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**CASE STUDIES  
OF  
BROKENNESS AND HOPE**

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**Draft #1  
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**The Lausanne Reconciliation Project  
Issue Group #22  
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## INTRODUCTION TO DRAFT #1

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The following are case studies prepared by the members of Work Group #22, Racial and Ethnic Reconciliation, for the 2004 Lausanne Forum on World Evangelization. These case studies are being compiled to eventually be part of a Compendium of Hope and Promising Practices.

Many thanks go to those members who worked on these case studies. We hope these will serve as an example to those still preparing case studies, and also as an inspiration to those who are seeking to understand the importance of reconciliation as a vital part of God's mission in the world.

If you have any comments, questions, or concerns about the following documents, please contact Carolyn Poteet (Carolyn.poteet@duke.edu) or Chris Rice (cpr@duke.edu).

Blessings,  
Carolyn Poteet  
July 2004

*As Christ has reconciled us to himself, may we too be reconciled to one another!*

## Case Study #1

# BURUNDI

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## THE CONTEXT OF BURUNDI CONFLICT

Burundi is a small mountainous and landlocked country -27,834 Km<sup>2</sup>- in the Great Lakes Region, East Central Africa. The country has one of the highest density populations in Africa (over 6.5 millions). For more than 40 years of independence, Burundi is known to the world for its lack of peace. High intensity of inter-ethnic killings alternately occurred in 1965, 1969, 1972, 1988, 1993-2003. The political-ethnic conflict that exploded in 1993 is nothing but a manifestation of existing tensions between two dominant ethnic groups (the Hutu and the Tutsi). For historical reasons, the Tutsi (14 % population) have been ruling the country for many years, before & during the colonial times<sup>1</sup> and through the post-independence period. The struggles of Hutus (85% population)<sup>2</sup> to gain the power control (numerical supremacy helping) and of the Tutsis to keep it have always lead to fierce fighting and ethnic mass killings. For the Tutsis, to remain in control of the power machinery is their sense of security. And dominating the military system (where they have the majority) has been the key stumbling block for long time. On one side the rivalry between Hutu and Tutsi has gone so far, while on the other side, the Batwa (1%) – 3<sup>rd</sup> & most ethnic minority group- has been drastically marginalized in all areas.

Estimates indicate that between 250,000-300,000 have been killed during inter-ethnic fighting that occurred between 1993-2003. Nearly 1 million people went either in internally displaced people camps (mainly Tutsi) or into exile (essentially Hutus). Political peace agreement and many cease-fires signed between various Tutsis and Hutus parties/armed factions are currently being implemented. But the people of Burundi live with the consequences of their history and are kept under persistent fear.

There have been many attempts to describe the roots causes of Burundi conflict. Most of them touch historical facts, behavioral attitudes, systems & structures design<sup>3</sup> (as dividers). Nevertheless Burundians share lot of things in common (Connectors).

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<sup>1</sup> Arnhem Land where the Church Missionary Society (CMS) is working has an indigenous population of about 5,000. Sydney diocese on the latest census figures has around 50,000. The Anglican Board of Mission's (ABM) work is mainly confined to remote settlements in Cape York Peninsula.

<sup>2</sup> Those statistics appear in many written documents especially those from foreigners, but there have been no ethnic census to confirms them.

<sup>3</sup> The ranking above seemed to gather consensus in a recent (July 5-8,04) forum of NGO's, International funding Agencies that were analysis Burundi conflict and strategizing on peace building scenarios. Details on each point exist.

| Major factors of conflict: DIVIDERS  | Major factors of peace: CONNECTORA   |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manipulated/distorted / marred history leading to frustrations, distrust and fear</li> <li>2. Impunity (Corruption, injustice, crimes)</li> <li>3. Unequal access to resources (exclusion)</li> <li>4. Bad governance (Institutions, Structures, Systems and Dynamics)</li> <li>5. Struggle for access to &amp; control of power</li> <li>6. Regional and international interferences on the conflict</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Traditional values (humanity, Cooperation, mutual help)</li> <li>2. Language, easy communication</li> <li>3. Prayer, worship, religion</li> <li>4. Freedom of associations, increasing civil society initiatives</li> <li>5. 'Heroes' who protected other ethnic members from death</li> <li>6. People wishing the end of war</li> </ol> |

Within this setting, churches and their leadership have shined by their absence on the area of influencing positively the trend of events.<sup>4</sup> Rather, witness to Jesus-Christ has been tarnished by:

- Churches/Christians bodies or structures involvement in divisions and them being used as arms for political superstructures propaganda rather than neutral peace steering entities
- Lack of credibility within national church leadership ; damaged by strikes, rivalry, competition , rampant self-interests promotion
- Lack of sound biblical teachings on Christian social/political involvement and responsibility. Intra/interdenominational syncretism,
- The so called and hypocrite 'separation from the world' (meaning from what is happening in the world) combined to the paradox of church leaders taking church matters *'to law before the unjust, and not before the saints'* (*1 Corinthians 6:1*)

All over the country, great expectations are still for the future; as people struggle to talk honestly about the past. The hearts of the people of Burundi remain burdened, wounds have not been healed; rather the tendency is to have it forgotten in a kind of *'reconciliation as hasty peace'*.<sup>5</sup>

## WORLD VISION BURUNDI PEACE AND RECONCILIATION INITIATIVE

Since 1995, World Vision Burundi has developed major areas of engagement including (a) Food security (b) Establishments of grain banks, (c) Health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS (d) Support Education (e) Housing (f) School feeding & Emergency response (g) Child soldiers demobilization (h) Capacity building etc. But the far most crosscutting program has been the Peace Building one, designed to promote Healing, Reconciliation and Christian Witness. This program was rooted in World Vision Burundi's vision that has been stated as follow : ***"To see Burundians transformed and reconciled with God, with themselves, other people around them, and the environment"***

Since 2002, a World Vision US funded peace and reconciliation project was especially built in collaboration with part of church leadership in the capital city Bujumbura. The project's aim was ***"To effect a radical heart-felt change in the lives of Burundi's citizens - at the national church & secular***

<sup>4</sup> During further discussions in the peace forum above mentioned, religion and churches as a factor has been relocated somewhere between Dividers and Connectors as something having high potential for shifting from one side to another.

<sup>5</sup> "By forgetting the suffering, the victim is forgotten and the causes of suffering are never uncovered and confronted ... Suffering is likely to continue; the wheel of violence keeps turning..." Robert J. Schreiter in *RECONCILIATION, Mission & Ministry in a Changing Social Order* , Orbis Books & Boston Theological Institute, Feb. 1996.

*leadership levels and at the grassroots level, that will begin to move the country towards peace*". Two of the three stated objectives were:

- To decrease the fear and distrust among and at least 40 respected leaders (20 from Hutu, 20 from Tutsi ethnic group) on national level, based on biblical teaching and the gospel message of grace and forgiveness
- To bring together all interfaith leaders to design a strategy to promote a unified involvement in peace and reconciliation activities in the country.

Activities were defined as follow :

- Identification of key influential church leaders and other emerging influential leaders
- Select an internationally recognized inter-faith leader to lead seminars
- And conduct at least three peace and reconciliation retreats with the targeted participants
- In collaboration with church leaders Undertake retreats for political leaders, business people, celebrities groups from different ethnic groups to promote reconciliation
- Facilitate and help interfaith church leaders to prepare and implement a shared strategy addressing their role in peace and reconciliation
- Establish on-going monthly support meetings for participants to continue to promote reconciliation and implement their strategy
- Design tool for monitoring and evaluating effect of the strategy within the interfaith community

## OUTCOMES FROM THE INITIATIVE

### Hope aroused from ashes during the first meetings late 2002.

Even if some leaders were checking on who has been invited before confirming attendance, the first conference gathered 65 prominent church leaders representing 44 denominations and Christian organizations. It was facilitated by Antoine Rutayisire, director of African Evangelistic Enterprise, survival of Rwandan genocide and a prominent figure on the area of reconciliation in the region, also Vice-President for National Unity and Reconciliation Commission in Rwanda. The conference aimed to discuss the *'The role of the church and Christian leadership in a peace seeking process within a conflict context'* and issues addressed covered the *Kind of leader, the Kind of Church, the Kind of message and the Kind of project* that can be expected from Christians in a conflict setting. The church needs to have a **prophetic, pastoral and advocacy role before, during & after conflict**. This was one of the conclusions.

The 65 leaders ended up by **(a)** forming a committee of 6 members representing all denominations trends (various Protestants and Catholics) and par church organizations to do a follow-up plan **(b)** deciding to have a further listening conference without any foreigner facilitator to *'to dialogue, listen to each other, reconcile, repent, pray and intercede, so that leaders have same mind & spirit and support the temporary committee working on the draft of Joint Plan of Action'*. This time moderators were chosen among the leaders committee and facilitators among the remaining leaders (who had a consensual credibility). Thus 44 highly church representatives came back for that 2<sup>nd</sup> conference. Reflections started by meditating on **Philippians 2:1-4**. *"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of the love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same*

*love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others”.*

Rev. David NIYONZIMA, Friends Church Leader (Quaker) brought the following lessons during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and main topic/discussion based on **Mat 18: 19**: “*Again I say to you if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven*”:

### **Obstacles to healing, peace and reconciliation: application to the context & to the church of Burundi**

**1. Ignorance, wrong information, lack of understanding that the peace of my neighbor is my peace.**

*Example:* The power of rumors in the Burundi culture is overwhelming ! Oh ! How people believe them! How wide the way they behave and act accordingly?

**2. Looking for selfish interests, personal gains rather than community welfare, and at the same times affirm pursuing peace.**

*Example:* The speeches that show anger on what one lost and the jealousy of what the other one has in political circle, even in church leadership circle. What are the interests one should pursue in peace building rather than peace itself .

**3. Misunderstanding of one’s role in the maintenance of peace.**

*Example:* Some political leaders do not understand the contribution that the population can bring to peace building. They think that all decision can be made independently as long as one is in control. Does everyone need to contribute militarily in peace building?

**4. The biased concept of justice.**

*Example:* The understanding that justice is a tool/weapon to get your way, or the welfare of your own people. Do you study justice to get hold of power and be able to control? Why do people study law? To judge or to reinforce justice?

**5. Confusion among Christians on the concept of peace and war in the Bible.**

*Example:* Using Bible to justify wars. No enough teachings are given on the subject of non-violence. Is there enough understanding of the Biblical principles among Christians in Burundi so that one makes a decision to enroll or not to enroll in the army/(rebels)? Is going to the army/(rebels) getting a job or is it patriotism?

**6. Confusion between what is political and what is Christian.**

*Example:* A concept that politics have no place in the Christian living thus Christians being indifferent to political injustice. Should Christians say nothing to a divisive political speech?

**7. A reluctance to change mentality on changing situations**

*Example:* The power sharing: the advantages and disadvantages. What do people think of the army/(rebels) ? protectors or destroyers? It depends on who is judging.

**8. Lack of social aspect in the Gospel presentation (Gospel interpretation, domestication and preaching)**

*Example:* How the preaching has emphasized more on the vertical relations and less on the horizontal aspect. How do we understand penetration to the world and being a salt to people? Can light be the light when it is not brought into the darkness?

At the conference closing ceremony, one bishop stood up and said “This is just the beginning of healing and revival, God is going to do tremendous thing in the Church of Burundi and in the country. From what we have done, Christians in our churches will soon see the fruit”

## **FURTHER OUTCOMES :**

*“A nation is more powerful when it kneels before God than when it transforms all its resources unto arms or guns”.*  
By *Honorable Joseph Bararu, Also Reverend Pastor, MA in theology.*

The six months pilot project continued almost for 2 years now.

- Over 200 church leaders designed together (in a series of seminars) a plan of actions that identified 5 areas of intervention **(a)** Collaboration and networking for church leadership training **(b)** Church in an advocacy role : reaching politicians and business leaders by the message of reconciliation & outreach for marginalized people /groups **(c)** Use of media for the churches mission fulfilment **(d)** Churches address to peacebuilding, poverty alleviation & development , HIV/AIDS mitigation **(e)** Churches & Christian agencies partnership for more impact in the community.
- Nearly 40 politicians committed for regular dialogue and prayer in a kind of fellowship within Burundi Parliament. Their network actually seeks to influence policy-making for peace restoration starting within the Parliament. Their regular meetings have much build on *Amos 3:3 ‘Can two walk together, except they be agreed?’* and on **Matthew 5:13-14**.
- Through youth-by/to-youth outreach approach (drama, conferences , peace education etc), over 2,000 teenagers have been exposed to the message of reconciliation and forgiveness. Transformed by God power, youth from different ethnic sides are eager to share their stories with other youth, especially the youth involved in politics.
- Over 500 prominent women leaders in coalitions went through conference/seminars on “The ‘Role of Women in Peace Building” or in intercession conferences accompanied by self-organized demonstrations.

