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Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing (Resources for Reconciliation)

Katongole, Emmanuel & Chris Rice

2 Cor 5:17-21- 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Col 1:15-24 - 15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

19 For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 20 and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. 21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of[g] your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation— 23 if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

We are to be reconciled to our brother, enemies, spouses, Jews and Gentiles, all of creation (Mat 5:24; Luke 12:58; Acts 7:26; Rom 5:10; 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:11; Col 1:20)

These verses focus on people, but our environment affects us as well, giving us more avenues to reconcile the world, by reconciling all of creation

Humans in relationships, and relationships take time. Mistakes will be made; trust must be earned. This means that the process of reconciliation will be a journey, that will not be fulfilled in this life.

Introduction

- a. A bigger journey – a quest of God's new creation and a fresh vision for the church ... the church as it can be: the bride of Christ, drawn from every nation, tongue, tribe and denomination
- b. Reconciliation as a Christian vision makes a claim on the life of every person, place and congregation
- c. Reconciliation is an invitation into a journey ... not a solution but a process and an ongoing search
- d. The conviction of our journeys: the way things are is not the way things have to be
- e. Rwandan proverb says, "To go fast, walk alone, To go far, walk together,"

Chapter 1 Prevailing Visions of Reconciliation

Two words are crucial throughout this book: journey and gifts,

- We all know brokenness and division. We live in a broken world. We need reconciliation.
- Can anyone fix us?
- We are aware that differences in religion can create conflict, so we try to find common ground
- We are left with versions of reconciliation that offer little concrete hope that fundamental change is possible

- The end of the cold war did not bring in a new world order of peace, but rather war and violence. In the midst of such a fragmented and broken world, reconciliation is a rallying cry for some hope of peace, solidarity and a better world. But there is a growing fuzziness around reconciliation that its popularity may result in meaning nothing. In an attempt to appeal to as wide a constituency as possible, we leave reconciliation to stand out its own.
- We have been at many reconciliation events, but ask what's next? **Reconciliation towards what?**
- An emphasis on right relationship with God is crucial to a Christian vision of reconciliation
 - For many reconciliation is focused on the gospel with exclusion of other ministries
 - The gospel of *evacuation* promises an afterlife of eternal bliss but is unconnected to social realities
 - All agents of brokenness must be discerned and confronted – personal, social, spiritual
 - One positive contribution of the focus on diversity and multiculturalism has been to acknowledge that differences are not a threat but a gift to our life together – but problems arise when each group begins to think it is self-sufficient in its own identity
 - For Christians, the language of reconciliation is not grounded in a historical or sociological reality, but in a theological one – we are created with different gifts for the sake of playing different roles in Christ's body
- Reconciliation is indeed an invitation into a journey,
- we need gifts to engage this journey well,
- One gift at the heart of this book is hope —
 - the way things are is not the way things have to be,
 - We see profound hope in the lives of faithful people who have gone before us,
 - Rwandan proverb says, “To go fast, walk alone, To go far, walk together.”

The Beyond

- Christians believe that reconciliation is a gift from God. We should be grounded in a vision of the beyond that confronts the brokenness of the world
- Without a clear theological vision, God's dream of reconciliation offers no better hope to a world that groans for another way. Without being explicitly articulated, the vision cannot be sustained. We are claiming that there is a deeper, richer hope God offers to the world. Yet we have forgotten the very source that makes reconciliation a distinct gift and vision of hope.

2 Cor 5:17-18 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation

- This verse reminds us that before reconciliation is about us, it is about God.
- God is always planting seeds of hope – but not in ways that we might have anticipated ... we must gain the eyes to see the hope because the quiet revolution often happens under the radar screen.
- NOTE: We do not go anywhere that Christ has not already been,
- Without reference to an explicit beyond, we are left with versions of reconciliation that offer little concrete hope that fundamental change is possible, - when we talk about the “beyond,” we mean the God who is revealed in Christian Scripture as Creator and Redeemer of the cosmos, the God of Israel who raised the crucified Jesus from the dead,
- the term beyond reminds us that reconciliation is a journey beyond our own vision, beyond human actors and our strategies and programs, God's desire and vision is beyond our desire and vision, **Reconciliation is not merely the sum total of our work ; it's also the peculiar gift we learn to receive as we live into the story of God's people,**
- fragmentation, war, violence and civil unrest in a world polarized between rich and poor continue, Ethnic and religious identities seem to intensify as cultural and family ties disintegrate, In the midst of such a fragmented and broken world, reconciliation is a rallying cry for some hope of peace, solidarity and a better world,

reconciliation toward what?

- Civil rights movement – “God can make a way out of no way” – remembers God’s faithfulness in the past to shape a vision for the future
- 2 Cor 5:17-20 – new creation. Quest for reconciliation is a journey with God – a journey from old to new
- If the journey calls for skillfulness and discipline, the most vital skill required is memory. (of God’s involvement with the world)
- Chris is the center of the journey
- in some of the most energetic contemporary Christian movements the biblical call to reconciliation is solely about reconciling God and humanity,
- Christianity is exclusively about personal piety and morals, This version of reconciliation is the explosive momentum of preaching and teaching centered on guarantees of personal prosperity,
- “**gospel of evacuation**, “This false gospel promises either an afterlife of eternal bliss or blessings for individual well - being, which are not connected to the transformation of social realities,
- The problem with individualistic Christianity is what we call “**reconciliation without memory**, “an approach that ignores the wounds of the world and proclaims peace where there is no peace - this detaches the gospel from social realities and leaves that messy world to social agencies and governments, The result is a dualistic theology and superficial discipleship that separates individual salvation from social transformation,
- One of the most widespread and cherished notions of our time is that reconciliation is about **promoting diversity** in a pluralistic world,
 - i. differences are not a threat but a gift to our life together,
 - ii. The problem arises when each group begins to think it is self - sufficient in its own identity,
 - iii. For Christians, the language of reconciliation is not grounded in a historical or sociological reality, but in a theological one … affirms diversity but also displays it as part of God’s purpose in creation,
 - iv. the world is diverse in ways that should be celebrated, we contend that it is also diverse in ways that are deeply disordered
 - v. reconciliation limited to “diversity “or “inclusion”
 - vi. interest groups contend for more power, failing to offer a higher vision than promoting one’s ethnicity or gender or culture as ends in themselves,
 - vii. coalition building by essentially silencing difference,

Reconciliation as addressing injustice

- Talk of reconciliation alone, especially when it sounds like a call to forget the past and move on, threatens not only the future of particular communities but individual identities as well,
- seeing justice as prior to reconciliation is connected to beliefs about a deeply fallen world and the political realism associated with such beliefs,
- The quest for reconciliation and the quest for doing justice are closely connected to the quest for truth —

Reconciliation as Firefighting

- In the absence of a clear vision of where it leads, reconciliation has largely become a matter of addressing the urgent needs of division and conflict — relief, mediation, advocacy and conflict resolution,
- reconciliation becomes the exclusive terrain of “experts,”
- However, in serving these social aspirations, Christianity can become one more way to achieve the same ends as an NGO or state diplomacy,
- The church fails to offer a unique answer to that crucial question, **reconciliation toward what?**
 - i. Hierarchy of needs - hunger, struggling for survival, life out of control

Chapter 2 Stepping Back: reconciliation as the Goal of God's story

Long View

- As Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero said, ‘It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view, The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision [NOTE: that does not mean that we do not have some kind of vision. We should strive to see not just what is in front of us, but also beyond],,, We are workers, not master builders ; ministers, not messiahs, We are prophets of a future not our own, “[1] It is the very ability to step back that allows Christians to see rightly what is going on in the world and to imagine new possibilities for living out a vision that comes from beyond the world of fires, Thus the ability to step back is not inaction but an invitation into a different kind of action — a different way of seeing and thus engaging the world around us,

