



STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION

PERVASIVE AND PERMEATING

"Jesus taught them another parable: "How can I describe God's kingdom? God's kingdom is like something as small as yeast that a woman kneads into a large amount of dough.

It works unseen until it permeates the entire batch and the loaf rises high."

Luke 13:20-21 (TPT)

Recently I was talking to our co-founder Molly Rouner about Pilgrim Center's work when she shared one of her memorable pithy thoughts. She said, *"We may be small, but never underestimate the power of yeast!"* Of course, this is what Jesus teaches us in this parable. Something small can permeate and impact something great. Transformation takes place when the hidden, yet penetrating, Kingdom permeates every part of culture and society around us. That has been and continues to be our testimony!

In a time of increasing isolation and division, our small yet powerful work continues. PCR is bringing transformation from the inside out, upending and undoing the cycles of bitterness, brokenness, and bondage. We bring hope and healing through the ministry of reconciliation, and we see the power of this work in individuals, families and communities in the US and in East Africa. Here are some examples:

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Last Fall, PCR was contacted by pastor Tim Weber of Hometown Church for support in navigating issues within the congregation, particularly around increasing racial tensions after the death of George Floyd.

We have now helped to host several facilitated conversations, a Heart of Reconciliation Retreat, and a Leadership Consultation. Here is the testimony of how the yeast of reconciliation has been working into the life of the leadership and church.

Hometown is a church of about 350 people located in a very racially and ethnically diverse community. Our church is predominantly white, but it's our hope and desire that we grow to better reflect the community that we are in.

When George Floyd died, we felt ill-equipped to lead our church through the challenging months that were ahead of us. We had men and women of color in our church that were hurting, other saints that were making statements on social media that were creating divides, and there was an overall growing tension in the body. We started a "racial leadership team" (RLT) made up of several black members from our church and myself. The team was initially established to act as a sounding board and counsel for the pastors. But as time went on, we began to see a break in trust develop between the RLT and the pastoral leadership team. We were facing a leadership crisis and knew we needed help.

That's when we were introduced to Jim Olson and the staff from the Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation. Jim facilitated a meeting between these two groups to work through the tension and mistrust that had developed. It was at this meeting where the Lord truly began to heal the divide and bring unity within the body! Since this meeting, Jim and his staff have worked closely with Hometown to provide critical leadership through a number of other very delicate and courageous conversations. We now feel like we are moving in the same direction with a beautiful vision of the kingdom of God ahead of us. We are very grateful for the support we've received from Jim and his staff and the partnership that has developed.

You can watch a testimony from our most recent *Living Reconciliation Evening* on this ongoing process of *Courageous Conversations* by [clicking on this link](#) and going to the 48 minute mark.

This spring we were approached by pastor Brad Kindall of Faith Covenant Church, requesting to host a PCR panel discussion on a Sunday morning for his church.

In his words, "65% of my congregation are thinking like Republicans, 35% are thinking like Democrats, and wish that they would all start thinking like Christians!" Our Board Chair Todd Bertelson, PCR South Sudan Acting Country Director Dr. Monica Yugu, and PCR facilitator Melanie Leehy formed an outstanding panel to address the issue of how we can think like reconcilers around issues like racial and political divisions. Here is the pastor's testimony from that morning.

I am so grateful the Pilgrim Center for Reconciliation stepped into the fray as my congregation and I wrestled with how to respond in Christ-like ways to the verdict in the Derek Chauvin trial. We are a congregation united in Christ, but like many, politically divided. What we didn't need was more divisiveness. What we needed was the shalom wrought on the cross.

PCR was so kind in sending us a diverse panel of trained reconcilers whom we could ask probing questions that Sunday morning to best understand what it means to be Christ-ones in a divided world.

While a good sermon is often helpful, having outside brothers and sisters in Christ trained in the peace of Christian reconciliation was priceless. Thank you, PCR!



HEALING RETREATS

This spring, we facilitated several retreats, including a wonderful Healing and Reconciliation Retreat for Nepali Churches Pastors and Leaders from April 30th - May 1st. These Nepali-speaking leaders came from across the Midwest, some from as far as Missouri. Pastor Kishor Gurung shared this testimony.

Thank you Pastor Jim, Annette and Pastor Sam for your precious time, I want to thank you for leading us in forgiveness and repentance and the energy in Healing and Reconciliation Retreat. We truly appreciate your support.



FOREVER SHINING

*Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky,
and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.*
Daniel 12:3



These words were shared about our co-founder Molly Rouner on the occasion of her 90th Birthday Celebration held here in Minnesota on June 26th. Many thanks to all who joined (in body and spirit) us in celebrating "Mama Molly." We heard many marvelous tributes and testimonies about her wisdom. And yes, she may be petite, but the yeast of the Kingdom in her has impacted so many people, and even nations! Here is an excerpt from Pastor Patience Rwabwogo, daughter of the Ugandan president.

Over the years I have grown to admire, love and respect Molly so much for her deep commitment to the LORD Jesus Christ and her willingness to follow Him wherever the road led her. That road led them away from a comfortable pastorship at the time when most couples and families are thinking of slowing down and enjoying their retirement. God called them to a difficult part of Africa in a very difficult time. The Pilgrim Center was birthed to bring the message of reconciliation to places that desperately needed it. Molly and Arthur answered the call to go to Rwanda after the devastating genocide in the 1990's when the nation was grappling with rebuilding the fabric of society and life.

I recall Arthur and Molly sharing their decision to go to Rwanda with me and other friends. When asked by her friends why they were making this very unusual decision to go to Africa in the evening of their years instead of staying home and playing golf, Molly answered with conviction, "That is not how I choose to live my life." That too is quintessential Molly! The rest as they say is history.

The work of reconciliation continues because Molly and Arthur were brave enough to go against the grain and follow Jesus wherever He led them, even when it was away from the pulpit of a local parish, away from friends, family and home. As a Ugandan and an African, I honor Molly and Arthur and I want to let them know that their labors have not been in vain. On this side of eternity we see the harvest of righteousness that their faithful seeds have produced over the years. They have been used by God to impact generations. I honor you Molly and I bless you all the way from your other home, Africa.

Thank you for partnering with us in this vital ministry of reconciliation. Your prayers, participation, and financial support helps to knead the yeast of hope and healing throughout the dough of our broken world. True and genuine transformation is happening and you are making a difference.

With Confidence in His Kingdom,

Jim Olson
PCR President