*“We can build political and social strategies to come out of crisis, but we will still need to pray for the nation to come back to God the Creator”.*  
*Honorable Laurent Kagimbi,*  
*also chairman the Catholic Church committed laymen Groups, Burundi.*

- Around 150 intercessors from churches and Christian agencies (and from different ethnic sides) met twice this 2004 to build up the Burundi Intercessors Network and prayer strategy. Two international facilitators helped on this by running seminars of conflict and spiritual mapping, nationwide intercession movement enhancement etc.

## **Obstacles and hindrances for reconciliation:**

- The weight of past wounds and conflictual relationships between leaders of ‘traditional big’ denominations on one side and newly formed churches leaders<sup>6</sup> on the other. Later on, enthusiasm of some leaders from the so called ‘big denominations’ went down because of that.

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<sup>6</sup> Some new churches leaders have withdrawn from the big churches, and the separation has not always been peaceful.

- Even if there is no open opposition between Protestants and Catholics denominations, a wall of mistrust between them have been a kind of shadow to the initiative.
- New forms of competition appeared as churches or local Christian organizations competed in breaking alliances & forming occasional ones to attract resources for ‘their own’ reconciliation initiatives. (Reconciliation programs seen as opportunity to promote ‘own’ ministries/churches)
- Lack of consistency and failure to view the work of reconciliation not as a strategy but more as a spirituality, an attitude of recognizing God *‘that filleth all in all’* (Ephesians 1:23)
- Lack of theological foundation and teaching to back all efforts and lack of inclusive vision for national healing, reconciliation outreach for the kingdom of God.
- Some church and Christian leaders still stigmatizing their fellow brothers and sisters politically engaged

## ANALYSIS OF SUCCESS AND FAILURE

The project seems to have success in the areas of applying ministry of reconciliation to explore new facets of witnessing for the Kingdom of God:

- Reconciliation ministry by/among/with women,
- Reconciliation as channel to witnessing in political circle or the highly educated social level
- The *‘enough is enough’* generation : youth willingness to see transformation and to reach other youth
- Reconciliation viewed as component of healing, prayer, repentance & intercession in individual and corporate social therapy.

All these areas attracts people and Christians that are/have been somehow “victims” of the existing order, structures and/or systems including the religious ones.

On the other hand, groups or individuals representing the ‘status quo’, ‘establishments’ always showed hesitations to engage on the reconciliation road.

Probably this indicates that, within a destructive conflict context, it is easier to take/lead the less comfortable people (probably victims) on the *road of healing and reconciliation* than ‘pushing’ one step the well established groups/individuals (let us assume they are not profiting from the context) on the same road.<sup>7</sup>

### Lessons / Practices that worked:

- Delegating and keeping people accountable : World Vision Burundi kept small number of people from its personnel to nurture the organization’s relationships with various groups and committees involved. Various leaders groups took the lead in planning and implementing. This was difficult at the beginning, but rewarding later on.
- *Don’t cheat God.* we are agents of reconciliation in the hands of God ***the reconciler*** : At the beginning WV Burundi labored to convince leaders that many other people or organizations are able

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<sup>7</sup> *‘How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!’* **Mark 10:23**

to bring church leaders together and thus welcome a shared responsibility/role ; the reconciler is not institutions with / without resources but God who works to ***‘reconcile both unto (Him) in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity...’ Ephesians 2 :16.***

- Promotion of maximum coalitions / consensus at all stages
- No distribution of resources (especially financial) to individuals or individual organizations. This was difficult at the beginning but slowly people appreciated and even abandoned the habit of expecting per diem for their participation in events
- Rather, churches and organizations started contributing in various way to the costs catering.

*‘For those who are reconciled, reconciliation becomes a calling.  
They ... serve in a prophetic way for the whole society’<sup>8</sup>*

Some years ago, I was leading a certain youth Christian fellowship. One of the Christian brothers had a demons attack . When he became demons possessed, the situation quickly turned helpless day after day and unbearable both for him and the rest of brethren amidst of the community of unbelievers where we were living . Myself and one Christian sister decided to undertake a full day retreat to fast and pray for him. We left him behind and got one pastor’s office in the city to pray. We were from different ethnic groups ; myself being Hutu (Burundi) her being Tutsi (even Rwandan refugee at that time). She was Anglican church member and I was (am still) Pentecostal church member.

We praised, worshiped the Lord, shared the Word of God ...up to the time we were stopped. The Lord convinced us to repent ! This was very tricky, because we prepared that day of intercession by ‘humbling’ ourselves and ‘getting ready’ for the Lord. But His voice insisted.

Then I started telling my story prompted from the deepest of my heart : ‘Pray for me: every time a Hutu come to me complaining of the ‘injustice’ they endure, I am weak to tell them the story of hope I have in Jesus. I need to be bold’. My fellow sister opened her heart : ‘Pray for me! Every time I hear politicians debating whether or not the Burundi Army should be reformed<sup>9</sup> fear invades my heart thinking that Tutsi in Burundi can be killed by Hutu as it has been in Rwanda’. After confession we alternately prayed for one another. Mark 11 : 24 have then been prompted to us while praying : ‘ Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them’.

We believed that our friend was healed and three months later he was completely delivered.

We have never forgotten the lesson! Reconciliation requires more than echoing the ‘Alleluia’ from fellow sitting next to you during Sunday service in the church. It requires facing together and honestly the daily life realities outside there and be open to work on bridging the gaps for the glory of God the reconciler.

This experience, combined with biblical reflections (*e.g. Ephesians 2 :11-16, 2 Corinthians 5: 14-20, 1 Timothy 2 :1-6, Acts 17 :26-30*) have shaped, nurtured and sustained my involvement in reconciliation programs in World Vision Burundi and elsewhere.

<sup>8</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, RECONCILIATION MISSION & MINISTRY IN A CHANGING SOCIAL ORDER, Orbis Books & Boston Theological Institute, Feb. 1996.

<sup>9</sup> For many years, the army of Burundi has been predominantly made of Tutsi. Now it is on the process of being reorganised to include other ethnic groups.



## Case Study #2

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Intercession in conflict transformation  
between the Abasita and the Abanyabyinshi clans<sup>10</sup> in Minembwe Territory

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## CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Early March 1991, a conflict between two clans of the Abanyabyinshi and the Abasita from the Banyamulenge tribe, living in Milimba locality, Fizi Territory, South Kivu Province in Democratic<sup>11</sup> Republic of Congo was the most complicated that the tribe experienced for many years. The locality is in a remote area with no roads or telephone. The village of the Abasita called Mucimisange had about 600 people and with a Methodist church in the heart of the village while that of the Abanyabyinshi called Imurerwangombe had more than 1000 people with a Swedish Pentecostal church in the village. This conflict lasted 4 years and it had a spiritual dimension, which was completely overlooked while the conflict had even drawn many other clans to sympathize. The police and local administration were also involved in the conflict depending on how much money each side would give to buy “its reason and justice”. Regular fighting in villages and grazing fields left many people wounded; one person was killed; thousands of acres of crops destroyed by people both clans using machetes and axes. Children from the Abasita clan had to drop from school which was in the Abanyabyinshi clan village and Christians fellowship were interrupted; houses destroyed and cows in the fields became also the target.

The cause (perceived by the communities) of the conflict was land issue. Culturally, the Banyamulenge are semi-nomadic and would move with their cattle in search of green pastures. Many times they would move with their families and settle in mountains and open places. So members of these two clans moved from Minembwe to Milimba, all settled in one locality and built 2 villages in the same place with about 3 km in between. The Abanyabyishi arrived first in the area and this time, they made a “project2” for their cattle grazing. When the Abasita arrived, used the same open place for grazing. The Abanyabyinshi felt unhappy and prevented their neighbors to do so. The Abasita resisted and the conflict started. But the real unseen cause was idolatry (spiritual forces) which involved witchcraft, adultery and wealth. This was could not be seen nor be interpreted in normal ways. It needed spiritual interpretation- intercession.

According to the Abanyabyinshi clan, a local chief from the Babembe tribe, who controlled the area, attributed the concession to them. But the documents were not enough according to the Abasita. The police, who were approached to settle the matter, whoever brought a big sum of money today, bought his

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<sup>10</sup> The Abasita and the Abanyabyinshi clans are members of Banyamulenge tribe living in the East of DR Congo.

<sup>11</sup> The term is used in a local context as a concession of a group of people used temporarily with agreement of local authorities.

case against the other. Until one day, the Abasita brought police to arrest their adversaries. The Abanyabyinshi resisted and used force against police. In turn police used force and killed one person among the Abanyabyinshi clan. The situation became worse.

At the same time, some members of these clans played fanatics from far, which in one way or the other fuelled the conflict.

In the late 1950s, the Banyamulenge converted to Christianity and every Banyamulenge village had a church. But as days went by, this became a mere habit and not a real commitment to Christian principles. The church structure in the villages did not help. There was also another doctrinal issue, which had affected most of the churches in the Territory of Minembwe from a prophetess called Mariam, which preached divisions and exclusion that God is not in some churches and locations! Pastors from Swedish Pentecostal church led by Rev. Bacoba went to Milimba and tried to solve the problem, but they only went to one village where there was their church and could not fellowship with them due to those differences, although members of the same church. This position of the visiting delegation upset the host and it could not help solve the crisis. The other issue is idolatry. People had forgotten Christian obligations of unity, love and prayer. They practiced idolatry in form of wealth, backsliding, adultery and witchcraft. Only when the group of intercessors from Minembwe Territory got involved, the crisis was solved and peace was restored in the area.

## **INTERCESSION AS THE SOLUTION**

The conflict was serious and worrying in the whole Banyamulenge tribe. Elders from different clans led by Musafiri Mushambaro and Protais Muzero, met in Uvira and called the warring clans to stop fighting and be helped by the tribe. The case was in court. They accepted, but the Abanyabyinshi were not satisfied since the case went against them. The conflict was far from peaceful solution! Early 1994, a group of 30 intercessors from different churches in Minembwe (80 km from Milimba), led by Pastor Tite Gatako (current member of Executive Committee of Eben-Ezer Ministry) and Rev. Mathias Sibomana (current Coordinator of department of reconciliation and evangelism in Eben-Ezer Ministry) met to pray specifically for this conflict. Some church leaders, elders from different clans, local authorities and police had done their best. The only remaining option was to explore “prayer that changes things.” They met for 3 days on a mountain for prayer and fasting. This initiative had no connection with local authorities, although it had support from church leaders and tribal elders. The initiative took about 3 months.

While praying, there came a revelation on the conflict. It revealed spiritual dimension of the conflict between the 2 clans. Some elements were noted such as idolatry in form of wealth, witchcraft and adultery. The team decided to pray and plan prayers in Milimba locality and in villages of Imurerangombe and Mucimisange. The journey from Minembwe to Milimba locality took them 2 days walk. The team organized 3 trips to Milimba. This was not an easy going. Trip one they went and stayed for 4 days in the villages, but nothing happened. Trip two, nothing happened. Trip three, the team of 30 people went and divided themselves in 3 groups. One group of 12 led by Rev Gatako camped in Imurerangombe. The second group of 12 led by Rev Sibomana went to Mucimisange village. The main message came from the book of Joshua “sanctify yourselves.” Among these teams, they were preachers and counselors to help people come to accept their responsibilities. The third group led by Pastor Rusomoka went to the mountain to pray. After two days, a team of 16 elders from the Abanyabyinshi came along with the group one to the Abasita village. They organized a church service and after preaching, people from both clans started confessing their sins and their responsibilities in the conflict. This took more than 6 hours according to Kibubuta one of the intercessory team. The following morning, all teams, 16 elders and the whole village of Abasita (men, women and children) moved to the

Abanyabyinshi village for a church service. The same exercise was repeated. The spirit of the Lord had started moving; people in tears confessed their sins; people forgave one another and reconciled together and there peace reigned!

Indeed, the teaching of the book of Joshua with the main theme “sanctification,” was a real encouragement and a challenge to the behavior of these communities, which had left their Christian obligations. Intercession was a secret to the pulling down the strongholds of the devil in the area. Intercessors were not paid for that nor were they doing it for any lucrative gain. They were on a special mission. This initiative was once experienced in Nganja location in 1960s in a conflict between the Banyamulenge and Babembe tribes, during the civil war led by Kabila in 1964 in Eastern Congo. At that time, my father Sebitereko was one of the local church leaders who led communities in intercession as a means of conflict transformation and protection of families from hostilities. This was the period in which I was born. I also witnessed the same experience during another conflict of three clans in Itombwe not far from my home area. After everything had failed, prayers worked.

