily Onyango understands this because she is part of a culture where polygamy is normal. She has observed it for herself.

Discuss

Verses 1-6

- Who holds power in this story?
- Where do your sympathies lie?

Discuss

Verses 7-10

(The Angel of the Lord is a term widely recognised to represent a direct intervention by God).

- If you were Hagar would you want to go back?
- How does God give Hagar the courage to turn back?

The story continues through Genesis 19:27 and 21:8-21. At first Ishmael is part of the community, named loved and circumcised with his father. However, when Sarah's tears turn to laughter at the birth of her own child Isaac, her jealousy rises again. Hagar is banished once more and Ishmael faces death in the desert. God comes to their aid and the future is hopeful.

Discuss

- Would a happy ending where all lived in peace have been better?
- What does it tell you about the difficulty and reality of reconciliation?

Care of the community

John 21: 15-19

The Bible is honest and clear about the imperfections of those who are followers whether it is Abraham, Sarah, Hagar or Peter.

- If you were Jesus would you have entrusted the care of the community to Peter?
- If you were Jesus would you have entrusted the care of the community to you and your friends?
- What does it mean that he has entrusted the care of the community to you and your friends?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, who spoke the world into being
and invite us into conversation,
teach us to listen with love and speak with boldness,
that together we might hear your voice in our world. Amen.

Chapter 7 – New Way of Being

Summary

Philippians is a letter to a healthy, functioning church capable of handling conflict and division in a way that enhanced evangelism. Paul identifies the key to be humility. He calls the Philippians to imitate Christ who gave up everything to live as a slave and die on the cross and who was brought to life as Lord of all. This new way of being is both individual and communal and a starting point is hospitality. Churches are comfortable offering hospitality, but imitating Jesus means leaving our comfort zone and being a guest. It is as guest that we discover the world of our companions. The act of eating is essential to us as we share the Eucharist, but we need to ensure that our church communities step out into the world. We often seek to offer hospitality and invite people into our safe space. It is when we become vulnerable and step into their safe space that we are able to hear those we often ignore. In receiving hospitality we show respect and treat people as Jesus did, and according to Zac Nyringe and Roland Allen, it is authentic mission. Listening processes that seek to 'heal the wounds of history' are difficult and painful and require facilitation. A great facilitator will pay attention to all kinds of power dynamics and enable honest conversation. Along with eating and speaking we need to worship together. When there is division between churches we need to resist the temptation to retreat into our safe space and risk feeling uncomfortable together in worship. We need to read the scriptures together. Reading the bible with someone you disagree with can be eye opening as you may encounter new ways of seeing the same reality; however, care must be taken that the opinion of one person does not overwhelm the other and so processes such as *lectio* are commended. The aim is that Christ is Lord and one side does not seek to win over another, but all learn from the scriptures.

Aim for Session 7

Encourage the group to form healthy practices of reconciliation.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter:

Think of all the stories in the Gospels.

When was Jesus the host?

How many stories can you remember of Jesus the guest?

Bible Study

Philippians 2: 5-13

For this text use the method of *lectio divina* set out in the chapter. This form of *lectio* was used throughout the Continuing Indaba Conversations as it allowed time for speaking and listening to one another and to God.

Opening Prayer

O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our saviour Jesus Christ, Amen.

- One individual reads the passage slowly.
- Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention. (1 minute)
- Each shares the word or phrase around the group. (3 –5 minutes, no discussion)
- Another person reads the passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible).
- Each person identifies where this passage touches their life today. (1 minute)
- Each shares. (3 –5 minutes, no discussion)
- Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible. Or even another language).
- Each person names or writes: 'From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?' (5 minutes)
- Each shares their answer. (5 –10 minutes, no discussion)
- Each prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in other steps. (5 minutes)

Close with the Lord's Prayer and silence.

Discuss

This may be the first time you have experienced a form of *lectio divina*.

- What did you learn from using the process?
- Did it include every voice?
- What are the weaknesses and advantages?

Discuss

- Draw upon any discussion you had during the *lectio* in the following discussion.
- When we think of mission do we seek to invite people in or do we go out?
- What would it mean for us to be the guest sharing the love of Christ in our communities?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, who chose the hospitality of a virgin's womb
and feed us with your very self,
give us the mind of Christ to welcome one another
as we would welcome you. Amen.