“The LORD will fight for you ; you need only to be still “(Ex 14 : 14 NIV),

- Christianity does not exist to motivate people for work within the prevailing visions of reconciliation, Rather, Christianity offers distinct gifts of seeing, speaking about, engaging and being transformed within the world and its brokenness,
- New possibilities

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5 : 17 - 20),

- The first movement is about God and what God has done in Christ, The second is about the transformation this first movement has enacted in the world and in the lives of people,
- The new creation contends with the old, the dividing line between good and evil runs straight through each one of us, So the journey of reconciliation begins with a transformation of the human person, [NOTE: transform ourselves, then look around and beyond to God's possibilities and then invite others to join in the journey]
- conversion from my deep desire to be a “fixer “to seeing my need to be changed by people radically different from me — including many of the very people I had come to fix,
- learning to listen to people who embody a unique journey and set of practices in a broken and divided world,

Chapter 3 Reconciliation is a journey with God

Reconciliation as a journey with God

- in the American South, slaves gathered to remember the story of God calling Israel out of bondage in Egypt, “God can make a way out of no way”
 - “watch night “services on New Year’s Eve
- The quest for reconciliation in the world is a journey with God, a journey from old “to “new,”
- that reconciliation is not limited to a few but is for “anyone in Christ, ““in Christ “we have all become part of God’s new creation,

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all - surpassing power is from God and not from us, We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not abandoned ; struck down, but not destroyed, We always carry around in our body

the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body, For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus ' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our body, (2 Cor 4 : 7 - 11 NIV)

- in the two times of greatest pain in my life, God provided gifts of Scripture, the patient love of friends who told me what I needed to hear and offered wisdom I did not have, the grace I did not deserve and the prayer that gave me strength to simply take the next step, In the mystery of God's presence, all of this somehow enabled me to go on in spite of the "now "and to see new life emerge in ways I could never have imagined,

Chapter 4 How Scripture reshapes us

How Scripture reshapes us

- Scripture is central to the journey of reconciliation because it relocates us "in the beginning, "
- our call to make peace is preceded by God's gift of a peaceful creation,
- the gift of reconciliation takes time to unfold,

Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce, Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters, Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile, Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper, (Jer 29 : 5 - 7, NIV)

- When we take time to cultivate both the land beneath our feet and the habits that make for healthy existence, we are actively receiving the gift of God's peace,
- on the seventh day, God
- in the midst of the chaos and conflict around us, we are invited to rest,
- God is telling Adam and Eve, "*I will give you everything you need, You can only receive it, You can never take it,* "
- John declaring, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride"(Rev 21 : 1 - 2 NRSV),
- instead of predicting a future based on the present (the rational thing to do), these individuals reshaped the present according to a vision of the future,

New possibilities

- The Christian ministry of reconciliation is about learning to identify, care for and smooth the unique pebbles God provides for us as we confront the Goliaths of this world,
- "the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear, for the battle is the LORD'S "(1 Sam 17 : 47), Unless a Christian pursuit of peace and reconciliation constantly points to this story of "the battle is the LORD'S, "it can never be sustained,
- focusing on the story of God and the journey toward new creation,
- reconciliation does not simply point to good collaboration between races, It promises that coexistence can happen in a new community that challenges our previous identities of race, tribe and nation,
- infatuation with race, tribe and nation can be idolatry,
- after the Fall, the gift of difference becomes disfigured and fragile, leading to all sorts of rivalry, divisions and wars between peoples,
- to Pentecost, where differences are not dissolved but restored to their proper order through a new communion in which "we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God "
- we must learn where cultural resources and differences can be celebrated and affirmed and where their affirmation becomes a way to obscure or even resist God's plan of building a new and genuine communion of people with diverse histories —
- Redefinition of justice

- i. Within the biblical story, the Christian discovers a constant call for justice on behalf of the weak and forgotten,
- ii. justice is an aspect of God's shalom,
- iii. Israel is called to "do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God "

Chapter 5 The discipline of lament

Lament

"Without this particular covenant relationship with God, justice is an empty claim,"

- reconciliation is not in the first place an activity or set of attitudes but an invitation into a story,
- The first language of the church in a deeply broken world is not strategy, but prayer, the journey of reconciliation is grounded in a call to see and encounter the rupture of this world so truthfully that we are literally slowed down, we are called to a space where any explanation or action is too easy, too fast, too shallow — a space where the right response can only be a desperate cry directed to God, We are called to learn the anguished cry of lament,
- Lament is a cry directed to God, it is the cry of those who see the truth of the world's deep wounds and the cost of seeking peace, It is the prayer of those who are deeply disturbed by the way things are,
- the more intensely we engage the divides of this world at the places of pain, the more the truth about what is wrong with us comes to the surface, the more we learn to lament, the more we see the need for time to grow, forgive and learn how to love,
- Lament in local places is a reminder of the long journey to tear down walls and become different people, It prepares us for the slow, daily work by which authentic transformation happens over time,
- our call is not first to "make a difference" but to allow the pain of that encounter to disturb us,
- Ministry, he had thought, was all about changing them, In time, however, he learned that he needed to change too,

Lament as conversion to authentic hope

- The relationship between lament and hope is crucial,
- reconciliation without lament cheapens hope,
- to be deeply bothered about the way things are is itself a sign of hope,

Pilgrimage, relocation, confession

- Lament is a painful training toward the beauty of seeing what peace truly is and bearing that different vision of peace to the world, Three ways to learn and engage the discipline of lament are pilgrimage, relocation and public confession,
- pilgrimage is a way of unlearning speed,
- worshiping, resting and reflecting
- relocation, of taking our very bodies to the hard places and tarrying long enough to be disturbed, is a way of unlearning distance,
- public confession is a way of unlearning innocence,
- After unlearning speed, distance and innocence, we learn to be present in a different way to a broken world,
- To learn to lament is to become people who stay near to the wounds of the world, singing over them and washing them, allowing the unsettling cry of pain to be heard,

Chapter 6 Hope in a broken world

- NOTE: Without hope, our invitation is weakened. Communities are broken by racism and other issues. Our technology has gotten us impatience, but fixing brokenness is slow work. Our hope is not in our ability, but in God's ability to heal. Sabbath helps to remind us of our weakness.
- HOPE IS GROUNDED IN AND ANTICIPATES THINGS NOT SEEN
 - i. Training in Christian hope
 - ii. starts with remembering,

- HOPE PRESSES TOWARD A NEW PLACE OF FRIENDSHIP
 - i. peace looks like African Americans and white Americans praising God together,
- HOPE EMBRACES THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SMALL
 - i. Scripture slows us down to notice and celebrate God's power to nourish the world through the small, the weak and the ordinary,
 - ii. The only way divided lives and communities are deeply transformed into a new way of life together is slowly,
- HOPE REQUIRES REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION
 - i. metanoia — a turning the other way,
 - ii. rather, a long and costly journey with God through which we are constantly being transformed into new life,
 - iii. politics is about the deeper questions of discerning the common good and negotiating a life together, Politics is about how the communities we are a part of order (and disorder) our allegiances and identities,
- HOPE BEARS PROPHETIC WITNESS AMID INJUSTICE
 - i. The challenge for Christians is always one of learning the right negotiation between prophetic presence on the one hand and prophetic distance on the other,
 - ii. Prophetic presence is required to know when and how to speak with boldness,
 - iii. prophetic distance is also required so as not to give over ultimate loyalty to any ruling party or power,
- HOPE TRESPASSES BOUNDARIES AND PLANTS MERCY AMID ANTAGONISM
 - i. Abby was asked not to start programs, but to walk the streets, pray with people, meet with community leaders and wait to see what doors would open,
- HOPE CELEBRATES JOY AND BEAUTY IN THE URGENCIES OF A BROKEN WORLD
 - i. In a world that entices us to put ultimate hope in human activism, a deeper hope develops when we drop everything and take the time for beauty, rest and celebration — to visit a garden, enjoy a friend, love our children well, praise and pray,
 - ii. Over time a community like this monastery can transform a place through its service and work, creating space for human life to flourish, But such a community is sustained through small acts of beauty like doing death well,