## OUTCOME OF THE INITIATIVE

When the spirit of the Lord started moving recalls Rev. Sibomana, men and women from the two clans confessed and forgave one another. During the conflict period, children could not go to same schools. The primary and secondary school were in Imurerangombe village, thus children from Mucimisange could not go there. The young one had to drop from school, others were relocated to other schools 15 kilometers away from their home. But after this breakthrough, children went back to same schools; cows grazed in same fields; church fellowship and inter-marriage practice did resume. A spirit of revival swept over the area and beyond! The church as God’s presence in communities came alive once again. Mr. Musinga Ruhutumure (from the Abasita clan) who was one of the main actors in the conflict was changed and transformed completely and today is a Methodist pastor. When asked to the clans involved what was the real problem: One said, “it was only ignorance, because land was enough for all of us.” Another one said, “we had backslidden and the devil ruled over us”.

One Methodist pastor who supported intercession as the answer to the conflict, said, “spiritual warfare can only be revealed to those who are still spiritually awake. People of these communities were spiritually dead.” Taking this case study and many others that I am aware of, reconciliation and evangelism are two divine ministries (2Cor 5:19; Eph 4: 11) but in one mission. They are proclamation of God’s presence among us. “They unity of the team from different local churches, clans, men and women, adults and youths, was a real testimony to the worrying parties. The team was made of prayerful people and not sympathizers in the conflict said Mr. Kibubuta, one of the intercessory team.”

## CONCLUSION

*“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord” (Zechariah 4:6).*

God is always pleased with sincere and broken heart! The conflict between the Abanyabyinshi and the Abasita is among many experiences that people are living across the globe. And Christians must stay awake because many a times, spiritual dimension is often not taken into consideration as a major hindrance to peace and stability. As much as we can prepare good projects if they are not supported by intercession, professionalism cannot solve a spiritual problem. When people from both clans realized their responsibilities in the mess, brokenness of their hardened spirit started and solutions came naturally. No one was forced to say or to do a particular thing. The spirit of God convinced them of their sins (John

16:8). At this time, people did not accuse each other but everyone saw his sins. Those involved were neutral in the conflict and were patient with the people in crisis and were obedient to God's message. They took their time and pain of long distance of walk. Peace between the two clans 10 years later is still a reality.

There are some realities, which cannot go unnoticed as I analyse this conflict:

1. **Tribal leadership:** Conflict in general is part of human nature. Culturally, among the Banyamulenge, internal disagreement and conflict were always treated and solved a council of elders composed of representatives from different clans. And each locality had its own local council. They were not supposed to make any appeal to other force. However, if not satisfied, parties in conflict would appeal to another council of elders in another location. But, with the coming of colonialism and police force, the Banyamulenge often then started making appeals to them. This started weakening the role of tribal council – external influence in internal conflict management. In many cases (with post-independence regimes), corruption found its way).
2. **Religious influence:** The Banyamulenge had their religion in which they worshipped *Imana* (God), the creator through his agent *Ryangombe*. But with the coming of Christianity, there came a proliferation of Christian denominations and doctrinal issues. Some how, these issues became a source of tension and conflict. As much as Christian values are the best in conflict transformation. But how are they presented? Church leadership among the Banyamulenge is very young and often has been in hands of those, who did not get opportunity to acquire formal education. Lack of proper teaching has brought a sharp division in the church within the tribe. This challenge is not only among the Banyamulenge, but in many other tribes too. So religion was far from solving such conflict.
3. **Biblical principles:** Proper teaching of the Word of God and intercession are two fundamental elements in transforming the tribe, which can be applied to any given context. In this particular case, different initiatives were undertaken to solve the problem but did not work because the conflict is not only mechanical but also spiritual. The intercessory team know about the delicacy of the problem. Their strategy was to let all parties understand their responsibilities and convince them of their weaknesses through the Word. They took time to share the Word, to pray and to listen. They were aware of the devil's scheme. For instance, during their first trip, the people in conflict did not want to welcome them in their villages. However they were patient and kept praying and learning more about the villages' realities. After all parties were convicted, there came a spiritual breakthrough.

## Case Study #3

# SIERRA LEONE

Prepared by  
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## INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone was the first country in West Africa to receive the gospel in 1605. After more than 200 years of the existence of the gospel there are 568,934 Christians in the country today, church growth is 2.9%, the population is 5.2 million and there are 2,000 churches and 9,000 mosques.

This country has gone through a 10 years of brutal civil war which destroyed the infrastructure of the country, maimed, raped, murdered and conscripted children in the army, used people as human shield but most of all spilt the church into camps until religious politics became the order of the day. A great need for reconciliation.

## THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

Almost at the end of the war situation got worse when there was a division in the army, half of the army joined with the Revolutionary United front and overthrew the Government in a coup d'état on May 25, 1997, since the leader of this coup was a Christian and the ousted president a Muslim it became sensitive, the church split into 2 camps. One camp for the Junta the group led by Johnny Paul Koroma who himself a Christian, those who supported this group said once he is a Christian this is of God, those who are called the pro -democrat support the ousted regime because they said according to Rom.13:1-2 he was ordained by God and moreover constitutionally elected while the junta used rebellious to take power.

This conflict affected the church greatly, there were fingers pointing and labeling, every camp kept in its own area, members did not visit each other church and pastor never allow other pastors to preach on their pulpit neither attend the same program. During this period, politics was the order of the day, the Muslims used this conflict to consolidate and build more mosques around the country in the midst of the war.

What is important in the history of this conflict is each camp continues to justify their positions and it seems that there will be no breakthrough. Furthermore, these camps divided into smaller groups again.

The stage of the conflict as the case study is written has improved greatly; the wall has been broken to certain extent because of the reconciliation initiative conducted in the nation of Sierra Leone.

Some of the key outside influence on the conflict was the high level of poverty which some groups capitalized on to take diamonds for weapons, the quest for the opposition party to regain power after 27 years of misrule. Islamic organizations pumping money to Islamize the country, countries like the USA, UK, Nigeria and West Africa nations were major players or had interest in this conflict.

No one gains in this conflict, in fact for the church she was affected the more because evangelism and church growth were delay or hindered.

#### DIVIDERS

Rebellious against leadership

#### CONNECTORS

Religious tolerance

Ethnic egotism, inadequate access to power, wide gap between the upper class and lower class, personality clash between the lettered and unlettered.

Connectors focusing on the high regard for religious tolerance, the healing and reconciliation initiative.

Both sides played roles in the past and present that were destructive. During the conflict at one point, names were given from each camp to soldiers loyal to the fighting faction so that they can be dealt with as enemies of progress. At this period, many Christians never give the respect that was due the church leaders because of their level of involvement in politics, which was affecting the church nationwide. Some church could be seen visibly in campaigns of politicians giving all their support. Presently all of these groups are in the vanguard to bring unity and reconciliation to the church and the nation. A particular group was not associated with a side it was mixture, this happened because when it comes to politics each Christian has his or her choice irrespective of which denomination he or she belongs to.

Taking part in a reconciliation shows how you view the conflict that led to the reconciliation, if a person is not involve he or she feels that his or her view has been overlooked. And those who participate will bring the purpose of their behavior, certain deformed theological and biblical understanding were hindrance to the reconciliation which could further the conflict but when the process of reconciliation started those deformed theological understanding was no longer a potential threat. This was so due to the prayers, the word of God and the receptiveness of each leader to reconcile.

## ACTIVITIES/INITIATIVE

### History of the initiative

After 10 years of brutal war that destroyed the nation physically and spiritually, all over the country, there was a cry to reconcile and forgive each other. For the reconciliation to be sustainable; it must be base upon the word of God but how can a divided church champion the national effort of reconciliation. So the church must unified for this process to succeed.

It all started when some of the pastors started coming together and pray for unity and healing of the nation, this was done on a rotational basis and gradually pastors form different camp started to attend these prayer meetings. The IMC, WVSL and the International Intercessory Team and the body Christ came together and plan the first Healing and Reconciliation of the Nation Initiative, this was under the leadership of John Robb, the initial motivation was to pray for the war to end, peace restore and unity in the body of Christ. This initiative was planned for May 2-4, 2000. More than 1500 heads of churches and intercessors attended representing all the districts of the country. For 3 days, prayer of repentance was offer, prophetic action was done, sins of our forebears were repented for, pastors hugged each other. The Initiative was chosen for it was the need for the hour for the nation and the church. The government was present and even the junta leader was present they! All offer prayers on behalf of the nation. There was a fruitful partnership with the government, the vice president, the chief justice, the inspector general of police and the chief of the armed forces were all visited and prayed for and they all welcomed the

imitative. At this imitative secret society, female genital mutilation, cannibalism and ritualistic killings were denounced.

### **Biblical, Theological and church sources of reconciliation**

The story of Joseph, David and Nehemiah were all used to paint picture of forgiveness and reconciliation. Verses like 2 Chron.7:14, Is. 63:9, Rom. 8:28, Jer. 29:11, Deut.30:1-5 inspired participants, including prophetic actions, repentance, confessions, forgiveness and reconciliation. Prayer for justice, tearing done of wall of division.

All the different denominations in the country were involved, communion were served at the end of the initiative to remember the covenant we have with our Lord.

**Cultural Resources:** The main cultural resources focus on were secret society, FGM, and cannibalism. This is a stronghold in the nation.

**Material Resources:** Funding was provided by WVSL, WVI, IMC, books and bibles were given by IMC and free registration was done by IMC staff across the country. The testimonies from the IIT were very encouraging on Uganda, Rwanda, and South Africa.

The prayer initiative was timely just as the initiative was going on the RUF was advancing on the capital, they were 14 miles away and we prayed for that they will not advance and that their leader be arrested and brought to justice and that the group be disbanded, all of these prayers were answered immediately after the initiative the leader of the RUF was arrested the RUF was disbanded and they are still being tried by the UN special court. At this same time, all Sierra Leoneans shouted the name of JESUS 7 times and declared that the war is over. Indeed our God is good; all of this came to pass.

## **OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVITIES/INITIATIVE**

After the initiative a committee was set up in each district to carry out what they received in the capital, we are still receiving reports of the wonderful thing that God is doing. Pastors in the interior of the country continue to work in unity, out this there have been many evangelistic outreaches done in the interior of the country. Many have testified that the initiative was a blessing and requested that it must be done on a yearly basis. As the result of the initiative so many good things have happened in the nation, since the initiative the division has decreased. Now there is more cooperation among pastors, yet there is a negative aspect some are not totally cooperating. Some have refused to attend others program, they only concentrate on their church, others want to but there is a fear that they will be lost in the midst of the crowd and their vision will be swallow up. All of these challenges are there and so we are still working on the reconciliation follow up. We have come to find out that if the church is united we can accomplish more for the kingdom of God.

## **ANALYSIS**

These outcomes happened because most of the leadership was receptive to reconcile, and the impact of this initiative reached across the whole nation. It continues even today, there are meetings going on in unity.

### **Lessons Learned**

- 1. Every situation or conflict has a solution once the parties involved are willing to dialogue.**
- 2. When it comes to politics, every Christian has his or her own view and choice.**
- 3. When the call of God is abandoned, there are consequences that follow.**
- 4. If the church is united, she will do more for God.**
- 5. It is good to listen to everyone's view in any conflict.**
- 6. Openness is a key to reconciliation.**
- 7. We are building wall with our individual ministry forgetting that we are all called by God.**

One's involvement in reconciliation is the difference from being a spectator, beliefs, culture, interest are some of those things that show up when each person goes through reconciliation.

This initiative will be appropriate for other countries to use, but in the implementation, the context in that society must be taken into consideration. We thank God for the fruits of the initiative. To God be all the honor and glory for great things He has done.

## Case Study #4

### BETHLEHEM

*The Power of Forgiveness  
A Personal Experience*

Prepared by  
**Bishara Awad**  
President, Bethlehem Bible College

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As a child I was wounded and suffered in many ways. I did not live my childhood years. At age 9, my father was shot and killed in the War of 1948. He was not a fighter, but like many civilians, lost his life. The war of 1948 was very devastating for me and my six brothers and sisters. We all saw our dead father and how we had to bury him in the courtyard, since there was no way to get to a church or call a clergy person. I could still hear the sounds of the fighting and the explosions all around us in the Musrara area of Jerusalem. My oldest brother was 10 years old and my youngest sister was 4 months old. One can just imagine what went through our minds as tender children. For weeks, we could not leave the house and were caught up in cross-fire. I was not aware of all the things that were happening around me, but I could not forget how terrible things were for my mother and a few of our neighbors that were stuck like us.

In April of 1948, the Jordanian Legion captured Musrara area and we were relieved to know that an Arab Army finally came to help. But to our great surprise, they took us all as prisoners and they considered us as Jews. They were treating us terribly, and at one point, they lined us up against the wall, children and adults, and were about to shoot us. My mother pleaded with them and tried to convince them that we were Palestinians. The Lord spared us at the last moment when a Palestinian soldier showed up and stopped what would have been a massacre.