Chapter 8 – Sharing the Vision

Summary

The final chapter offers a practical vision of churches Living Reconciliation. An example is given of the people of the Diocese of El Camino Real offering hope to young people who gather in gangs out of fear and our hope is you will seek your way to live reconciliation. The first step in this transformation is for leaders acting as convenors to signal a radical change in the way the community is going to live. The Bishop of the Diocese of Saldanha Bay (South Africa) did just this as he called all in his diocese to take responsibility for themselves and for one another rather than rely on top down instruction. The next requirement is to do as the Indigenous Anglicans of Canada and design a process and frame open questions that do not presuppose an answer. Design groups need to be in clear communication with the convenor, but able to draw on the experience of all, especially those previously ignored. In the Episcopal Diocese of New York the Bishop signalled change and design group delivered a process that enabled many within the diocese to seek to define who they were together. The result was a shared vision of a common life. Similarly the Youth of Saldanha Bay summed up their response to the Indaba opportunity with the phrase 'Nothing about us without us.' The next challenge is how to incorporate Indaba life into the structures of governance of a church in synods and conventions. The Diocese of Iowa drew on the experience of its international partners in South Sudan and Swaziland to develop a new way of doing business. Utilising people with transcultural skills is vital and such skills are the distinctive requirement for Indaba facilitators. You have the opportunity to live reconciliation in your parish. Living Reconciliation is not a precursor to mission: it is mission. Where it happens people come to faith; they are given responsibility to be disciples; they strive for justice; they serve and they seek reconciliation with nature. The time is now for you to take up the challenge and live reconciliation.

Aim for Session 8

Encourage the group to get out there and Live Reconciliation.

You should leave room in this session for your group to discuss what you are going to do as individuals and as a community. Be careful to be realistic and hopeful.

The Session

Recapping the chapter

You may want to begin by reading the summary of the chapter. This might lead naturally into an opening discussion, if not use the discussion starter below.

Discussion starter

*Think about how decisions are made that affect our life where you work,
by your government (local and national), and in other communities you are part of.*

When have you felt included in decision making?

When have you felt ignored and had something imposed on you?

What has been effective?

Bible Study:

Acts 9: 1-19

This is the story of how Saul changed from enforcer to Paul apostle of reconciliation.

Following the death of Stephen (Acts 7 and 8:1) Saul was full of rage against those who were following the Way of Jesus. He regarded them as traitors and heretics.

- What groups and individuals, in history and today, justify murdering people for holding the wrong opinion?
- Does the fervour of Saul help you understand their thinking?
- Are there people in *your* community who live in fear: victimised for what they think, do or say?

Discuss

Verses 3-5

Saul is told that he is persecuting Jesus himself.

- How does seeing Jesus in the powerless and persecuted change your view of the world?

Verses 10-16

Saul went on to Damascus where Ananias was called by God to minister to him.

- What are the emotions that shaped Ananias' response to the call to attend to Saul?
- Remember your great heroes of reconciliation from session 1.
- What feelings do you think they experienced when they felt they had to stand for peace?
- If you were married to someone like Aung San Suu Kyi or Nelson Mandela, who faced long years in prison, would you encourage them to face the difficulties or stay at home and live a quiet life?

Read verse 16 again.

- What is Paul offered?

Read 2 Corinthians 11: 16-33

- What was the cost of Living Reconciliation for Paul – what do you think it might cost you?

Discussion

This chapter offers practical steps for a diocese or a parish to Live Reconciliation. These are:

- A clear sign of intention that things are going to be different.
- A design of process.
- A commitment to the inclusion of all.
- Clarity about how a reconciliation agenda would work with existing structures.
- A desire to learn from people from other cultures.
- The use of facilitators.
- An expectation of transformation.

Discuss

- What would taking these steps mean for your church, parish and diocese?
- What would it mean for your ecumenical and international relationships?
- What are you going to do?

Pray for one another

Spend some time praying with and for one another and the communities to which you belong.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, you invite us into your Story of Love.

Strengthen our hearts that we might take the risk of sharing power and reimagine our communities as places of transformation. Amen.