Chapter 7 Why reconciliation needs the church

- begin to see ourselves as companions and fellow travelers on the journey toward God's new creation,
- us to catch glimpses of that new communion into which the journey of reconciliation leads,
- form patterns and habits that sustain the journey of reconciliation,
- Unless the church is able to be the space where people who share different cultures and histories can receive their common gift and invitation to the same journey, then the church herself becomes just one more actor in the history of division and conflict, instead of healing the tensions and brokenness of the world, the church can become an epicenter that radiates and intensifies these divisions,
- The church's mission is to gesture to this reality beyond us,
- For the church to be capable of interruption, we must exist as a community that is willing to adjust itself to the constant interruption of the stranger, The church is not only an interrupting community: we are ourselves always interrupted,
- The community of Jesus is not a spiritual gated community or a ghetto of moral righteousness, Instead the stranger constantly interrupts our life,
- We need the interruption and gift of the stranger to be drawn back into this urgency,
- incarnation means learning to be there in broken places and developing the patience and discipline necessary to stay long enough to see the needs,
- “three Rs “vision for Christian community development : relocation, reconciliation and redistribution,

Chapter 8 The heart, spirit, and life of leaderships

Leadership

- If the church is to live into the vision of reconciliation we've outlined, we need, among other gifts, a unique type of leadership,
- Experts direct from a distance,
- Christian leaders are both inspired by a vision of God's future and grounded in the thick stubbornness of the now, they have made the conflict their struggle,
- The story of the ministry of reconciliation always begins in the humility of everyday life, with someone responding to a gap, this is also where leadership begins,
- Leaders are ones who begin to see, to be disturbed, to go out of their way to respond to the gap,
- Leaders do not engage or stick to the journey of reconciliation because they feel qualified, but because they are burdened by a gap and respond,
- Leaders know where they are going from but not always where they are going to,
- The leader does not have all the answers, but she does have a story in which wisdom, faith, a compelling sense of call and vocation, and skills of improvisation have been learned, Within the journey itself, leaders gain the wisdom to trust that God will provide what is needed for the next step,
- navigating very concrete contexts with the right measure of knowing and not knowing,
- to belong to the gap, Belonging to the gap means staying present to it long enough to learn what it means to proclaim good news there:
- leaders are ones who learn to absorb pain without passing it on to others or to themselves,

Belonging to God

- This unique kind of leader must learn to draw deeply from the often - hidden gifts God gives to refresh and discipline in ways that keep God at the center, One gift is prayer and meditation,
- Another gift is theological reflection,
- The final gift we want to name is sabbath,
- At stake is a summons to see reconciliation not merely as a challenge of what "ought" and "should" "be done but as an invitation from God to participate in what is most beautiful and true,
- The journey with companions toward God's new creation —

Appendix

Recovering Reconciliation as the Mission of God Ten Theses

- 1, Reconciliation is God's gift to the world. Healing of the world's deep brokenness does not begin with us and our action, but with God and God's gift of new creation,
- 2, Reconciliation is not a theory, achievement, technique or event, It is a journey.
- 3. cultivate the imagination necessary to live into the gifts and challenges of the journey of reconciliation. 3, The end toward which the journey of reconciliation leads is the shalom of God's new creation — a future not yet fully realized, but holistic in its transformation of the personal, social and structural dimensions of life,
- 4, The journey of reconciliation requires the discipline of lament.
- 5, In a broken world God is always planting seeds of hope, though often not in the places we expect or even desire,
- 6.engage both the pain of the past and the call to forgive.
- 7, Reconciliation needs the church, but not as just another social agency or NGO,
- 8, The ministry of reconciliation requires and calls forth a specific type of leadership that is able to unite a deep vision with the concrete skills, virtues and habits necessary for the long and often lonesome journey of reconciliation.

- 9, There is no reconciliation without conversion, the constant journey with God into a future of new people and new loyalties.
- 10, Imagination and conversion are the very heart and soul of reconciliation.

Resources

Living Gently in a Violent World (Expanded Edition): The Prophetic Witness of Weakness

Paperback – September 29, 2022

by [Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier](#) (Author)

How are Christians to live in a violent and wounded world? Rather than contending for privilege by wielding power and authority, we can witness prophetically from a position of weakness. The church has much to learn from an often-overlooked community-those with disabilities. In this fascinating book, theologian Stanley Hauerwas collaborates with Jean Vanier, founder of the worldwide L'Arche communities. For many years, Hauerwas has reflected on the lives of people with disability, the political significance of community, and how the experience of disability addresses the weaknesses and failures of liberal society. And L'Arche provides a unique model of inclusive community that is underpinned by a deep spirituality and theology. Together, Vanier and Hauerwas carefully explore the contours of a countercultural community that embodies a different way of being and witnesses to a new order-one marked by radical forms of gentleness, peacemaking, and faithfulness. The authors' explorations shed light on what it means to be human and how we are to live. The robust voice of Hauerwas and the gentle words of Vanier offer a synergy of ideas that, if listened to carefully, will lead the church to a fresh practicing of peace, love and friendship. This invigorating conversation is for everyday Christians who desire to live faithfully in a world that is violent and broken. This expanded edition now includes a study guide for individual reflection or group discussion...

Community (Resources for Reconciliation)

Paperback – September 25, 2009

by [Charles Marsh](#) (Author), [John M. Perkins](#) (Author), [Philip Yancey](#) (Foreword)

[4.4 4.4 out of 5 stars \(46\)](#) [Note: Racism]

It was not that long ago that African Americans and other minorities were excluded from many spheres of American public life. We have seen remarkable progress in recent decades toward Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of beloved community. But this is not only because of the activism and sacrifice of a certain generation of civil rights leaders. It happened because God was on the move. Historian and theologian Charles Marsh partners with veteran activist John Perkins to chronicle God's vision for more equitable and just world. They show how the civil rights movement was one important episode in God's larger movement throughout human history of pursuing justice and beloved community. Perkins reflects on his long ministry and identifies key themes and lessons he has learned, and Marsh highlights the legacy of Perkins's work in American society. Together they show how abandoned places are being restored, divisions are being reconciled, and what individuals and communities are now doing to welcome peace and justice. The God Movement continues yet today. Come, discover your part in the beloved community. There is unfinished work still to do.

Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission

Paperback – March 3, 2010

by [Christopher L. Heuertz](#) (Author), [Christine D. Pohl](#) (Author)

In our anonymous and dehumanized world, the simple practice of friendship is radically countercultural. But sometimes Christians inadvertently marginalize and objectify the very ones they most want to serve. Chris Heuertz, international director of Word Made Flesh, and theologian and ethicist Christine Pohl show how friendship is a Christian vocation that can bring reconciliation and healing to our broken world. They contend that unlikely friendships are at the center of an alternative paradigm for mission, where people are not objectified as potential converts but encountered in a relationship of mutuality and reciprocity. When we befriend those on the margins of society by practicing hospitality and welcome, we create communities where righteousness and justice can be lived out. Heuertz and Pohl's reflections offer fresh insight into Christian mission and what it means to be the church in the world today.