I was only nine years old, and at that age I decided that I would help my mother, who became a widow at age 29. At midnight one night, the Jordanian Legion army told us to run for our lives. We left everything and for hours we walked and walked until we reached the Walled City of Jerusalem. We left with nothing but the clothes on our backs—some of us only in our pajamas.

In the Old City, we became refugees. We were put in a kerosene storage room that had no furniture. A Muslim family gave us blankets and some food. Life was very bad and extremely hard. I still remember the terrible smell of the kerosene and how many nights I went to sleep with an empty stomach. Mother refused to go to a refugee camp and decided to dedicate her life for us children. Later, Mother was able to rent a one-room apartment. We were certainly very poor, and I cannot remember I ever had a new pair of shoes. But we were happy and satisfied.

Mother had some nursing training before she got married, and she got a job as a hospital nurse earning \$25 a month. She worked and studied during the nights. We, the children, were put in boarding schools. My sisters were accepted in a Muslim school, and a British lady accepted the boys in a home run-school.

To me, this came as a real blow. First I lost my father, and now I was away from my mother and family. We were allowed to visit home once a month, but otherwise we stayed at the boy's home for the next twelve years. Suffering continued as we never had enough food, and the treatment at the school was very harsh. I saw other kids getting beaten by the teachers, so I was always afraid and tried not to misbehave.

At the School I had a sponsor from the United States that I never was allowed to meet and I never got the gifts that were sent to me. Yet, at school I was able to attend church and became very active in Sunday school and later became a Sunday school teacher.

When I finished high school, I was so surprised to receive a scholarship to study in the United States. I ended up in Mitchell, South Dakota.

In 1967, another war took place in my country. I was so relieved that mother and all my siblings were all right. However, the war was another catastrophe for me personally. I found out that since I was away during the war, I lost my right to return. At that time I completed my education and was ready to return to stand by my mother who had worked very hard. I was completely taken by this new Israeli law. So, I applied for a teaching position in the US, and the school district hired me since they badly needed science teachers. The school also applied on my behalf for me to become a permanent resident. It was the hand of the Lord that directed all of this and in 1971, I became a US Citizen. I was finally able to go home as an American citizen, which I did. The feeling was terrible, as I knew I could only come as a visitor on a three-month visa. On this visit, I met Salwa, who later became my wife. As my wife, Salwa, applied to the Israeli Government for a family reunion, and again, the Lord gave favor and I became a resident of my own country.

We made our home in Beit Jala, where I was assigned a headmaster of the Mennonite School for Boys – an orphanage started by the Mennonite church. The school provided for boys who were orphans, poor, lost in the war and completely needy. Both Christians and Muslims were invited to come. Chapel hour was every day, but no one minded, not even the Muslims. While at the school, the Mennonite church wanted to phase out and I was instrumental in creating a society called The Arab Charitable Society, that took responsibility for the school and a new name was given to the school – Hope Secondary School.

At that school, I saw myself when I was a child at Dar-Al-Awlad Orphanage. I gave the children everything I was denied when I was young living at the boarding school. I gave them all the food they could eat, love, and care, and I tried to feed them spiritually. Every day we would have morning devotion. These boys loved to sing and give praises to God. Mostly myself and a few other teachers gave a short devotional. I also noticed that no one was really growing spiritually. This bothered me and I went to the Lord asking why? Then in his grace and mercy he spoke to my heart and I realized that I was the reason.

I saw these boys as I saw myself, full of hatred and anger. Each one of them was hurt by the wars, and each one was scarred, probably for life, with how the situation affected them. I, myself, was the same. I was angry, and I had so much hatred for the Jews because of what happened to my family and me. At that moment I asked the Lord for forgiveness. I cried out to the Lord, telling Him I want to be used by Him. My desire was to see these children walk with Jesus and be transformed. That night the Lord did a miracle in my life. He changed the hatred to love; He forgave me for the hatred and put peace in my life.

The next morning as I led the devotional time, everyone noticed the difference. I was not the same man. They could see the Word of God becoming “living” words. They started coming to the Lord and wanting to serve Him.

It was during this time that the Lord gave me a vision for a Bible School. I shared this vision with the local church leaders and they all agreed that we needed a Bible College. One pastor gave me \$20 and said, "Bishara, you can do it... Go ahead." This was a seed and with this seed money we started a Bible College with nine students in 1979. We used the boy's school building and had evening courses. Missionaries helped us. We operated like this for two years. In these two years the Lord blessed and provided for us many partners. Groups like World Vision, Christian Aid, Open Doors and many Churches and individuals looked us up and wanted to partner with us.

In 1981 we were asked to rent a place near the beautiful Church of the Nativity. The Lord, who is so good, provided so much for us. In 1990 we were given three buildings to use free of charge. These buildings were the Helen Keller School for the Blind. In 1996 we were able, with the grace of God, to buy these buildings for \$1.8 million dollars. It is amazing what God can do with \$20. Any time we are faithful to God, He is faithful to us.

All of this started because of the great transformation in my life. It took a humble spirit to acknowledge the sin of hatred. God can do miracles and to me, the Bible College is one of those miracles. This I write for the glory and honor of God who is able to use us to behold His Kingdom!

## Case Study #5

# ISRAEL/PALESTINE: MUSALAHA

### *Reconciliation Initiatives between Messianic Israelis and Palestinian Christians*

Prepared by  
**Salim J. Munayer, PhD**  
Director, Musalaha

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## THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

The conflict between Israel and Palestinians is multi-faceted and intractable. The conflict, over 100 years old, exists on the national level; religion, culture and identity are also major factors. Since the birth of the state of Israel in 1948, there have been wars and unrest attempting to determine sovereignty and borders of Israel and Palestinian Areas. As a result of the inability to resolve issues such as land, security, refugees, sovereignty of Jerusalem, borders, and settlements, both sides have turned to violence and force. When agreements failed and progress towards a viable two-state solution was slowing, a second *intifada* (uprising) erupted in 2000. In the past four years of conflict, violence has affected nearly every community. Economic hardship has taken its toll. A wall is being built that fences in Palestinian towns and areas. Daily life and travel have been restricted.

The reality of our situation in the Middle East is that Israeli and Palestinians are living as if in one house. As they live in such close quarters, intermingling is unavoidable and even necessary, albeit tense. At the end of the day, there is no choice but to live side-by-side; therefore reconciliation and building relationships are essential. While peace accords have attempted to work out a solution for co-existence, the political solution failed to mend inter-group relations, or to alter attitudes of hatred and prejudice that undermine political agreements. Hatred, racism, and dehumanization between Palestinians and Israelis has fueled the cycle of violence and conflict. While hammering out a way for them to share the house, the political process has not induced the change of heart required to live alongside each other.

Believers can play an important part in this conflict, because as a result of their faith in the Messiah, they are ‘one body.’ Because of Christ's death on the cross, believers are given the tools required for a transformation of hearts, and can answer hatred and bitterness with the message of forgiveness and love. In the current political conflict and division, we can be examples and models that it is possible to live side-by-side, free of the bondage of hatred.

At the same time, believers disagree on many issues, especially political and theological. Typically, meetings between Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews, who share a faith in Jesus as the Messiah, would end in accusations and blame, and many were left hurt and hopeless. Believers are not immune to the experiences, attitudes and impacts of the conflict. Often theological issues, such as fulfillment of prophecy, eschatology and justice, are major dividers that cause believers to stop fellowship with those

who have diverging interpretations. The challenge before us was to find a forum where Israelis and Palestinians could meet with each other, develop relationships and a certain level of trust that would help them deal with some of the core issues of the conflict between their peoples. Many wanted to deal with the issues right away without understanding the importance of the process: that these issues will be dealt with in proper time and manner, in the context of relationships. In order to facilitate reconciliation and give believers a platform to build relationships, Messianic Israeli and Palestinian Christian leaders founded a Musalaha, an organization dedication to reconciliation based on Biblical teachings.

## DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

### History and Resources

Musalaha began when Salim J. Munayer, along with leaders from Israeli Messianic and Palestinian Christians began taking groups of believers from Israeli and Palestinian communities to the desert to promote reconciliation. The leaders were dissatisfied with meetings between the two communities and felt the need for more relationship and trust building activities before moving to confront the divisive issues of the conflict. They registered Musalaha as a non-profit organization in 1990. Today the organization has full-time and part-time staff and volunteers, both local and international. The board of Musalaha is composed of leaders from Israeli Messianic and Palestinian Christian congregations. Musalaha's projects are financially supported by foundations, churches, and organizations both here and abroad.

In order to achieve their vision of reconciliation, Musalaha's activities include:

- 1. Desert Encounter:** In an area with such complex realities, it is difficult to find common ground that is an appropriate forum for teaching and advancing in reconciliation. There are very few locations that are neutral and easily accessible. In order to solve this problem, Musalaha developed the Desert Encounter, where different groups of Palestinian and Israeli youth, young adults, and leaders travel together on a desert journey.
- 2. Follow-up Projects** Following the desert encounter, we designed follow-up projects so that participants have a means to keep in contact with one another. The goals of the follow-up projects are twofold: to continue the process begun in the desert and to expand the process into communities. In many cases the follow-up projects provide a means to take relationships to a deeper level and to deal with difficult issues. As part of the follow-up, participants select a social service project through which they can serve both Palestinian and Israeli communities.
- 3. Women's Activities** Israeli and Palestinian women must deal with the effects of living in a highly tense and uncertain atmosphere. Musalaha recognizes that women have a unique impact in society as thus provides conferences that will enable building relationships between these two groups of women. Considering the very special needs, concerns and contributions of this unique group of women, we wish to provide a platform for addressing some of the intrinsic subjects concerning daily life and family issues.
- 4. Theological Seminars:** Over time, leaders and lay persons have understood that a vast array of theological interpretations exists. Musalaha attempts to provide an edifying environment for discussing these issues and for listening to one another's positions. Through the years, Musalaha has conducted seminars on peace, theology of the land, prophecy, end-time theology, and other topics.

- 5. Leadership Training:** Musalaha works with leaders of congregations, ministries and youth leaders, to offer training that builds up the body of Christ in the land and also promotes reconciliation. Conferences for youth leaders and pastors have helped create a network of relationships between leaders across the cultural boundaries that provide encouragement, promote reconciliation and resource sharing.

**Musalaha bases its ministry on a Biblical foundation:**

- 1. Christ's act on the cross reconciles humanity to God.** (2 Cor. 5: 18-19).
- 2. Jesus' obedience compels us to obey His commands for unity and to experience the fellowship and community of believers.** (Eph. 2: 14-16).
- 3. Our unity in Him is an essential element in our proclamation and the truth that He is the Savior of the world. Jesus prayed that believers' unity would be a message of His salvation in John 17:21.**

## **OUTCOMES OF THE ACTIVITIES**

**Continued involvement and long-term effect:**

In Musalaha's experience not only are perceptions affected, but many participants move to the level of taking action. Some have made extraordinary efforts to reach out to meet the needs of those on the other side through donating time, money, and goods. Many endeavor to maintain contact by visiting each others' homes and families.

**Reduction of hatred:**

Listening to each others' stories serves to stem the tide of misperceptions and hatred. As a result, Palestinian and Israeli congregations pray for each other, knowing each others names and needs. In praying for one another, they begin to look at each other as created in God's likeness and as subject to His will. This helps to curb the rise of animosity and dehumanization. Participants' involvement in Musalaha activities also has an impact in their communities when they speak out against prejudice and even make choices to avoid violence. This can be a step in preventing deterioration of the situation.

**Relationship Building**

Building relationships has been a key element for Musalaha, as it builds trust and enables participants to approach topics that require extra sensitivity. Following a program, groups have moved to discuss sensitive issues such as theology of the Land, political matters and historical narratives. Discussions on theological and political issues have deepened believers' understandings of each other's positions on these topics. At times, assumptions have been made concerning interpretations of scripture or political opinions. Dialogue on these topics helps participants to understand the variety of perspectives on the other side.

Often participants are less influenced by one-sided media and seek alternative sources. They are moved to consult people from the other side to discuss issues addressed in the news. Our observation is that those who have not been involved in Musalaha are more influenced by media one-sidedness and less in touch with how the other side thinks and feels. By building relationships with people from the other side,

participants are able to broach issues and have dialogue with a heightened sensitivity that leads to greater understanding.

Meeting with each other helps participants discover that a plurality of opinion exists within the other side. There is a tendency to believe that the other side is of one opinion. Usually the radicals, who have the most extreme voices, are perceived as representing the majority. For example, you often hear, “They want to kill us all.” This kind of statement is derived from the voices of extremists and applied as the entire opinion of the enemy. There is difficulty in identifying alternative voices within the other side. Encounters between the two sides enable them to learn new information about each other.

