



ASSOCIATION FOR
EPISCOPAL DEACONS
ENGAGING THE DIAKONIA OF ALL BELIEVERS

Open Space Notes 2020
Communicating across difference

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Brunilda
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David - service on anniversary of arrival of first enslaved Africans. Came out of Dio. race work
For this, have conversation, no debating politics

Charlie - Veterans treatment corps (Florida) - 2yr program for veterans with misdemeanors,
afterwards, record is expunged

Mentoring vets - try to listen, hopefully supportive & helpful, try not to allow differences of
opinion to interfere with friendships. Try not to do *ad hominem* attacks

Bonnie - Be with, listen to hear and not specifically to respond, listen to others with no agenda
"Joining Jesus in the New Missional Age" program

Roxanne - after 2016 election, had to back off from a couple of friends, thinking to myself and
practicing "Love Wins" Challenge to act in grace

Gary - You may think of CA as blue state, but Northern CA is very red, middle is kind of a
'demilitarized zone' Had a new parishioner interested in a creation care ministry - sat with her to
talk about some of these factors. Worked with her to identify trigger words in the way she was

describing her project. We are feeling our way through how to do this in a way that honors the goal of creation care and also the diversity of the group.

It's important not to make people wrong. How to blend different viewpoints in the reality of a context.

Roxanne - prophetic voice is difficult when preaching on borders - very sensitive topics. How do we bring people along with us.

Bonnie - civil discourse

Roxanne - *Reclaiming Jesus* is good material

Theresa - *Love Your Enemies* by Arthur C. Brooks (Catholic, from a conservative think tank) people were so anxious about this, it was almost like hearing confession. Praying for enemies, moving away from contempt

Tracie - Living Room Conversations, Crucial Conversations, Crucial Accountability

Brunilda - in years past, in PR, they celebrated the Year of Reconciliation - with God, man, creation, based on love, and the acceptance of diversity

Each homily talked about reconciliation; we had workshops and activities (ex: cleaning beaches, swamps, how to comport self with others)

Was successful

This year, celebrating Year of Mission, nevertheless, keeping the reconciliation topic a focus

David - in Richmond, 12 Episcopal churches in small geographic location, from mission to cathedral size, very diverse/eclectic

How do we engage in reconciliation as a region. Working group of a few churches, trying to create a curriculum to run academic year (Sept. 2020 - 2021) Look at a range (racial (not just B/W), gender, LGBTQI, etc). Resources primarily related to African American / White

How do we be White in a society that's becoming less white? How do we move past fear about giving up positions?

There are some churches not willing to do this work. By doing it as a region, people in some of those churches are still able to access it.

Chris - When talking about diversifying reconciliation to include discussion with Latinx, etc. it can be a deflection. But B/W issues are the impetus of every other 'ism' we try to work with. This is the work I do regularly. Don't fall prey to the deflective conversation - it actually minimizes/dilutes the work on the original sin of this country.

Sacred Ground was created for this reason.

Have to also understand the divide between race and class - a divisive tool that has been used throughout our history.

When we get microfocused on LGBTQIA, etc. we can lose sight of the main work that needs to be done - have to make progress on that first.

Our church has contributed so greatly to some of the issues we live in; reconciliation is extraordinarily important.

Until we can face up to who we are as a church in relation to this issue, we're not doing ourselves any favors by fanning out.

Charlie - grew up in Brooklyn in Bay Ridge - very white; b4 I was in the Navy, I knew almost no POC. Once there, I met POC in bootcamp, on submarine, etc and learned that the differences I'd heard about were not accurate. It's important that we get to know each other. Now live in a 55+ community in Cent. FL; lot of environmentalists live there, and they are politically not what I'd expect. Have to get to know each other.

Bonnie - need trust in order to build relationship. I need to understand / claim my own white privilege to be able to have fruitful interaction with POC. Maybe if you try to get too wide, you won't get anywhere; need to focus deeply in one area. If you lightly skim everything, may not accomplish anything.

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What are we doing as deacons in our role within the church to insert reconciliation into the life of the church and community

David - writing Prayers of the People; for example, we alternate between naming leaders and not naming. Now also pray for grace and courage to hold elected officials accountable. Added another prayer related to love and civility as moving into an uncivil time. In preaching, grace has been a consistent theme.

Judy (AL) - encouraging people to get it outside the doors. Racism is insidious there; we live pretending it doesn't exist, but it does. I find it frustrating how to get it spoken out loud.

Felix - from NY (puerto rican) - there was a sense of community among a wide diversity; one of the things I can recall that I don't see now, is there was a sense of community. People took an interest in one another. We've lost connection with our neighbors. We have to take risks, go with a sense of humility, spend time in community, listen. Spend a lot of time trying to understand the suffering that they are going through, empathize, pray. Slow down, take interest to get to know our community. When we don't know, we're scared, and it creates a barrier of fear.

Theresa - there are people in our parish who don't feel safe because they sit 'on the opposite side of the aisle.' We have opportunities to write, invite people. We are reliving much of the Jim Crow strategies. How can we bring that back up to the surface?

Chris - basing connections in Baptismal Covenant. Choices (to come to church, for ex.). How are we going to live into that outside the walls of the church? That can make it less threatening. Difference between Gospel politics and partisan politics. How we dance the dance is very important. We should take opportunities to improve preaching skills, for instance. Reconciliation - running shelter - will God ever forgive me for ___? Ashes to Go - lots of conversations, interfaith, etc - Muslim man asking for ashes when I told him what it was about - "Remember that you are dust." That is universal. Job is to remind people how beloved they are.

Confess our sins against God, our neighbor, ourselves

Tracie - Liturgical resources related to trauma. Example - corrolary liturgy piece to confession - for restoring those who have been harmed, in addition to restoring those who have done harm.

Dennis - congregation 'returned' to an Arapaho community - they said "we don't need to 'reconcile' because we never 'conciled' in the first place." Have to call out things that are hate speech or misleading or stirring.

Roxanne - lot of this is about loss. *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* (Francis Keller) all kinds of loss and how we live into it, how restorative it can be. Reading for a small group discussion. Always reminding myself that fear is the absence of God.

Holly - prayer att. To St. Francis