Making Peace with the Land: God's Call to Reconcile with Creation

(Resources for Reconciliation) Paperback – March 22, 2012

by [Fred Bahnson](#) (Author, Foreword), [Norman Wirzba](#) (Author, Foreword), [& 1 more](#)

God is reconciling all things in heaven and on earth. We are alienated not only from one another, but also from the land that sustains us. Our ecosystems are increasingly damaged, and human bodies are likewise degraded. Most of us have little understanding of how our energy is derived or our food is produced, and many of our current industrialized practices are both unhealthy for our bodies and unsustainable for the planet. Agriculturalist Fred Bahnson and theologian Norman Wirzba declare that in Christ, God reconciles all bodies into a peaceful, life-promoting relationship with one another. Because human beings are incarnated in material, bodily existence, we are necessarily interdependent with plants and animals, land and sea, heaven and earth. The good news is that redemption is cosmic, with implications for agriculture and ecology, from farm to dinner table. Bahnson and Wirzba describe communities that model cooperative practices of relational life, with local food production, eucharistic eating and delight in God's provision. Reconciling with the land is a rich framework for a new way of life. Read this book to start down the path to restoring shalom and experiencing Jesus' kingdom of shared abundance, where neighbors are fed and all receive enough.

Living Without Enemies: Being Present in the Midst of Violence

(Resources for Reconciliation) Paperback – May 31, 2011

by [Samuel Wells](#) (Author), [Marcia A. Owen](#) (Author)

With senseless violence occurring throughout society, people are suffering and communities are groaning. Fear and not knowing where to begin hold many back from doing anything at all. But is "doing something" really what is most needed? Marcia Owen and Samuel Wells come together to tell the story of a community's journey through four different dimensions of social engagement. After attempts to seek legislative solutions led nowhere, a religious coalition began holding prayer vigils for local victims of gun violence. It was then that Owen discovered the beauty of simply being present. Through her friendships with both victims and offenders, Owen learned that being present was precisely the opposite of violence--it was love. And to truly love others as God loves us meant living without enemies and taking small steps toward reconciliation. Owen and Wells offer deep insights into what it takes to overcome powerlessness, transcend fear and engage in radical acceptance in our dangerous world. Your view of ministry will be altered by this poignant tale of coming face-to-face with our God who loves boundlessly and has no enemies.

Forgiving As We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace

(Resources for Reconciliation) Paperback – September 28, 2010

by [L. Gregory Jones](#) (Author), [Célestin Musekura](#) (Author)

Christians are supposed to forgive others as we've been forgiven. But hearing the call to forgive is different from knowing how to practice forgiveness at home and in the world. Forgiveness is about more than the isolated acts and words of individuals. To forgive and be forgiven, we need communal practices and disciplines for a way of life that makes for peace. Greg Jones and Célestin Musekura describe how churches and communities can cultivate the habits that make forgiveness possible on a daily basis. Following the Rwandan genocide, Musekura lost his father and other family members to revenge killings. But then he heard God tell him to forgive the killers. The healing power of forgiveness in his own life inspired him to work for forgiveness and reconciliation across Africa. Jones, author of *Embodying Forgiveness*, interacts with Musekura's story to show how people can practice forgiveness not only in dramatic situations like genocide but also in everyday circumstances of marriage, family and congregational life. Together they demonstrate that forgiving and being forgiven are mutually reciprocating practices that lead to transformation and healing.

The Space Between

– Eric Jacobsen

- What can we do with our built environment to encourage community and reconciliation (walking, etc.). The built environment is ultimately a setting for people where there is the potential to engage you as a whole person, (all of

our activities are meant to serve The Kingdom) and where you can meet and interact meaningfully with other people. Because we live our lives in the built environment, our experience of community is strongly influenced by the shape and quality of that environment.

- The Built environment could be broadened to include the technologically built environment. The technology that interferes with community by not engaging whole persons. The “free” spaces are now controlled by algorithms, click-bait, that feed commercial interests instead of community. We live in a culture that has become convinced that there is no longer any connection between geography (where one lives and the distinctive qualities of that place) and our experience of community. “Community is about relationships” Enacted space refers to the dynamic interaction of people and props (ex: a ball field) in a particular place through time. (ex: the ball game) It is much easier to build a public place like a park or a plaza than it is to create a successful public space that is regularly enacted. 9. The built environment is ultimately a setting for people where there is the potential to engage you as a whole person, (all of our activities are meant to serve The Kingdom) and where you can meet and interact meaningfully with other people. Because we live our lives in the built environment, our experience of community is strongly influenced by the shape and quality of that environment.
- NOTE: there has been critiques of the suburban environment before, the new conversation is to have a thoughtful consideration of our theological and community values. We should consider how shall we best thrive, not just as individuals but as a community and how we may best serve the Lord and the community in addition to the cost of living and safety.
- We need to recover the ability as a culture of demanding to know whether something really works or makes sense instead of relying solely on the opinions of irrefutable experts
- The eschaton is not some kind of an abstract future that looms far beyond the distant horizon but is rather a dynamic state that exists beyond our linear time. Rather than us simply traveling toward it, the eschaton is also breaking into our world in various signs of the coming kingdom.
- Christians need to attune their eyes to evidence of God’s kingdom breaking in where others see only chaos and tragedy.
- when we awake with the sun and begin our work, we acknowledge that God has already been at work through the night.
- To seek the welfare of the city. The Hebrew verb for “seek” (dirshu) is a plural command. Individual humans can’t have shalom in the fullest sense of that word; only human communities can. see three distinct bodies (or communities) - family unit, fellow denizens of the city (polis) the church
- Social capital - The strength of the relational bonds that are built up when neighbors work on a common project can be described as social capital. While social capital is usually increased when neighbors work together to pursue a common project, social capital is also strengthened by ordinary interaction among neighbors in day-to-day life. [NOTE: Use of social capital reduces need for political power]

To Change the World

- James Davison Hunter

Political power increases when social cohesion decreases. Empowering people to act locally will reduce the impulse to act in a polarized way in national politics. Because of a decreasing social consensus in the public sphere, there is an increasing politicization of power, which means that the coercive power of the state is increasingly used as the vehicle to “resolve” differences. The Christian right strives to resolve things through domination while claiming injury or injustice. The Christian left, stressing humanism, focuses on individual liberty and equality but have been uncomfortable with the language of faith. The neo-Anabaptists offer an alternative way of living but isolate themselves from the larger public sphere. The net result has been that Christianity has a decreasing cultural role, forcing it to a more political and defensive role. Since the political role is primarily about power, not grace or forgiveness, it cannot be faithfully used to affect culture.

“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). In the Hebrew derivations, the key verbs are abad and shamar. The former can be translated as work, nurture, sustain, and husband; the latter means to safeguard, preserve, care for, and protect … active verbs that convey God’s intention that

human beings both develop and cherish the world in ways that meet human needs and bring glory and honor to him. ... human beings are the ... world-makers.

To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation.