### **Preconceptions Influence Outcomes:**

Participants are affected by the process in different ways, and the degree to which they are changed by the process is influenced by their background and perceptions. It is evident that people who participate in Musalaha’s programs bring with them strong political opinions and Biblical interpretations. These preconceptions have bearing on the affect that the encounter has on them.

### **Encounters do have an Emotional Impact:**

In our experiences with believers, reconciliation is very much a “heart” issue. In dealing with hatred and studying the Bible together, we see that the degree to which we learn to love God comes hand-in-hand with our love for brothers and sisters, even those who belong to the “enemy camp.”

### **The Impact of Biblical Teaching:**

As we meet with people from the other side, we learn what it means to follow Biblical principles, such as “seeking and pursuing peace,” and loving our enemies. We explore and follow the Bible’s teachings about relationships and our treatment of others. This has a profound impact on our responses to the conflict, and our ability to model Christ in our communities.

## **ANALYSIS. IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Musalaha’s philosophy is to begin with the community of believers and to expand to the larger communities. In our ministry, it has been very important to begin with a focus group of believers in Jesus, who are given the tools for reconciliation because of Christ’s act on the cross. As a Christian organization, our sphere of influence and responsibility is among believing communities, and from there we are expanding to include Israeli and Palestinian societies.

As participants in Musalaha’s programs, Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians are also active and integrated members of their larger communities. We believe that as a result, reconciliation initiatives among believers have a broader impact on Palestinian and Israeli societies.

On the Israeli side, Messianic Jews have become very integrated into Israeli community life. Two or three decades ago the Messianic movement was small and marginalized. In the last 15 years it has grown tremendously. Most of the next generation were born and raised in Israel. They attend Israeli public schools and serve in all units of the army including military intelligence and combat units. Messianic Jews can be found working as professionals in the fields such as education, tourism, city planning, and high-tech.

In Israel and Palestinian areas there are around 150,000 Palestinian Christians. They play key roles in academic institutions and government offices. Some work in non-profit organizations such as World Vision. Many church-run schools are populated by both Christians and Muslims. Christians in Palestinian areas have started non-government organizations that serve the poor and needy.

Service and follow-up projects is a means by which Musalaha has been impacting the community at large. Following a Desert Encounter, participants select a service project to accomplish together. Often the projects take place in both communities. For example, the group might visit a Palestinian children's hospital and an Israeli home for the elderly. They bring gifts and share a small program, talking about how they came together in the desert, and sharing their testimonies. These projects take place in the public locations, causing people to be curious. With the gift of service comes the testimony of reconciliation.

The fact that Palestinians and Israelis are working together grabs the attention of people. Wherever we go, on desert encounters, conferences, and service projects, our guides, bus drivers, cooks, etc. want to know about the group.

Although Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians compose unique communities in the Land, they do interact with and contribute to their societies. In this way, Musalaha is able to impact the communities at large with the message and testimony that reconciliation is possible.

### **Lessons Learned**

- Relationships are key to building trust, challenging attitudes, and breaking down the walls.
- Reconciliation is a cyclical and not a linear process. We often complete certain stages only to find ourselves returning to those stages again under new circumstances.
- The spiritual and Biblical dimensions of reconciliation are of utmost importance. Leaders who are involved, need to have spiritual maturity and strong Biblical foundations.
- Those who are involved in reconciliation need an understanding of the conflict, of its history, background, and the cultural dimensions involved.
- Leaders need to have their identity firmly placed in Christ in order to reach out to others who don't belong.
- Prayer is very important.
- It is important to know the language of the other side.
- Work with leaders, but it is most effective to include their families in the process. This facilitates relationship building.
- A good board is necessary for accountability, advice and wisdom in decision making.
- Begin working with people as young as possible. Opinions concerning the other are formed at a very early age.
- Be creative in providing a forum and place to meet. For us the outdoors and especially the desert has been most effective. It is helpful for people to go on a journey together, or share a common goal or task.
- Duplicate leaders. Build a team of volunteers and leaders who can go on to lead programs and take initiative.

- In our office, our staff is of composed multi-cultural backgrounds, and has exposure and understanding of both sides of the situation.
- In raising funds, develop relationships as opposed to relying on one-time gifts. Be transparent with supporters and keep them updated with information concerning the ministry.

## Case Study #6

# ISRAEL/PALESTINE: RECONCILIATION BETWEEN WOMEN

Prepared by

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## CONTEXT

In today's Middle East, Israelis and Palestinians are engaged in a complex, lethal struggle that is directly affecting the entire population of the area. The conflict not only involves the conflicted factions, but in today's global village, it has implications for much of the world.

The two sides of the conflict view it from quite different vantage points. On the Jewish side, certain elements maintain that the conflict dates from patriarchal times and is prefigured in the enmity between Jacob and Esau, Isaac and Ishmael. Others describe the source of the conflict as Islam's view of conquest and land. Those who hold these views see a combination of theological, historical, and ethnic elements as sources of today's conflict. Others in the Jewish world describe the current conflict as yet another manifestation of anti-Semitism while some maintain that the causes are solely political and relate primarily to issues of land and water.

On the Palestinian side there is greater consensus as to the source and causes of the current conflict. In the main, Palestinians see the situation in terms of occupation and land based disputes. They view the conflict as recent, dating from the end of the nineteenth century as Jews in significant numbers began to immigrate to Palestine. They found an existing Arab population. Increased Jewish population and economic viability stimulated immigration to the area by Arab peoples from the neighboring nations. With Israel's victory in 1948 War of Independence, the conflict took on new dimensions that laid the foundation for the current conflict based on land and occupation.

There is agreement between all parties that the conflict has affected the entire population. On the Palestinian side, large numbers have been displaced, land has been confiscated, families have been separated and homes have been demolished. On the Israeli side, the threat, as well as the actuality, of random acts of terrorism has traumatized the entire population. The fact of mandatory military conscription has profoundly affected generations of Israelis. There has been much loss of life and injury on both sides. Fear has played a major destructive role in the subsequent breakdown of relationships between the two populations.

The populations are severely distanced from one another. Cultural and social, economic and political differences are all factors in this distance. Palestinian Arabs are oriented towards a more rural, traditional Middle Eastern life style whereas today's Israelis are heavily influenced by the Western urban experience. Language is another factor. Ethnically, however, Jews and Palestinians are closely related. Recent genetic testing has shown that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are genetically closer to each other than either group is to any other ethnic group.

The overwhelming majority of Israelis are Jews who see their attachment to the historical land of Israel rooted in the patriarchal narratives of the Bible. Most Messianic Jews hold to this understanding. Palestinian Christians claim their spiritual heritage from the time of the early church but history shows that Islam swept the Middle East in the 8<sup>th</sup> century causing most Christians in the Middle East to become Moslems. Today there are viable congregations of Palestinian Christians and Messianic Jews who live in the midst of the majority Moslem and Jewish populations. These groups are numerically small. In total, Arab Christians of all kinds constitute about 3% of the population of Israel/Palestine. Messianic Jews constitute approximately .1% of the Jewish population of Israel.

Historically Christian mission has focused on one group to the exclusion of the other. The effect of this singular focus has not been helpful to the parties in conflict. In the Israeli/Palestinian spiritual arena, theology has played a role. Regarding the place of Israel, supercessionism has been the dominant theology of the Palestinian church and Liberation Theology is strong in some sectors. In the Israeli sector, most Messianic Jews identify with dispensationalism and affiliate with the Christian Zionist agenda.

In contrast to the Messianic Jewish community which is entirely evangelical, Palestinian Christians are denominationally quite diverse. Anglicans, Lutherans, Latin Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and other traditional Eastern Orthodox denominations make up a large portion of the Palestinian Christian community. These groups tend to relate to international denominational and ecumenical bodies. In so doing they frequently adopt a liberal agenda that focuses on issues of human rights at the expense of an evangelistic mandate for all. For them, the most prominent issue is justice. Reconciliation between the communities of faith on both sides of the conflict is not a priority.

The Messianic community sees concerns for truth, meaning their own understanding of biblical teaching regarding the place of Israel, as primary. This focus often precludes any motivation for reconciliation with Palestinian Christians who interpret scriptures about Israel differently.

## **ACTIVITIES**

The reconciliation activities addressed in this case study take place between Palestinian and Jewish women who are believers in Jesus. The reconciliation activities described here take place between the Palestinian evangelical community and the Messianic Jewish community. Although both groups are minorities within their peoples, these two faith communities stand firmly within their ethnic groups and identify with their respective struggles.

Organized meetings between Palestinian Christian and Messianic Jewish women began in the mid 1990's. These meetings have continued on an annual basis since that time. As an outcome of the annual conferences, during the past two years, small groups of women have been meeting several times throughout the year.

The initiative came from Musalaha, a ministry of reconciliation that was founded in 1990. Women met together to tell their stories, listen to one another, learn about each other's lives and communities, pray and worship together. These activities were chosen to enable the women to begin to get to know each other and to build bridges of understanding and trust. All of the participants, speakers and those attending were from within the two communities.

From the beginning of these meetings, the basis was clearly defined as meeting together "in Christ/Messiah." The primary spiritual identity was always stressed and the commonality of faith was emphasized. Women told their stories, spoke from a personal perspective as wives, mothers and daughters

each struggling to live a life of faith in the midst of conflict and tension. Biblical passages focusing on the unity of the Body of Messiah were highlighted as foundational for reconciliation as were the scriptural exhortations to love one another. Listening to the personal narratives of one another in the light of sharing a common faith was crucial to the encounters. Speaking from the heart rather than from an intellectual perspective was a characteristic of these gatherings. Corporate prayer for common concerns has been a significant unifying factor. Singing together in one another's languages was another important unifying element.

In the early years, women shared about their cultural traditions in the context of their life of faith. A positive aspect of the women's meetings has been the participation of only local women. In the diverse cultural/religious milieu of Israel/Palestine this has been particularly enriching.

Musalaha has provided financial subsidies to enable these meetings to take place. Both communities struggle economically and women would be unable to attend such overnight meetings if there were no financial aid given. The administrative staff of Musalaha handled administrative matters but the conference/meetings were planned and organized by a committee of women on a volunteer basis. All of the participants came voluntarily.

Frequently these meetings take place during times of active conflict between the two communities. This means that local military authorities have to be petitioned for permissions to allow Palestinian women to leave their areas and travel to the other side where the meetings are held. The context of violence contributes to the urgency and importance of the meetings. One such meeting was held on the eve of national elections in the Israeli sector and it was at this meeting that united prayer for common concerns was particularly poignant.

## **OUTCOMES**

The purpose of the women's meetings was to begin a relationally based process of reconciliation. There are both short term and long term outcomes of the reconciliation meetings between women.

In the short term, the feedback from women attending the meetings has been almost entirely positive. They relate that they have been personally enriched and challenged by the faith of other women living in vastly different circumstances. In the context of the meetings, stereotypes have given way to seeing one another as sisters and distance has given way to mutual embrace. Worshipping together has been described as "a taste of heaven." Comments like "why did I wait so long to come to these meetings," express the short term impact of these gatherings. Feedback from the women repeatedly contains a desire for more frequent gatherings.

In the longer term, as a result of these meetings, relationships have begun that have endured through times of accelerated conflict and violence. One of the outcomes is a number of ongoing relationships, first between the women themselves, then between families and in some cases between two congregations. This is evidenced by the level of contact between the two groups. There are frequent telephone contacts, particularly during times of violence, as the women call one another to encourage and support each other during time of crisis. Families visit one another and attend congregational meetings together. As an outcome of the recent smaller meetings, a monthly email prayer fellowship has been formed. This functioned well for several months but has not maintained the level of continuity that was hoped for.

The witness of the united community of faith that includes Jews and Arabs has had a positive effect on those hosting the meetings. These meetings have at times been held in commercial venues and staff and

other guests have expressed amazement at seeing “enemies” embracing each other. In their respective communities, the existence of loving relationships “across the lines” is challenging and it is a witness to the power of Jesus to break down walls.

Some criticism has been leveled against Musalaha’s reconciliation activities among women by Palestinian Christians who are not a part of the evangelical community. The focus on common faith rather than on issues of justice and liberation is perceived as naïve and an avoidance of the “real” issues. Another criticism is that rather than empowering women to stand for justice, these activities lull them with a false sense of harmony between opposing sides in the conflict.

In the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, it is clear that there is a strong connection between reconciliation and evangelism. The reconciliation spoken of here is within the community of faith where Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians are beginning to express that they are one in Messiah. Women seem to be initially more constitutionally suited to exploring relational issues than men. They naturally identify in solidarity with other women, regardless of other superficial differences. These women strongly connect with one another on an emotional basis. The fact of friendship across the lines powerfully witnesses to the only One who has the power to unite and reconcile such diverse people into one family.

