

Experiential Dislocation Assignment

Church Site Visit

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Introduction to Racial Reconciliation

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I attended Full Gospel Church, a Ukrainian Pentecostal Church in Garfield, NJ for one of their regular Sunday Morning Services. In all my adult years I have not attended a church outside of the Catholic or Christian faith and it was interesting but not much different from ours in service order. As I was entering the doors of the church there was a family that was entering in with me. They didn't treat me different, and the husband opened the door for me, and I entered in after his family did. They were singing when I entered the church, and it felt a little uncomfortable walking into the sanctuary because I was the only person in the building that was brown skin. Some of the people in the building looked back at me a few times and the children that were in attendance was staring at me. Although I do know that I am not the first brown skin person that has come to the service. I am the first one that has stayed for the whole service in a very long time. I felt very uncomfortable in the beginning but as the service went on, we all shared something that was profound in common. We shared the Holy Spirit and God became our focal point. The service was like many other Christian Pentecostal services without the shouting and jumping around, however the Holy Spirit was present. This speaks to some prejudices that we as a church of color may have about other churches, in that we can't come together to worship because it is stated that we worship differently.

One of the ways that I was the most conscious externally was because of the color of my skin. This is an initial response for me when going places where people do not look like me in skin color. Internally there was some fear with how people would treat me after service, would people come up to me and would they know how to have conversation with me or would it be a topical conversation. I was caused to be aware of differences by the eye stares and the fact that no one sat in the pew next to me. There were no other people that I could relate to physically. However, at the end of service I was able to meet the Pastor of the church and a couple of the

members and speak to them about their background. Within these conversations I realized that we have one main thing in common, and that is pain. We know pain, although it is for a different purpose, our fathers have been taken from their homes to engage in a war that is fueled by greed, pride, arrogance, and power.

I have learned that Reconciliation is needed if we are going to promote the Word and works of God. We have gotten so used to pushing our own agendas and we have had to react in some great ways as to make a way for ourselves that we have gotten away from the true reconciling power of the Gospel. We have allowed the greed, pride, arrogance, and power that men have, to dictate how we treat others and how we respond to situations and circumstances. I've learned that in order for us to strive as a people in God's army we have to engage in reconciliation and transformation. Brenda Salter McNeil states in *Roadmap to Reconciliation* that many of us have been trying over the years to build communities of reconciliation on our own, relying on trial and error and a mix of reconciliation models like "embracing cultural diversity" and "tolerance-based education."¹ It is wonderful to use these methods but there is more that needs to be done. We need to get a clear sense of direction, a plan to where we are going and how we will get there. It is not easy to embrace cultural diversity due to the need to gain understanding of other cultures and they work together. In addition, tolerance and inclusion can become intertwined and muddy the waters.

¹McNeil, Brenda Salter, J. Derek McNeil, and Eugene Cho. *Roadmap to Reconciliation Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. (InterVarsity Press, 2016), 14.

When discussing reconciliation as it pertains to my experience with the congregation is that we have a lot to learn and platforms to create that will embrace all cultures. One way to begin the merging ground is to search for platforms that already exist in the context of Jesus Culture at the center and building on mimicking the love of God to everyone we encounter. In addition, create or add on to a community that is already working in the business of reconciliation. If we can bring the people into the thought and idea of reconciliation by going through the steps that Brenda discusses in her book.

Here are the steps in this order, first it is acknowledging the need for reconciliation, it is kind of like AA or NA, if you don't acknowledge that there is a problem then you can't work towards a solution. Next, there is creating catalytic events and the only thing about this is you have to prepare your self for a good / bad outcome. Then there is the realization phase which helps a person to come to an understanding that there perspective has to change. Next is the identification phase which is when people from other cultures come together to break barriers and tear down walls of division in every way. Then there is the preparation phase that helps us to write down the action plan and discuss ways to activate it which opens up the door for fighting the injustices that were created to divide and conquer. Last, but not least, the ability to stay the course amid adversity, hatred, pain, greed among other things.

Bibliography:

McNeil, Brenda Salter, J. Derek McNeil, and Eugene Cho. *Roadmap to Reconciliation Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*. InterVarsity Press, 2016.