- Only within strong communities can one find the relational means to sustain the difficulties endemic to life in the modern world.
- Nowhere is this more important than in the task of formation.
- Formation into a vision of human flourishing requires an environment that embodies continuity, historical memory, rituals marking seasons of life, intergenerational interdependence, and most important of all, common worship.
- Formation into a vision of human flourishing requires intentionality and the social, economic, intellectual, and cultural resources of a healthy, mutually dependent, and worshipping community provided for Christians by the church.
- accommodation must always be critical and resistance must always be humble.
- Christianity is not, first and foremost, about establishing righteousness or creating good values or securing justice or making peace in the world.
- The creation mandate given to us before sin entered the world is to abad (work, nurture, sustain, husband) the world and to shamar (safeguard, preserve, care for, protect) the world. (gen 2:15) To be Christian is to be obliged to engage the world, pursuing God's restorative purposes over all of life, individual and corporate, public and private. This is the mandate of creation
- Cultural change is most enduring when it penetrates the structure of our imagination, frameworks of knowledge and discussion, the perception of everyday reality.
-

Rooted Yet Awake

- Anne Snyder, editorial, Comment, Becoming a Discerning People Vol 43, Summer 2025

Re: "The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind," Gustave Le Bon, 1895. A crowd is a psychological phenomenon governed by suggestion, imitation, and impulse. The individual dissolves and becomes an automation who as ceased to be guided by his will. The casualties are judgment and the will.

Culture Care

– Makoto Fujimura

Culture Care is seen as one of a triad of responses for restoring the kingdom - the others being Soul Care, which looks at restoring us internally (mentally and spiritually), and Creation Care, which looks at restoring our external natural environment. Culture Care looks at restoring our social behaviors and customs (human environment). All these Caring responses acknowledge that everything was originally created to be good but are now broken because of our sin.

In Culture Care, Makoto tries to get us to think holistically and to think in terms of restoring beauty as a means of invigorating culture so that people can thrive. This type of thinking invokes what Makoto calls "Generative Thinking" (response to awareness of transcendence – beauty is just one of transcendent qualities) which looks beyond the resources right in front of us and recognizes the transcendence of God in our midst (what Makoto calls Genesis Moments) which then allows us to think and behave generously and then also allows us to think beyond the immediate future and instead think in terms of generations to come. This contrasts with the attitude that our resources are scarce and must be handled in utilitarian and economic ways.

Culture is not a territory to be won or lost but a resource we are called to steward with care, Culture is a garden to be cultivated Artists can become known instead as "citizen artists" who lead in society with their imagination and their work - creating opportunities for genesis moments in culture - moments in which dialogue can happen, caricatures can be discarded, and deeper concerns can be addressed. Destruction and dissolution are far easier than creation and connection. We need vision, courage, and perseverance. Therefore, the care and cultivation of culture begins with the care and cultivation of the soul

Soul care is the spiritual development and psychological integration that can result when we diligently follow good guidance - the interactive and creative process that responds on an ongoing basis to the shifting needs of the soul. Culture care starts with the identification and articulation of brokenness. It creates a safe space for truth telling. It starts with listening and then invites people onward toward beauty, wholeness and healing.

Kingdom calling

– Amy Sherman

Very few congregations - even those sold out to the missio Dei - are actually facilitating "serving God with your talent" in an intentional, sustained, practical and strategic way that pays attention to members' vocational gifts, passions and power. A rejoiced city, therefore, is one where ever-greater tastes of justice and shalom are made real. We are called to offer "foretastes of kingdom realities" in our communities and cities. Biblical justice is concerned with "...the healing of wrongdoers and their restoration to the community. Justice and salvation are linked concepts" (pg. 32). **Justice is about restoring wholeness with God and with other human beings.**

Shalom – universal flourishing, wholeness, delight. Peace with God, self, others, creation. Concerned about sanctification and mission (c, evangelism, compassion, justice)

The righteous (tsaddiqim) live Godward, concerned about (bringing healing) God's people and God's creation.

Path way	Key Word	Description	Church type	temptations
1	Bloom (where you are)	Promoting the kingdom in and through your daily work	All: any size, any outreach strategy	Pietism, triumphalism
2	Donate (skills outside your employer)	Volunteering vocational talent outside your day job	Small to midsize: those with an outreach strategy emphasizing partnerships	Impatience; arrogance toward volunteer or nonprofit organizations and staff
3	Invent (culture making)	Launching a social enterprise	Midsize to large: those with a high percentage of leaders and half-timers	Reinventing wheels; failure to partner, vainglory
4	Invest (strategically to targeted group)	Participating in the church's targeted initiative	Midsize to large: those with a narrow and deep outreach focus	Failure to do "ministry with" failure to recognize ministry of mutuality

Uncommon decency

– Richard Mouw

Convicted Civility

- 1) Civility - kindness, grace, patience, generosity, caring for others, not divisive spirit
- 2) Convicted - there is absolute truth, standards of morality, we are called to be salt In temple, Jesus used whip for animals only
- 3) IMITATING THE DIVINE CHARACTER
 - a) reverent concern for public righteousness.
 - b) we are called to imitate the divine character (kindness, gentleness, modesty).
 - c) To be a Christian is to belong to a community that is in the process of being "made right."
- 4) THE SCOPE OF CIVILITY
 - a) The followers of Jesus are to act like "a holy nation"
 - b) do no wrong to strangers
 - c) Christlike compassion. Jesus has paid quite a bit of attention to individuals. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"

"If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12: 18).

speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone" (Titus 3: 2).

- d) This is what civility is all about: honoring other people — even people whose beliefs and actions we dislike — in a manner that is gentle and reverent.
- 5) SEEKING SHALOM - “But seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29: 4 - 7).
- 6) SERVING A SLOW GOD
 - a) These slower - God perspectives share a strong sense of the importance of God’s providence.
 - b) We have to be open to new challenges as we continue in our journey.
 - c) ” We have to be conservative about only one thing — our commitment to the gospel. we need to subject everything else to “radical” critique.
 - d) Humility. Arrogant self - righteousness must have no place in our hearts, cast off the triumphalist spirit, The triumph we await is not our triumph, but the victory of the Lamb
 - e) Awe To worship the God of the Scriptures is to bow in the presence of unsurpassed mystery. We also learn how to be, in the time of the divine patience, gentle and reverent agents of the gospel in the larger world.
 - f) Modesty every Christian is called to engage in radical obedience to God’s program of justice, righteousness and peace. God calls us to deal with the challenges before us, often our most “radical” challenges are very “little” ones. we’re not asked to duplicate the epic work of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
 - g) civility comes to, finally: an openness to God’s surprises.

Living into community

– Christine Pohl

- 1) Pillars of community are: Gratitude, Promise-keeping, Truthfulness, Hospitality
- 2) Stop wasting time running after the perfect community. Live your life fully in your community today. The character of our shared life —as congregations, communities, and families —has the power to draw people to the kingdom or to push them away. How we live together is the most persuasive sermon we’ll ever get to preach.
- 3) Communities in which we grow and flourish, however, last over time and are built by people who are faithful to one another and committed to a shared purpose. Community life certainly has moments of incredible beauty and intense personal connection, but much of it is daily and ordinary. Our lives are knit together not so much by intense feeling as by shared history, tasks, commitments, stories, and sacrifices.
- 4) Because practices address both basic human needs and God’s character and activity, discussions about them give us a way to draw together the human and the divine, the earthly and the transcendent.
- 5) Wisdom and experience teach us that what is noticed and celebrated is usually also repeated.
- 6) Gratitude is also vital to sustaining communities that are holy and good.
- 7) Thomas à Kempis - “Be thankful for the smallest blessing, and you will deserve to receive greater. Value the least gifts no less than the greatest, and simple graces as especial favors. If you remember the dignity of the Giver, no gift will seem small or mean, for nothing can be valueless that is given by the most high God.”
- 8) When our lives are shaped by gratitude, we’re more likely to notice the goodness and beauty in everyday things.
- 9) “The way you grow into God’s love isn’t by making demands of each other. . . . You do it by giving each other grace.”
- 10) The truth is, we can’t stand the idea of not fixing each other.
- 11) We live by faith in a God whose character is steadfast love, so it should not surprise us that making promises and keeping promises are also at the heart of what is best in our human relationships.