## **ANALYSIS**

The context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has ongoing implications for reconciliation activities. Palestinian women have a much more difficult time getting out of their communities than do the Israeli women. In earlier years, it was legally possible for Israeli women to go into the Palestinian territories while Palestinian women have always needed to have permission from the military authorities to cross over into Israeli territory. Few Israeli women have been willing to confront the military presence and cross the border to the Palestinian territories. It is much more difficult today than when the reconciliation activities were initiated. Not all Palestinian women are willing to illegally cross over into Israeli territory.

The positive short term outcomes that were described in the previous section occurred because of a basic willingness to meet with one another on the ground of commonality rather than difference. Although differences were recognized, they were not the focus of the meetings. The meetings were intentionally structured so as to encourage the participants to see beyond the differences of culture, ethnicity, theology and language. The clear focus was always the unifying fact of the commonality of salvation in Jesus held by both communities.

The dominant party in the conflict is the Israeli presence. In the reconciliation activities, however, Arab participation has always proportionally outnumbered the Jewish participation. As the years have passed, this balance is slowly changing as more Jewish women are willing to be involved in the activities. This is in large measure due to the positive short term impact of the annual women’s meetings. The Messianic Jew feels himself a part of the dominant group and as such does not feel the same vulnerability or need to interact with the other side. In reconciliation activities, the inequality of the parties comes quickly to the fore and this threatens the self perception of the Jewish participant.

In order to facilitate the meetings, venues had to be chosen that were both accessible and non-threatening to both sides. At times this meant that some of the Palestinian women were unable to obtain permissions to attend the meetings. As these circumstances are beyond the control of the organizers, there is no way that such problems can be avoided. They are however a significant factor in reconciliation activities in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

As women meet together on the basis of faith, with the aim of building trust, this leads to deeper relationship and commitment. This has proved to be an effective method of reconciliation. Particularly communal worship and prayer for common concerns of the gospel, family and society are important elements that have proved to be valuable tools in the ongoing process of reconciliation between the two communities.

While there are similarities between reconciliation activities in many parts of the world, reconciliation in the context of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is in some ways unique. In the area of women's work, the model described in this case study can be applied in other contexts of conflict. There remains, however, one issue that is unique to this conflict and to the context of reconciliation within the larger community of faith. This is the issue of the place of Israel in the plan of God. Israel cannot be dismissed by adopting a supersessionist theology of the people of God, however well reasoned it may be. The "one new man" continues to be made up of two reconciled parties, Jews and non-Jews. Ultimately all reconciliation initiatives and activities in the Israeli/Palestinian context must somehow deal with this thorny issue.

Reconciliation is finally about family. Restoring the family of God; healing it from the effects of sin and brokenness that have damaged relationships, both human and divine, is the heart of the gospel. Relationship building within the family of God is but the first step to seeing the healing of the world's brokenness.

## Case Study #7

# KOSOVO AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

Prepared by  
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Tirana, Albania

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## CONTEXT

The history of the Kosovo region over the past 500 years is quite complex. One indisputable fact, however, is that hundreds of monasteries and churches, most of which are centuries old, cover the land. Their presence attest to the long history of Christianity in the region.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many ethnic Albanians abandoned their Christian identity and succumbed to the great social, economic and religious pressures of the Ottoman Empire by converting to Islam. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a strong emphasis on ethnic identity arose in the Balkans, which led to the formation of ethnic states. The Church itself led this struggle for freedom and independence from the Ottoman Empire, often identifying herself fully with the new ethnic states.

With the divisions and formations of new states during the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Kosovo saw itself as a part of Serbia. Interestingly though, a majority of its inhabitants at that time were ethnic Albanians. In 1946, Kosovo became an autonomous province of the communist Yugoslav federation. Ethnic and religious tensions between Orthodox Serbians and the mostly Muslim Albanians were suppressed by the communist government with anti-religious and atheistic propaganda. This propaganda led to a very secular and atheistic mentality among both Serbians and Albanians.

In 1989, a rise of Serbian nationalism, led by Milosevic, led to the rejection of the autonomous status of Kosovo. Ethnic Albanian leaders declared independence from Serbia a year later. Both emphases on nationalism often tried to use their differences in religion as a factor in the impending conflict. The Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) received much aid from Islamic countries. Serbian militia often used the sign of the Cross as a distinction between the Serbians with Albanians.

Milosevic's campaign of ethnic cleansing against Albanians eventually led to the NATO bombing of Serbia in March 1999, when more than 900,000 Kosovo Albanians fled into Albania and FYROM. Following the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo, revenge killings forced 180,000 Serbs and Roma to flee Kosovo, leaving only a few, heavily guarded enclaves of Serbs still in the Kosovo region.

Patriarch Pavel of the Serbian Orthodox Church issued statements at different times condemning the policies of Milosevic and ethnic cleansing, trying to preach a message of tolerance and goodwill. Many local and national leaders on both sides, however, with their atheistic mindset, tried to use their different religious cultural identities as impetuses for the conflict. The Church was often used as a puppet in the hands of atheistic political leaders. Also, some clergy and leaders within the Church itself too readily preached a nationalistic agenda instead of the good news of forgiveness and love.

One serious historical criticism of the Serbian Orthodox Church in this region over these centuries is the total absence of any effort to bring the Good News of Christ to the Muslim Albanians in their own language and within their own culture. Even though a small minority of Albanians in Kosovo are Roman Catholic, a very sizeable minority of Albanians in Albania are Orthodox Christian, and despite the historical Christian identity of most Albanians, the Serbian Orthodox Church focused only on its own people and did not try to integrate this other ethnic group into their Christian family.

This ethnocentric pride, which existed in Israel in Old Testament times, and even in the early Judaic Church, is a constant temptation for every Church in each generation. This bane of nationalism has tempted and overwhelmed Christianity in the Balkans. Religion and ethnicity are too often seen as one by many people in the region.

One very concrete example of this occurred recently, when I offered a presentation about the resurrection of the Orthodox Church of Albania in Banja Lluca, Bosnia-Herzegovina. My hosts warned me that some of the Serbians present wouldn't be able to understand Orthodox Christianity outside of their Serbian context. And sure enough, at the end of my presentation on the hundreds of Churches and the revival of Christianity in Albania, one very sincere and polite old man raised his hand and asked, "I don't understand. How can you be talking about the Orthodox Church when you haven't mentioned anything about Serbians?"

This inability to separate one's religious identity from one's ethnic identity is one of the most serious theological problems facing the Church in these regions.

## **ACTIVITIES/HISTORY**

A unique response to this tense situation has occurred over the past five years by the Orthodox Church of Albania. This response unexpectedly began in March 1999, when 400,000 Kosovo Albanian refugees flooded into Albania. Although the vast majority of the refugees were Muslim, and the Orthodox Church of Albania itself was still in the process of trying to recover from her own severe communist persecution, Archbishop Anastasios, the head of the Orthodox Church in Albania, mobilized the entire Church community to respond. While others were trying to use religion as a cause or negative factor in the conflict, he preached consistently, "The oil of religion should never be used to inflame the fires of hatred, but should be used to sooth and heal the wounds of the inflicted ... The radioactivity of hatred has spread throughout the world. We must combat this hatred with selfless, sacrificial love...The Church should never have enemies. We pray 'for those who hate us and for those who love us.' Thus we cannot have enemies. How could we? If others want to see us as enemies, it is their choice, but we do not consider others as enemies."

The Orthodox Church in Albania called upon her Christian friends throughout the world and responded by overseeing a \$12 million emergency relief campaign. Not only did she run the longest standing refugee camp, but she also offered aid to more than 34,000 refugees.

A memorable example of Christian love was when our women's group offered the first clothes, food and aid to more than 300 newborn babies and their Kosovo Albanian mothers. One of the best examples of Christian witness, however, occurred when our faithful began visiting various refugee camps. Through these visits, they established bonds of friendship which enlightened both the refugees and Albanians alike. The Muslim Albanians saw Orthodox Christian believers in a new and positive light, witnessing the love of God in concrete ways. Our believers, on the other hand, overcame their initial fear of how the Kosovo Muslims would react if they discovered we were Orthodox, and learned an essential lesson in the midst of

suffering – that the person in front of them is first and foremost a fellow human being in need, an icon of Christ, not a stranger with a different religion.

When two Kosovo Albanian girls attended one of our summer youth camps that year, they were initially afraid to be surrounded by people “who made their cross like the Serbians.” But 10 days later, one of the girls confessed in front of the entire camp, “I have never experienced such love in my life. I will never forget this camp.”

Ramadan, a Muslim man who spent two months at our refugee camp, told me during one of his return trips to Tirana after the war, “I will ever be grateful for all your Church has done for me. Really, I now understand what true Christianity is. I have hope for the future. From this experience, I believe that Serbians and Albanians can still live as neighbors and brothers with one another.”

Following the war, the Orthodox Church of Albania has tried to keep contacts and develop relationships with both Kosovo Albanians and Serbians. We understand the very unique position we hold, since the Kosovo Albanians see us as their ethnic brothers, while the Serbians view us as their Orthodox Christian brothers. We hope that we can become a small bridge in helping each side develop a different perception of the other.

One way of trying to do this is by holding yearly summer “friendship camps” for Kosovo Albanian children in two Muslim villages. More than 700 children attended this past year. Twenty Orthodox Christians from Albania lead these camps, and worked side by side with a number of Kosovo Albanian teachers and youth leaders. This interaction is enlightening and challenging for both sides.

Simultaneously, our students visit different Serbian enclaves. For the first time in the history of some monasteries, the Serbians have heard the Albanian language in their Church services. Such efforts are attempts at breaking down century old prejudices and stereotypes from both sides.

During recent outbreaks of violence in March 2004, Archbishop Anastasios of Albania made another symbolic gesture by offering \$300,000 each to the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosovo Islamic Community, so that each side could rebuild a church and a mosque that had been destroyed.

The Archbishop stated, “The burning of churches and mosques, does not promote justice and peace, and certainly neither progress. On the contrary, it is a return to times and practices which led the Balkans to stagnation, divisions, and tragedies. Indeed, those who involve religion in the violence are essentially violating the spirit of religion. No matter how much one is in the right, he must respect the sanctity and the purpose of sacred places of worship. These should become centers of reconciliation and peace, and not breeding grounds for maintaining animosities. It is only with peaceful coexistence of the religious communities that genuine social progress can take place. This is the principal that we Christians and Muslims alike have adopted in Albania: to live together and to cooperate with each other in harmony. The sobriety of religious tolerance and courage of love must overcome the blind hatred that can only lead to an escalation of conflicts.”

## **OUTCOMES AND ANALYSIS**

One of the most significant consequences from these initiatives has been the changed perception of the other. Despite differences in religious faith and religious culture and traditions, Kosovo Albanian Muslims in the villages where we have worked, and the Orthodox of Albania who have participated in these activities, see one another as friends. Their religious differences don’t turn one another into the stereotypical monster.

It must be emphasized that in all the aid we offered, and with the camps we presently run in Kosovo, none of our actions were or are overtly evangelistic in nature. The emphasis is more on breaking down stereotypes, helping to see the other in new ways, and creating relationships of trust and love. The evangelism comes more from the witness of how we proclaim the good news through our lives, and how we interact with the other, than to some specific words and sayings. Also, from the friendship camps in Kosovo, some participants have come to our Church camps in Albanian, which are clearly Christian in nature and in word. Seeds are being planted.

As for our interactions on the Serbian side, the Serbs are often amazed at meeting Christian Albanians. After their initial shock, they have come to respect what our Church is doing, and have invited members of our Church to different affairs in Kosovo. They are beginning to understand that one can be Albanian and also Orthodox Christian, something that was inconceivable years ago.

One of the best fruit of this overall initiative is the overwhelmingly positive experience and education for our own believers. It has made very concrete the words of our Archbishop, “The oil of religion should never be used to inflame the fires of hatred, but should be used to sooth and heal the wounds of the inflicted.” When the Archbishop says we should have no enemies, this saying has new meaning for us as we try to offer a witness to both sides of a conflict. Our believers also have learned how difficult it is to forgive and forget the horrors of hatred and conflict. It often does not come quickly. When one has seen death and evil all around, we Christians cannot preach a simplistic message, and expect forgiveness to come immediately. Hatred, ignorance, prejudice, and evil are formidable barriers, which a Christian, armed with the grace of God, needs to struggle against and hope to conquer over time – God’s time, not ours.

Also, our believers are learning that evangelism is often a part of a long process of witnessing. “Paul plants, Apollo waters, but God gives the growth.” The planter does not always see the fruit. Or he may see fruit many years later. Our purpose and goal is to be faithful in offering an authentic witness in every aspect of our ministry and life, and leave the results up to God.

