



STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

REIMAGINING A RECONCILIATION MOVEMENT

Our lives, our work, our ministries, and our world has been turned upside down for the last six months. On Wednesday evening March 11th I arrived in Kigali Rwanda to begin a 3-week journey out to Rwanda and Uganda. In the middle of the night my phone began blowing up as family members started texting that our president had announced that all flights from Europe were going to be halted. Over the next 24 hours in consultation with partners there and here we made the difficult decision to return back to the US rather than going on to Uganda as planned. After 2 days of planning meetings with our Rwanda leadership team I arrived back in Minnesota on Saturday the 14th to find a world that was completely changed from even days before.

While I was quarantined at home that first week back, early one morning I "heard" God speak a simple phrase into my spirit, "pregnant pause." My heart immediately leapt with anticipation as I sensed that the pause we were all entering into would not be a barren time, but rather a fertile time when God would begin to conceive and birth creative new Kingdom initiatives. And by God's grace, so it has been.

Though our previous plans have been disrupted, God has in fact redirected our efforts into fruitful and fulfilling new Kingdom ventures and reconciliation efforts. Though challenging, it has been tremendously rewarding to see fruit from these new efforts. The movement is growing! Here are some highlights:



LOCAL RECONCILIATION MINISTRY ENGAGEMENT

The whole world was stunned by the tragic death of George Floyd on May 25th which once again exposed the deep racial divide and disparities present in our country. Having lived and ministered here in the Twin Cities for 30 years now, my heart was deeply grieved and my hands longed for something to do. We bore witness to the pain of our brothers and sisters, we prayed, and we partnered together with those we have collaborated with for many years to seek practical solutions. The Pilgrim Center is a founding partner with the *One Fund*, through the *Be the Church* initiative, which has now raised over \$375,000 to support primarily African American churches and leaders and those who serve those vulnerable communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and ongoing affects of racial injustice.

This month we are joining with the Justice Journey Alliance and ReWire on September 25th, the 4-month anniversary of George Floyd's death, for the *Beyond Words: Count Us In Movement*; a clergy assembly of repentance from indifference to racial injustice and a call to action. This truly is a pivotal moment for our country and an opportunity to listen, lean in, and learn about our past as well as how we can with God's help create a new and different future together. It is often painful, but also very promising!

We also hosted a *Living Reconciliation Evening* in July, at one of our partner churches, *Fountain of Life*, located just three blocks from the site of George's death. Our theme was *Engaging the Powers: A Principled Approach* and we had a remarkable panel representing a wide variety of perspectives and work united by a common Kingdom purpose to see genuine reconciliation take place in our Twin Cities. Here is a response from one of the attendees:

"Knowing the history and roots of racism, building bridges of understanding through relationships of listening and involvement in the community came through. In all of the responses I heard the theme of a grounding in using the lens of Jesus as the core of one's will and action in cultivating personal relationships with others to move forward. Creating space, considering the views of the other, all the while praying, repenting, and leaning in with love (compassionate love). Riz had a good final word - As his mother told him - "Be gentle with one another. Do good. Do what is right."

[Click here to listen to a portion of that evening here.](#)



VIRTUAL RECONCILIATION MINISTRY EXPLORATION

Like most of the world, we have had the opportunity to learn how to effectively transition to primarily online ministry in this time of the pandemic. Over the months we have hosted zoom *Prayer Gatherings*, our *Spring Social*, and our new *Becoming a Reconciler Course* as well as our *Way of Reconciliation Course*. Surprise surprise, it works! We have had great participation and significant outcomes. As one participant just testified,

"This course has really helped me understand the depth of my ministry as I was looking to dig deeper into restoration ministry. Now I understand many things that I was not aware of. I have also enjoyed the team that we formed, always happy to see each of the members online. So I want to thank God and the Pilgrim Center for the great opportunity that I have been given to participate in this course."