The just church

– Jim Martin, International Justice Mission

- Faith is acting on your faith. It is developed by stretching it to the point of failure. Testing leads to endurance leads to maturity, leads to ministry
- Psa 50 – To develop a right relationship with God requires: get into trouble, call out to God, God rescues, God is glorified
- Isa 58:6-14 righteousness is feeding the hungry, not serving your own interests

- What should the church offer young people who are ready to risk everything? The absence of risk in the church is one significant reason we lose so many of our youth. Brainstorm:
 - list all the passions residing in people in a group,
 - brainstorm a list of networks to which the people in the groups were connected,
 - list the assets the groups possessed
 - give an hour to brainstorm potential “missional risk” projects and present them to the group
- the work of justice is something for which most churches are unprepared
- before meaningful and lasting engagement can happen, there are significant deficits in education, vision, and exposure that must be corrected. Before the church can engage transformationally in the work of justice, it must itself be transformed.
- There is a process by which the church can actually build biblical justice into its ministry DNA
- Responding to violent oppression will lead into direct and often shocking confrontation with real evil and complex need.
- Justice journey: Encounter, Explore, Engage
- around it, it usually turns inward
- Our environment influences how clearly we see the scriptures – if our environment is limited then our understanding of scripture will be limited then we may not see compelling reasons to embrace the needs of the world around us.

News Items

After 17 years treating sex trafficking victims, this gives me hope

The latest statistics on sex trafficking in Arizona are concerning. But they also offer room for hope.

Allison Vallejo

<https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/2025/07/07/sex-trafficking-victims-arizona-resources/84444952007/>

AI-assisted summary

- The average age of child sex trafficking victims in Arizona is getting younger, and nearly a third are sold by relatives.
- Arizona has increased efforts to combat human trafficking through various programs and task forces.
- With proper intervention and support, young trafficking survivors can heal and build positive futures.

... [Mingus Mountain Youth Treatment Center](#) in Prescott Valley, ... a haven for more than 100 young women at a time, ages 12 to 17, who receive housing, education, counseling, recreation and 24/7 medical care to heal from severe trauma. Not all residents have been trafficked. But for those who have been sexually exploited, our center is often the safest place they have ever lived. Our clinic sometimes provides their first meaningful health care, and our “[Empowerment Over Exploitation](#)” program presents a vital opportunity to reclaim their lives. Sex trafficking victims are getting younger. Although the latest statistics on sex trafficking in Arizona are concerning, they also offer room for hope. A study presented last year to the Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family found the number of [child sex trafficking victims in Arizona](#) has increased, and the average age is getting younger — only 15 years old. In addition, while many assume underage survivors of trafficking are runaways, the study found that nearly a third of these children live with their families, sold for sex by parents or relatives.

... Governor's Office host a [Council to Combat Human Trafficking](#) that brings together law enforcement, social workers and other community leaders on a regular basis, but every region of the state has its own task force as well. Maricopa County Superior Court has a program where [trauma-informed judges](#) connect youth survivors with support to build a better future. The Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking Unit has gained national attention for its efforts. PBS Frontline made a [documentary](#) about it. ... Arizona State University contributes research through the [Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research](#). And treatment centers like mine are noticing more buy-in from insurance companies to cover trafficking recovery services for survivors. This kind of change keeps me motivated. But

everyone's support is needed to protect children from sex trafficking and help survivors heal. To schedule a training in your community to learn how to support anti-trafficking efforts, visit goyff.az.gov/humantrafficking/resources.

Florida records more than 700,000 people as victims of human trafficking in 2024

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/11/florida-human-trafficking-data>

More than 700,000 people fell victim to human trafficking in Florida last year, an alarming new study [has revealed](#). Of that number, about **100,000 were children targeted for sex trafficking**.... A significant number are believed to be undocumented migrants, who lack many of the legal protections of authorized workers and are considered especially vulnerable to exploitation. The Florida Policy Institute estimates there are [almost 400,000 undocumented workers](#) in key industries including tourism, agriculture and construction. Another 200,000 people were victims of sex trafficking, about half of whom were minors, the study reveals.

Covenant Resources

Immigration

How is the God who invites us to welcome the stranger calling the church to respond? [Love Mercy Do Justice](#) proposes a response that invites our churches to offer welcome and hospitality to our immigrant neighbors. Below is a consolidation of resources to help churches offer welcome in their unique contexts. If you would like to receive timely updates of new immigration resources, please subscribe to our [Immigration Resources newsletter](#).

Covenant Resolution - [2014 Annual Meeting Resolution on Immigration](#)

Recently Curated Resources

- [Understanding New ICE Policy on Church Access](#) | A Covenant resource in English and Spanish
- [Welcoming the Stranger – A Covenant Tradition](#)
[Immigrant Roots Homily](#) | Pastor Lauren St. Martin, First Covenant Church, Seattle, WA
- [Immigrants and Refugees Prayer Vigil](#) | A curated toolkit designed for a March 2025 event, adaptable for ongoing use

Legal Service Centers

- [Open Door Immigration Services](#), Salem, MA, was developed out of Highrock Covenant Church in partnership with Love Mercy Do Justice.
- [CHET: Hispanic Center for Theological Studies](#) has a task force on Immigration Legal Connections.
 - The task force connects churches with pro bono and reputable private legal service providers, offering general immigration information and referrals. For details, [contact CHET](#).
 - CHET also offers an eight-week certificate in Immigration Ministry and Advocacy to train advocates for immigrant communities. For details, [contact CHET](#).
- [Immigrant Connection](#) guides churches in establishing Immigration Legal Service Centers.
 - They provide a [toolkit](#) to help churches welcome immigrants.
 - LMDJ offers [grants](#) for churches starting Immigration Legal Service Centers through Immigrant Connection.

Immigrant Stories in the Covenant

- [A Great Ambition](#) | A 15-minute documentary about the roots of The Evangelical Covenant Church.
- [Tim Hawkinson, Renew Covenant Church](#) | Historical and theological perspective of pioneering Swedish immigrants chartering what would become The Evangelical Covenant Church.
- ["We Are an Immigrant Church"](#) | Phil Anderson (retired North Park Theological Seminary professor) and Danny Martinez (Central Conference Superintendent), Lov the Cov podcast episode.
- ["Walking to Church"](#) | Sneha Augusthy, tells her own immigration story of arriving in the U.S. with her mother from India and how their experience is woven through several Covenant churches

- [**“Grateful for the Journey: From Dreamer to Advocate”**](#) | By Milly Silencio, licensed Covenant clergy
- [**Called and Gifted to Empower Others**](#) | Through cycling and advocacy, Cindy Wu empowers refugees with mobility, community, and voice—living out her call to serve and equip others in Houston and beyond.