As the most famous Albanian, Mother Teresa, once stated, “God did not call me to be successful, but to be faithful.” This is what our believers are learning in this ministry of reconciliation – to faithfully offer a witness of love, and to leave the rest in God’s hands.

## Case Study #8

# INDONESIA

Prepared by  
**James Tumbuan**  
Director, World Vision Indonesia.

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*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one  
and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ...  
Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens,  
but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household”  
Ephesians 2:14 and 19*

## CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

During the transition from authoritarian, centralized government to democracy starting with the 1998 downfall of Soeharto, the Indonesian archipelago underwent traumatic upheavals involving unspeakable incidents of communal violence. One of them is the conflict in North Maluku.

Government Decrees created the province and another one a sub-district that put settlers in opposition to locals. Apparently, the conflict began as the decree declared. It creates the conditions for competing political power and economic resource conflicts to emerge. In October 1999 Kao Moslem and Christians jointly retaliated the attempt to force the five villages to the Makian District. The Malifut residents fled mostly to Ternate and Tidore where it is said that they fomented anti-Christian sentiments.

The hostilities in North Maluku started as an ethnic conflict in Kao/Malifut area in North Halmahera but consequently spread like a wildfire as a Muslim/Christian conflict first through the islands of Tidore/Ternate and back to Halmahera and the rest of the province. It has been said that the Moslem was supported by outsiders. Within nine months, between October 1999 and June 2000, the conflict left the province divided into homogenous Christian and Muslim enclaves caring for around 207,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).<sup>12</sup> An additional 25 – 50,000 IDPs fled to Sulawesi and elsewhere. Meanwhile it was estimated officially 3000 people were killed, numerous villages and homes were destroyed as well as shops, health centers, schools, mosques and churches.

The conflict in North Maluku had high complexity and it is difficult to determine which one is the actual root cause of the conflict. The external issues especially conflict in Ambon influence the North Maluku situation. IDPs from Ambon – both Christian and Moslem – came to Ternate and generated huge numbers of IDPs who carried the conflict to other parts of North Maluku.

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<sup>12</sup> PMI (Ternate)—Indonesian Red Cross— November 2000 figures.

The conflict enclave the areas into three fortresses where religious identity is highly valued compare to ethnicity. Tidore/Ternate and Galela were places where the Moslem IDPs run for protection. Tobelo, on the other hand, was the place for the Christian IDPs.

Today, Tobelo is mixed and a number of Moslem government officials have returned. Yet, the Christian character still dominates. Galela is mixed as well, but still has a Moslem character. Although Ternate is still quite dominantly Moslem, the Christians are back, and they are no longer fearful to be in Ternate. Nevertheless, in all cases, the return of IDPs has introduced tension as a new balance needs to be found.

In the case of Kao, the area remains mixed. Christian and Moslem live together. In fact, when Ambon conflict erupted, a forum made up of Christians and Moslems formed and called Forum Solidaritas Maluku Utara. They anticipated the riots and socialize non-violence response/reaction to the gathering storm by making brochures to educate the people about how to handle provocation, disturbing issues etc.

Having seen the complexity of the issues, an assessment in North Maluku identified connectors and dividers. Some of them are described below:

| Dividers   | Connectors  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formation of local militias and informal para-governmental bodies</li> <li>▪ IDPs experience feelings of revenge</li> <li>▪ lack of respect/tolerance, difficulty in accepting people of different backgrounds and origins, exclusive attitudes and behaviours</li> <li>▪ Both groups defend religious values and need to “defend the faith”</li> <li>▪ Experience of religious and ethnic violence resulting in a gap between the groups</li> <li>▪ Community trauma as a result of war</li> <li>▪ Christians and Muslims have a hard time accepting each other’s symbols, e.g.</li> <li>▪ For Muslims, the symbol of the cross, food (pigs head), are hard to accept</li> <li>▪ For Christians, the Kopiah (cap) and jilbab, and other religiously associated clothing is hard to accept</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shared root ethnic identity, adat, language, and inter-marriage.</li> <li>▪ Common concern for well-being and future of children</li> <li>▪ Guarding tolerance, capacity to accept differences</li> <li>▪ Efforts at mutual respect</li> <li>▪ Shared vision for a new N. Maluku</li> <li>▪ mutual concern for future of the children</li> <li>▪ drawing on common root values to reestablish co-existence</li> <li>▪ All groups are “tired of the conflict”, and are ready to “normalize”</li> <li>▪ Memories of good times together as children at school and at play.</li> <li>▪ PMI (=Indonesian Red Cross) use of the (+) symbol</li> </ul> |

In this situation World Vision tried to break the wall as the Bible said, “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility ... Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household” (Ephesians 2:14 and 19)

**EFFORT FOR RECONCILIATION/ACTIVITIES**

World Vision began its work in North Halmahera with community development projects in 1987. Due to the conflict, WV had to stop the program and evacuated its project staff.

After three months of conflict, WV made the management decision to enter North Maluku – with relief program – through Ternate, a predominantly Muslim area, instead of entering the Christian ADP area. This enable WV to gain the trust of the people, as Christian staff were working in Muslim IDP camps. World Vision was very explicit about its intentions in bringing the two groups together. Moreover, WV

recruited Christian and Muslim staff to do the ministry. The post conflict goal was to break down the walls between the two groups, to begin getting Christian and Moslem to mix once again, influencing WV staff, to facilitate communication, joint projects and demonstrate that Christians and Moslem can work together toward a common goal. In 2002 the project was changed to implement rehabilitation program with the emphasis to accelerate the normalization process with peacebuilding as its goal in developing the programs which are carried out until present.

The effort was supported by other actions like opening a branch office in Galela and WV car driving back and forward between Tobelo and Galela without any security guard. This is the first action done. Indeed it was a significant breakthrough. The community did expect World Vision to be the tools to breaking down distrust.

Moreover, World Vision Indonesia has initiated peace and reconciliation programming to help restore normalcy. Several peace and education projects have been implemented, numerous trainings in “Empowerment for Reconciliation” have been sponsored, and community peace initiatives have been organized. One remarkable activity was “mama baku dapa” where women from both sides had a chance to interact with each other physically and spiritually. They told their stories of how they fled the conflict and family died.

Besides the effort and willingness to reconcile, there are people (both groups) who keep their memories of their neighbours – from the opposite group – whom bravely provided protection and safety for them during the height of crisis where people going against the stream of violence. These are expressed through a story telling project – initiated by World Vision – where stories of courage during the conflict collected. Their stories are virtually all rooted in strong relationships between Muslims and Christians, deep respect for each others identities, and an unshakeable love for the other.

On 19 April 2001 Tobelo held its Day of Reconciliation celebration. Moslem and Christian leaders from Tobelo District gathered to exchange and “bury” spears and to sign a peace declaration which laid out the conditions of public behavior and attitudes which would under grid the restoration of peace in Tobelo. Witness by about 500 people, the religious leaders began forgiving each other, weeping and embracing. The process was initiated by the Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Halmahera (Halmahera Community Defense Organisation). The team’s chairperson was the District chief at the moment. Three days after the event, Tobelo leaders went to Galela unescorted by the military to accompany 57 IDP families back.<sup>13</sup>

The North Maluku governor initiated a peace and reconciliation process that permits local initiatives in beginning the process and determining the pace. He believed that there wouldn’t be such “reconciliation heroes.”<sup>14</sup> Reconciliation happened only by the grace of God, by the will of the people, the combined support of the government plus security forces and of the international community. Although the peace process was very much a government initiative, it is focused on the middle-level of community leaders.

To be truly reconciled with each other is indeed a unique process. A GMIH (Local Church) chairman commented that church leaders feel as if they are like a dam holding back their parishioners’ feelings of anger and a residual desire for revenge. In contrast, however, what is solid is the Christian willingness to take risks in starting the peace process, and it appears to be an initiative that is based on teachings of love

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<sup>13</sup> The Indonesian term is to *menjemput*. This term was heard a number of times. It means literally to go and accompany someone back. It is rooted in a concept of hospitality, and is being practiced in North Halmahera as a sign of welcome and trust. It takes on a special meaning when it is applied to one’s enemy. For Christians, it is a sign of demonstrating forgiveness.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this “policy” was heard reiterated a number of times by the heads of the districts

and forgiveness of the enemy. In other occasion, in one IDP camp, a pastor express his belief when he was asked how does he pray, “Jesus wants us the love our enemy. I pray that they are forgiven for they do not know what they are doing”

## **OUTCOMES**

Although it is difficult to measure the effect that World Vision’s programs have had on the peace climate in North Maluku, as there are many other factors that have contributed to the positive environment, World Vision aims to provide what the communities identify as their needs, the communities naturally perceive that World Vision is effectively meeting its objectives. Nonetheless, World Vision can identify significant benefits gained through its programs:

The government and the community members agree that World Vision’s assistance has made their areas a safer place. World Vision has helped with the reconciliation and showed no favoritism in selecting beneficiaries. Moreover, the aid reducing tensions, relieving physical suffering and generating hope. They helped both Muslims and Christians on a first come first served basis. According to the community, although World Vision is a Christian organization, the Muslims were able to accept assistance because WV maintained an objective, neutral aid policy. Now people are respecting each others’ differences because they are all working to rebuild the communities. World Vision programs have been beneficial to the community for both physical and non-physical social development like reconciliation process.

When World Vision gave the people opportunity to meet each other, the community respond was enthusiastic. Take the “mama baku dapa” activity. For the first time – after two years in conflict – people met peacefully. The women were happy and slowly they discuss more and more about the things that have happened in the past. As one pastor wife said, “I really wanted to forgive and continue with my life so I joined the team. In the meetings...we discover that we share the same experience, the same emotion and the same traumas... I still feel safe, although some Moslem people live near my house again... Inside I am a changed woman, although there are still painful memories, I can deal with them better now.” After the event, mothers began inviting each other – from different groups – to attend their children parties.

One person express his opinion, “Because of World Vision we do not fight each other because we have help, there is reduced tension and suspicion.”

## **ANALYSIS/LESSON LEARNED**

- In Indonesia, generally, International NGO is perceived as the “western” agent and associated it with Christianity. This is why it is crucial to keep the neutrality by trying work in balance, serving Moslem and Christian. Also, it is important that the activities are seen by both groups to be balanced and neutral.
- World Vision work in North Maluku not only provide space for the people to interact with each other, but World Vision has been successful in giving model for the community of how the Moslem and Christian can work together.
- Moreover, by showing no favoritism in selecting beneficiaries, WV has significant role in encouraging reconciliation in the community
- The decision to start working in Ternate made a strong statement for the staff and the community. If World Vision’s objective is bringing peace and breaking down walls, entering in predominantly Christian Halmahera would have labeled World Vision as the “enemy”

- It is useful to integrate peacebuilding into the education, health and rehabilitation program. In this way, people get more chance to experience themselves of what is tolerance, who is their neighbor, and how to communicate with each other.

## Case Study #9

# AUSTRALIA

### *Institutional Neglect and the Kingdom of God : The treatment of Australian Aborigines: The Church's role in Reconciliation*

Prepared by

**Tom Mayne**

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## THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT: THE 'DISCOVERY' OF AUSTRALIA

New Holland, Terra Australis Incognita, or The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit as Australia has been variously named – sometimes mistakenly,<sup>15</sup> was the last major inhabited continent to be discovered by Europeans. Jan Carstenz in 1606 was probably the first explorer to record that Aborigines inhabited parts of the vast island continent. Perhaps 40,000 to 70,000 years before God called Abram, Aborigines crossed from Asia on land bridges during the last ice ages.<sup>16</sup>

Aborigines fitted neither the construct of Rousseau's 'noble savage' nor the Eurocentric category of 'barbarian'. They were not idolatrous, but animist. They retold in their dreamtime stories, the work of their 'sky hero' creator who fashioned them and the landscape around them. They had a complex system of lore and culture that sustained them through millennia. What place did they have in God's overarching providence? Where did they fit in God's sovereignty?<sup>17</sup>

In 1770, Captain James Cook sailed up the east coast of Australia and took possession of the eastern half of the continent.<sup>18</sup> He carried instructions with him from the British Admiralty that read in part,

*You are with the consent of the natives to take possession of convenient situations...  
or if you find the country uninhabited, take possession for his majesty.*<sup>19</sup>

Cook, and botanist Sir Joseph Banks were almost certainly aware that the territory *was* inhabited since they were familiar with the records of earlier European visitors who had commented on the Aborigines.<sup>20</sup> The idea, therefore, that Terra Australis was *terra nullius* was probably known to be a myth even before Cook left England.

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<sup>15</sup> Pedro Fernandez de Quiros named what he thought was Terra Australis as 'The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit'. In fact he had reached the New Hebrides or today's Vanuatu.