Another notable example was that we were in the midst of our *Becoming a Reconciler Course* right when all of the unrest following George Floyd's death broke out and our diverse group of participants was able to dialogue together in a very deep and transparent way regarding events that were unfolding before our eyes and how God was inviting us to engage in to the brokenness around us. It was both timely and profound. You will hear a testimony about that at our upcoming *Virtual Fall Celebration, Growing Hope*, on Facebook and Youtube on Thursday evening October 22nd at 7:00 p.m. (Central Time).

We have also taken this opportunity to begin to videotape our PCR materials so that we can more quickly distribute them and multiply our ministry far beyond our physical reach. We have just completed taping the six sessions for our *Way of Reconciliation Course* and are now beginning the post-production process. We are confident that this will open up many new exciting doors of opportunity to grow this movement of reconciliation. Additionally, we also completed a total refresh of our website. If you haven't visited lately let me encourage you to take a look at www.pilgrimcenter.org.



AFRICAN RECONCILIATION MINISTRY EXPANSION

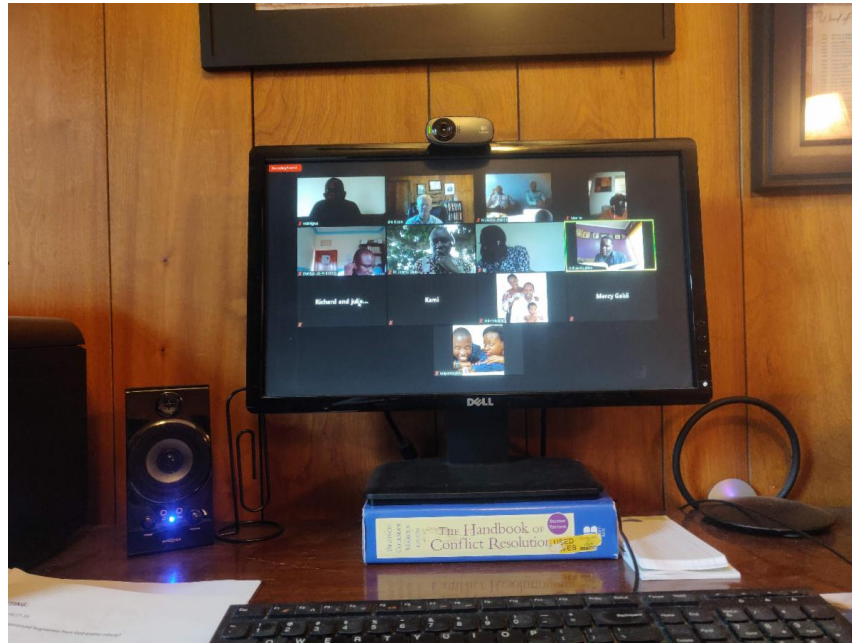
Like here, our African partners faced similar restrictions on in-person gatherings for the first several months of the pandemic. Due to major economic disruption, they pivoted to providing life-saving support for our facilitators and PCR family members there. Thank you for your generous contributions! They also met as leadership teams to discern and determine planning going forward. As things have begun to open up, and in-person retreats and other gatherings have started again, they are developing creative and

strategic new approaches to growing the movement in their countries. It is tremendously exciting!

One concrete expression of that is the launching of our *Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation Eastern Africa Initiative* (PCREAI). We had a virtual gathering for our leaders from three countries, Rwanda, South Sudan, and Uganda to begin the process of growing our communication and coordination between our work in those various countries. We recognize that there are many common needs and challenges and opportunities to grow this amazing ministry. By learning from one another and laboring together we can exponentially grow our impact. God is moving!

Currently, Dr Monica Yugu and I are teaching our *Way of Reconciliation Course* by Zoom to our leaders in all of those countries. It has been so encouraging! As one leader/facilitator in the refugee camps in Northern Uganda said,

"May God bless the works of your hands and all those who stand with you in the ministry. There is power in this package of reconciliation and we feel blessed."



Thank you for your partnership in this work. Now more than ever our communities, our countries, and our world need this ministry of reconciliation. It is essential, it works, and it is transformational!

With growing hope,

Jim Olson
PCR President

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Growing Hope



Pilgrim Center Virtual Fall Celebration – October 22, 2020