Suggested Books for Further Education

- Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang Yang, [**Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate**](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).
- Karen González, [**The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong**](#) (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2019).
- Cindy Wu, [**A Better Country: Embracing the Refugees in Our Midst**](#) (Littleton, CO: William Carey Library Pub, 2022).
- Karen González, [**Beyond Welcome: Centering Immigrants in Our Christian Response to Immigration**](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2022).
- M. Daniel Carroll R., [**Christians at the Border: Immigration, The Church, and The Bible**](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013).
- Dale Hanson Bourke, [**Immigration: Tough Questions, Direct Answers**](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

Digital Resources for Further Study

- M. Daniel Carroll R., [**“Sojourners in a Strange Land: Looking to the Bible to inform our conversation about immigration.”**](#) | Reprinted from *The Covenant Companion*.
- [**“Evangelical Views on Immigration.”**](#) | A study sponsored by the Evangelical Immigration Table and World Relief.

Video Resources for Study and Reflection

- [**The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong.**](#) | Karen González, a Guatemalan immigrant living in Baltimore, shares her immigration story, the work she does for immigrants and refugees through World Relief, and the stories of immigrants in the Bible.
- [**Migration in the Bible: Entering the Stories, Expanding Our Vision.**](#) | Dr. Danny Carroll, professor at Denver Seminary, discusses how reading the Old Testament with a “migration lens” impacts our perspective on various issues.
- [**The Stranger**](#) | A 40-minute documentary film commissioned by the Evangelical Immigration Table profiling three immigrant stories and including interviews with Christian leaders.
- [**Four-part interview with Jenny Yang**](#) | Former vice president of advocacy and policy for World Relief, facilitated by Dominique Gilliard.
- [**TEDx Talks: My Life as an Undocumented American**](#)
- [**PBS Frontline: Lost in Detention**](#) | Investigative reporting examines the current U.S. immigration enforcement system and uncovers hidden stories of abuse in the U.S. detention system.

Podcast Resources

- [**“We Found Fellowship on the Opposite Side of the Immigration Debate”**](#) | A border patrol agent and an immigration reform activist discuss the spiritual roots of their unlikely friendship.
- [**“A New Crop”**](#) | Third-generation dairy farmers pass on their legacy and land to Somali immigrants to maintain the legacy of local farming.

Liturgical Congregational Resources

- [**Litany for Dreamers**](#)

Invitation to Racial Righteousness - An experience designed to challenge participants to deepen their understanding of racial reconciliation and move to a deeper place of personal awareness, responsibility, and action. Building on the biblical foundation of Rev. 7:9, this experience seeks to assist the church in developing a scriptural understanding of racial righteousness, which is the foundation that makes racial reconciliation possible. We will do this by exploring what it

means to: Move from pseudo to true community across ethnic and racial lines, Honestly dialogue about the racial injustices that exist in our society, Recognize the ethnic discrimination and divisions within scripture, Promote personal and community healing and obedience to the will of God, Participants will then be challenged to form action steps for change, both personally, and corporately. To learn more about hosting an Invitation to Racial Righteousness event at your church, contact the Love Mercy Do Justice office. Email: lmnj@covchurch.org Call: [773-784-3000](tel:773-784-3000)

What is Intercultural Development?

Intercultural Development leverages cultural competency and helps churches along in the reconciliation process. Intercultural Development is foundational to reconciliation. Love Mercy Do Justice walks alongside churches and communities as they embrace the mosaic of God's Kingdom, learning how to engage in mutual exchange and share life with people across ethnicity and culture.

All of us can benefit from Intercultural Development. ID is particularly essential in churches that do not reflect the ethnic diversity of their community. Through using ID tools and resources, the church can be equipped to participate in the breaking down of dividing walls of hostility and misunderstanding as we work alongside those in our neighborhoods.

Intercultural Development is pursued in conjunction with other Ministry Development initiatives and Racial Righteousness offerings: the Invitation to Racial Righteousness Suite, Sankofa, Journey to Mosaic, the Love Mercy Do Justice Curriculum, and others.

Physical and Sexual Abuse

Safe Sanctuaries

The Evangelical Covenant Church addresses intimate partner violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, through the Safe Sanctuaries initiative. This program, rooted in our foundational commitment to advocating for victims, acknowledges the reality of brokenness and sin in the world. We believe in the power of community to heal through Jesus Christ. The Safe Sanctuaries initiative informs, educates, and raises awareness in our congregations and communities, fostering a supportive environment for survivors.

Safe Sanctuaries Training - Break the silence. Stand against the injustice of abuse. Research reveals that a significant portion of individuals experience violence in intimate partner relationships, with statistics indicating that 25% of women and 10% of men endure such violence. This leads to profound emotional, physical, and spiritual consequences. Therefore, many among your church's congregants and broader community may have been impacted.

Our comprehensive 8-hour training is designed to empower pastors and leaders with the necessary tools to effectively minister to those who have suffered trauma due to the injustice of abuse. Throughout the training, we will develop a theology of abuse, explore the profound effects of trauma on victims and survivors, and examine strategies for collaborating with community advocates to foster holistic healing.

Participants will also learn sensitive and empathetic ways to respond to survivors who share their stories of abuse while acquiring best practices for offering both spiritual and practical support. We invite you to join us as we equip your church with the skills and wisdom needed to embody God's shalom through healing and the creation of a safe space.

This in-person training facilitates an immersive and interactive learning experience with ministerial colleagues. To express your interest in participating, please complete the interest form below.

Advocacy for Victims of Abuse - Online Training - This self-paced, 11-session course will educate clergy, lay leaders, and anti-abuse advocates on issues of intimate partner violence, teen dating violence, and childhood sexual assault. The purpose of this tutorial is to provide leaders with needed information on issues of domestic violence (also referred to as family violence). Given the prevalence of abuse, all faith leaders need this basic knowledge. This format permits you to gain this information at your convenience and at no cost to you. [English Version](#)

Resources

Sexual Violence Uncovered in the Bible - This four-session Bible study will help your small group or church community start or continue conversations about sexual abuse and its prevalence and reverberating effects in our society and churches. In an effort to engage various learning styles, we provide opportunities for you to read, listen, watch, and discuss in this study. [Download >>](#)

Domestic Violence Awareness Month Webinar 2022 - October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and we partnered with Sojourners to have a rich conversation around faith and advocacy for victims and survivors of abuse. [Watch Now >>](#)

Child Abuse & Neglect - Use these brochures in your church and community to educate and bring awareness from a faith perspective on the topic of child abuse. These brochures also provide resources for further information and help. The digital flyer can be emailed or posted online. [Order Printed Copies >>](#)

Intimate Partner Violence - Use these brochures in your church and community to educate and bring awareness from a faith perspective on the topic of intimate partner violence. These brochures also provide resources for further information and help. The digital flyer can be emailed or posted online. [Order Printed Copies >>](#)

Evangelical Covenant Church Resolution against Domestic Violence - This resolution was adopted by the delegates to the 127th Covenant Annual Meeting to move beyond denial and disbelief and break the silence on domestic violence by acknowledging through teaching, preaching, and leadership the existence of domestic violence that occurs within our society and churches, and by encouraging victims and survivors to seek help and healing [Download Here >>](#)

Sexual Harassment: Response and Prevention - As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to community where women and men work together in a “blessed alliance,” seeking to bring the Gospel to a broken and struggling world. When people in our communities find the courage and the space to speak up about harassment, trauma, and abuse, our churches can be just the safe sanctuary needed to have helpful, honest conversation that works to raise awareness, incite healing, and lament brokenness. Toward that end, the following resource is offered as a starting point for congregations and their leaders. [Download Here >>](#)

anti-sex trafficking initiative

Globally, an estimated 4.7 million persons are caught in sex trafficking today. Approximately 250,000–350,000 American children and youth are at risk for sex trafficking each year.

People who have been marginalized are also being deemed disposable and thus usable for the demoralizing purposes of those with power and privilege. The exploitation of those targeted through sex trafficking continues to attack the Imago Dei; marring, and harming trafficking victims, the traffickers, and the communities where economies of sexual exploitation flourish.

The Covenant’s core identity as Mission Friends is rooted in its desire to respond to God’s call in Isaiah 1:17, “Learn to do good, seek justice, and encourage the oppressed” in our world. As a response to this call, Serve Globally and Love Mercy Do Justice are collaborating through FREE, an anti-sex trafficking initiative of the Evangelical Covenant Church that calls the global church to Pray, Learn, Give, and Act to oppose the evil of sex trafficking both domestically and globally.

Pray

Join us as we pray with hope for God to transform our unjust and broken world. We join in prayer for God’s shalom to move us into action as Spirit-empowered servants of Jesus to reflect God’s kingdom of peace, justice, and freedom across cultures and around the world. Below are various prayer resources that will draw you closer to the cross and instill hope as you pray alongside our courageous and resilient survivors, partners, and advocates.

Week of Prayer - The gift of God’s amazing grace is boundless, both in its beauty and its many dimensions. In our 2022 Week of Prayer guide, our courageous and resilient survivors inspire us to freshly encounter and receive God’s grace.

[Download >>](#)

Lenten Prayer Guide - Six weeks of reflections written by people engaged in the ministry of anti-sex trafficking. We invite you to use these reflections as part of your weekly Lenten discipline to be reminded of God's grace and love for all of the world that unites and liberates us together. [Download >>](#)

Communion Liturgy - We invite you and your church to participate in the sacrament of communion as a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus for our freedom and how our liberation is tied to the freedom of others. Order communion wafers made lovingly by our survivor sisters in India as a way to sustain themselves and gain economic freedom. [Download](#)

[Communion Liturgy >>](#) [Order Communion Wafers >>](#)

Free Sunday Litany - Download the prayer litany to use on FREE Sunday. This litany is partially adapted from a compilation of prayers from survivor leaders and advocates of our domestic partner Thistle Farms. Join us in praying for God to transform our broken world. [Download >>](#)

Engage Training - A 1.5-day training event that equips church members to live missionally by engaging injustice, learning, and moving toward action. Email us to sign up for training or learn more. [Learn More >>](#)

For Churches

- [Contact us to have a FREE representative preach at your church](#)
- [Download the Biblical Statement on Anti-Sex Trafficking](#)
- [Download Biblical Perspectives on Trafficking](#)

Pendo's Power - A children's book that empowers children to protect themselves and their friends by equipping them to navigate potential dangers. The book helps parents and their children have conversations about very sensitive subjects such as consent, body boundaries, and sexual abuse in a very child-friendly, appropriate, fun way. [Order Now >>](#)

Advocacy for Victims of Abuse Online Training - This is a self-paced training on abuse for clergy, spiritual leaders, teachers, and anti-abuse advocates. The purpose of this training is to provide clergy and other leaders with information on issues of intimate partner violence, teen dating violence, and childhood sexual assault. Furthermore, it offers foundational knowledge about trauma, healing, and a theology of abuse. [Learn More >>](#)

Purchase Products - Browse products made lovingly by survivors as a way to sustain themselves and have economic freedom., [Communion Wafers](#), [Thistle Farm Products](#), [Nunayú Mexican Handmade Jewelry](#)

Host a Free Sunday - FREE Sunday is a powerful opportunity to engage your church in the fight against sex trafficking. Host a FREE Sunday to learn about this great injustice happening in your own neighborhood and around the world; how our partners are responding domestically and globally; and how you can help break the cycle. [Sign Up >>](#)

Partners

Our global and domestic partners are engaged in holistic and transformative work of anti-sex trafficking through prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation that seeks to support survivors and break the supply and demand cycle. Alongside our partners, we hope to mobilize individuals and local churches to strengthen the movement through the power of networking, education, awareness, support, and activism. We invite you to join us so that together we might see a collective movement toward opposing this evil.

Freely in Hope Kenya - Freely in Hope equips survivors and advocates to lead in ending the cycle of sexual violence. Freely in Hope provides a holistic education, leadership development, and storytelling platforms that allow survivors to lead through their rewritten stories. Throughout our community-based programs, sex trafficking prevention is a core component as we serve women who are survivors of sexual violence, women in prostitution, and girls who are most vulnerable to all forms of sexual violence, including human trafficking.

Priceless Alaska Anchorage, Alaska - Priceless Alaska is first and foremost a mentorship program. Mentors are the heart and soul of Priceless and have proven the effectiveness of community and relationship for hope and healing. Priceless works with survivors who are currently being trafficked or have been trafficked within the past five years. Faith communities are trained to be mentors to survivors of commercial sex-trafficking. This mentorship ministry mostly takes place in Alaska but the Engage training can be offered to other communities as well.

Naomi's House Chicago, Illinois - Naomi's House (NH) operates several programs including a residential care facility with a 15-month program for trafficked women survivors over the age of 18. NH programs are comprehensive services

offering hope and healing to women who have suffered from commercial sexual exploitation. Naomi's House exists because every woman who has suffered from sexual exploitation deserves a new start. NH programs are: Faith-based and rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ; Trauma-informed and integrated with expert therapists and staff; Committed to her full healing, believing she is the best advocate for her own care.

New Day for Children Alamo, California - New Day for Children provides intake services and placement coordination for sex trafficked girls under 18 years of age. New Day for Children places girls in partner residential facilities and boarding schools that offer educational opportunities. They offer case management services to ensure the girls get the holistic care they need. They financially support ancillary services like art therapy, horse therapy, surgery, tutoring, travel for parental/family visitation, as well as other well-rounded care needs.

Amirah, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts - Amirah, Inc. exists to provide a refuge for those seeking to break free from exploitation and heal in community on their journey toward lasting hope. Amirah does this work through long-term residential programs, survivor-led outreach programs, and educational/training programs. Our hope for the women who participate in our programs is that they would develop the skills they need in a supportive community environment to find liberation, remain independent, and accomplish the goals she sets for herself.

Thistle Farms Nashville, Tennessee - Thistle Farms operates a 2-year residential recovery facility for sex trafficking survivors. A large component of their holistic healing program is the social justice enterprise that gives the women opportunity to reap economic justice, be employed, and sustain themselves financially. Thistle Farms also facilitates trainings that teach others their model for residential care for traumatized, sex-trafficked women, so the model can be replicated in other locales. While their main facility is located in Tennessee, they have sister facilities in 29 states, Canada, Belize, New Zealand, and Hawaii.

Hindustani Covenant Church India - Hindustani Covenant Church/ Covenant Social Services (HCC/CSS). Inspired by the life of Christ, HCC/CSS envisages a society where people participate in their own empowerment towards a transformed life. In its efforts to combat sex trafficking, they provide holistic services to bring communal transformation by addressing poverty and providing education to prevent victimization of women and children, services for intervention, rehabilitation, and economic empowerment opportunities for survivors.

El Pozo de Vida Mexico - El Pozo de Vida is a nonprofit organization that fights against human trafficking and exploitation in Mexico and throughout the Latin American region. We work with a holistic, strategic model that focuses on three main areas: Prevention, Intervention, and Restoration of families, children, women, communities, and other populations that are vulnerable to the crime of human trafficking so that they can experience freedom, new opportunities, and a fresh start in life.

International Justice Mission - Cyber Sex-Trafficking Partnering in the area of ending Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC) International Justice Mission is a global organization that protects the poor from violence throughout the developing world. We partner with local authorities to rescue victims of violence, bring criminals to justice, restore survivors, and strengthen justice systems.