<sup>16</sup> M. Estensen, *Discovery: The Quest for the Great South Land*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonard's NSW, 1998, p.2.

<sup>17</sup> J. Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity-a story of Hope*, Albatross Books, Sutherland NSW, 1990. p.541.

<sup>18</sup> It was believed that Terra Australis was perhaps two continents separated by an ocean. Cook's proclamation, therefore, extended west only to the 135<sup>th</sup> meridian.

<sup>19</sup> D. Carne, *Land Rights: A Christian Perspective*, Australian Council of Churches, 1980, p.69.

<sup>20</sup> Estensen, *op. cit.*, p.235.

## Early Christian Contact

The first settlement in 1788 was a convict colony. The Christianity the convicts were to experience and that which Aborigines were to observe, thus had a heavy overlay of authority and harsh discipline. Aborigines wept when they saw convicts being flogged. A military drum roll announced the first Christian service where the convicts were ordered to attend, with the warning, 'No Man to be Absent On Any Account Whatever.' The sermon, based on Psalm 116, verse 12, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?'<sup>21</sup> must have caused the convicts to wonder just what their benefits were? Perhaps it was the benefit of transportation, rather than the alternative, which was hanging.

## Colonisation, Altruism and Exploitation

Whether they were Spanish or English explorers proclaiming territories in the name of their respective Sovereigns and bringing the benefits of their enlightened civilisations to the 'heathen', there were always other motives. Running parallel to such espoused altruism was a race between the Europeans to discover and proclaim sovereignty over lands believed, according to de Quiros, to contain, "*As much gold and silver as you can carry and such a quantity of pearls that you shall measure them by hatfuls.*"<sup>22</sup>

Added to this was the often-blurred distinction between 'civilising' and 'Christianising' the natives. Early attempts by missionaries to reach Aborigines with the gospel proved to be failures because of lack of support from Churches and governments. Most missionaries lived sacrificially, in poverty, not far removed from that of the now-dispossessed Aborigines. Most early missions in New South Wales were abandoned by the mid 1800s through curtailing of funding by the Colonial government, opposition from settlers who branded missionaries as 'nigger lovers' and from pastoralists who saw the missionaries taking up valuable grazing land. The contrast between dedicated missionaries and an unsupportive racially biased Church is nowhere better illustrated than in a 1913 Presbyterian report which contained a submission proclaiming that, "*It would be foolish to argue that all men are equal. The blackfellow is inferior and must necessarily remain so, but he is by no means so inferior as to be able to rise above the level of a working animal.*"<sup>23</sup>

Aboriginal numbers continued to decline because of massacres, introduced disease and frontier decadency, well into the 20th Century.<sup>24</sup> Aboriginal dispossession of land, language, children, culture and identity continued up to the 1970s. While mainstream Churches for the most part remained aloof, dedicated independent missionaries continued to reach out to Aborigines with the gospel. Questions of social justice, however, such as land rights and the 'Stolen Generations' were not addressed.

## ACTIVITIES: FROM NEGLECT TO RECONCILIATION

In the 1980s, I was galvanised into the realisation that the Anglican Church of which I was a member, had sadly neglected justice for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal ministry in particular.<sup>25</sup> My wife and I had worked with the Church's Flying Medical Service in Ceduna, South Australia, in the mid 1960s where we frequently came in contact with Aboriginal people, yet we returned to Sydney with the same level of

<sup>21</sup> N. Macintosh, Richard Johnston: Chaplain to the Colony of New South Wales, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978, p.49.

<sup>22</sup> op. cit., Estensen., p.202.

<sup>23</sup> Love J R B, 1915, *The Aborigines: Their Present Condition As Seen in Northern South Australia, the Northern Territory, North West Australia and Western Queensland*, Report to the Presbyterian Church of Australia, quoted in H. Wearne, (Ed.), A Clash of Cultures, Uniting Church, 1980, p.13.

<sup>24</sup> Harris, op. cit., p.58.

<sup>25</sup> The Church Missionary Society had been working in Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory and the Australian Board of Missions in Cape York Peninsula since the turn of the 19C, but little or nothing had been done in city and urban areas where the majority of Aborigines lived.

ignorance and prejudice that pervaded society generally. This changed dramatically in 1980 when newspapers were reporting on a Royal Commission being conducted into the effects of Atomic Bomb tests on Australian and British servicemen carried out in the 1950s at Maralinga, South Australia. *The question screamed at us. Why, when we were in Ceduna, did no one ever mention what effects the tests may have had on the Aborigines?* For various reasons Aborigines had earlier been removed from the nearby Ooldea Mission, so Maralinga became an ideal site to accommodate the tests.<sup>26</sup> Aborigines, it seems, were expendable when it came to testing weapons and the Church remained silent. If ever there was a time in my life when I felt God speaking, it was now. *DO SOMETHING!*

## EDUCATING MYSELF AND OTHERS

For four years I set about educating myself by meeting with Aboriginal people and reading everything I could lay my hands on – history, especially mission history. One book that proved invaluable was ‘One Blood’, by Dr John Harris<sup>27</sup> (who I understand will be at the Forum). John had done extensive research into mission history and this stimulated me into looking further into the Sydney Anglican Church’s dealing with Aboriginal people. I spent many hours in the diocesan archives where my concerns about the Church’s neglect were only reinforced. The minutes of the Church Society’s<sup>28</sup> annual meetings from 1856 to 1862 made dismal reading. An 1862 extract read,

*‘While expressing their regret that hitherto nothing has been done towards carrying out this [mission to Aborigines] object...your committee entertains the confident hope that before the next annual meeting they will have something satisfactory to report.’<sup>29</sup>*

Another further example of how Aborigines were invisible or regarded as part of the flora and fauna is provided by reference to the Sydney Diocesan Report for 1850. Explaining why dioceses had not been established in the districts of Port Phillip (Victoria) and South Australia until 1847, the report noted that, *“hitherto they were previously uninhabited.”<sup>30</sup>*

Having researched the history of what could only be described as neglect, and realising that our diocese alone, had around 45,000 Aboriginal people within its borders with no policy on justice or ministry, it was time to move forward and try and do something.

## PRAYER PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE

The first thing was to work out a strategy. Together with my colleague, Rev John McIntyre, we realised we needed to bring on board those willing to pray, and support a synod motion calling for radical change. That change would include a request for \$1.2 million to be set aside for a fund to appoint and train Aboriginal ministers. We faxed all senior Church officials, bishops, archdeacons and other high profile members asking them to indicate their support for the motion. When the returns came in there was a 95% favourable response. Letters were then sent out to all 750 Synod representatives showing the result of the returns and advising them of the pitiful state of Aboriginal society and Aboriginal ministry. Most

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<sup>26</sup> Controversy surrounds the removal of the Aborigines since Ooldea was experiencing problems with its water supply and this may have been a factor in the removal decision. However, the possibility of the removed Aborigines being able to return to their (now radio active) traditional land was not a consideration.

<sup>27</sup> J. Harris, *One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity: a story of Hope*, Albatross Books, Sutherland, 1990.

<sup>28</sup> The Church Society was the organization responsible for placing chaplains in schools and hospitals and generally having the financial oversight of the diocese.

<sup>29</sup> *Church Society Fifth Annual Report*, 1862, p.19, Diocesan Archives.

<sup>30</sup> Diocesan Annual Report for 1850, Moore College Library archives.

Aboriginal pastors relied on income from ‘work for the dole’, worked as seasonal workers fruit or cotton picking, or in an office or elsewhere in order to survive. Most Aborigines had friends or relatives in prison.<sup>31</sup> Most would have been affected by child removal policies.<sup>32</sup> Domestic violence was widespread. Alcoholism and youth suicide were major problems. With the help of World Vision we produced a low budget 8-minute video in which five Aboriginal people - pastors, a Church worker and a member of the Stolen Generations, told their stories. After years of preparation, the scene was now set to present the motion to the Synod.

## **OUTCOMES: THE HAND OF GOD AT WORK**

Despite the positive response from the faxes, there was serious opposition to the proposed motion. We had arranged for a number of Churches to pre-view the video where we explained the reason for the action being proposed. The response was anything but overwhelming! Most of the objections came from the number crunchers who said they couldn’t support it on financial grounds. However, not to be discouraged, we felt compelled to press ahead.

When the day came for us to address the Synod, everything seemed bleak. The budget had just been debated and everyone was pleading for more money to resource their particular ministries. When the time came, we screened the video, I addressed the Synod and my colleague seconded the motion. To our amazement, there was virtually no debate. Those who previously said they would oppose it, remained silent. When it came to the vote, it was miraculous! 640 to Nil in favour.

### **The Establishment of Indigenous Ministries**

With the establishment of the \$1.2 million Trust Fund, the money was invested and with the disbursements, (and help from interested Churches) we have been able to appoint two full-time Aboriginal ministers. At Tregear, western Sydney, we have, following negotiations with the diocese, acquired a Church building and rectory for the minister and his family. Regular (culturally appropriate) worship services are held together with Kids Club, men’s and women’s groups, Sunday School, bible studies and prayer times. The Church also runs a group home for seriously disadvantaged children. The minister has since been ordained ‘deacon’ and we hope to see him ‘priested’ so that he can have a voice on Synod. The other ministry at Minto, south-western Sydney conducts similar holistic ministries. Children who previously were turning up hungry are now being given breakfast. In both these ministries, the gospel is presented in ways that are relevant to Aboriginal people. Sermons in mainstream Churches (where few Aborigines attend anyway) can be unhelpful where the emphasis may be on some finer point of doctrine or the English Reformation!

### **Community Involvement**

A positive aspect of these two ministries is that they are community oriented. A problem with many independent (and financially unsupported) Indigenous Churches is that they tend to be isolationist. These two Anglican Indigenous Churches foster strong relationships with the surrounding community. The Tregear Church recently held a cross-cultural night where around 300 people (mainly non Anglo-Celtic) attended. The Minto Church in collaboration with a secular Aboriginal-run corporation has been given permission to take religious instruction in its school. Overall there are many examples of these Churches being able to interact with the surrounding community.

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<sup>31</sup> While Australia’s adult Indigenous population is less than 2%, its prison population is 20% Indigenous.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Halfcast’ children could be forcibly removed (sometimes without a court order) up until the late 1960s.

## ANALYSIS

Why did this come about? Firstly, because we believed the actions taken were clearly in accordance with the will of God. Two scriptures became dominant in our thinking. One from Jeremiah 21:11-12, and the other from Matt 5:23-24. One speaks of justice and the other of reconciliation.<sup>33</sup> Historically, the Church with few (and some notable) exceptions, had turned its back on the injustices of the past. While some of our earliest and most beautiful Cathedrals and Churches were being erected, Aborigines were still being shot, poisoned, forced off their lands and reduced to pauperism. Unlike in other former British colonies, no treaty has ever been negotiated with Australia's first nations people.

The second reason is that Aboriginal Christians were taking the lead in pursuing reconciliation. It was almost as if the mainstream Church was shamed into responding. But respond it did, because reconciliation is rooted in scripture and a strong scripturally-based argument was presented. In political terms, reconciliation had become (and is increasingly becoming) meaningless – a cliché thrown around by politicians trying to appease their consciences, so the Church had to respond.

Were there negative effects? Yes, a few. Some – to use the popular jargon – thought that 'it's no use throwing money at Aborigines'. Some thought that just because societies like CMS and ABM were doing great things in the Northern Territory and the Cape, that all was well.<sup>34</sup> Many issues still need to be dealt with. No federal government has so far apologised to the Stolen Generations – though many Churches have.

While we are indeed grateful to God for what has been achieved, we must not become complacent. There is an enormous backlog of neglect to be addressed. Reconciliation comes with a price. Just as Christ paid the ultimate price on the cross, true reconciliation for us will not be cheap. It will cost us our pride, our prejudices, our racism and our indifference.

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<sup>33</sup> Jer 21:11-12, '*See that justice is done every day. Protect the person who is being cheated from the one who is cheating him. If you don't, the evil you are doing will make my anger burn like a fire that cannot be put out.*' Matt 5:23-24, '*So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God.*'

<sup>34</sup> Arnhem Land where the Church Missionary Society (CMS) is working has an indigenous population of about 5,000. Sydney diocese on the latest census figures has around 50,000. The Anglican Board of Mission's (ABM) work is mainly confined to remote settlements in Cape York Peninsula.

## Case Study #10

# USA: NYACK COLLEGE

Prepared by  
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President, Nyack College

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### THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICT

In the winter of 1993 the racial atmosphere on the Nyack College (NY) campus was a tinderbox, ready to explode. For nearly a decade the college had been making steady, intentional progress in diversifying its student body. Statistics showed that over 40% of the students were from ethnic groups other than Caucasian, a jump from 19% four years earlier. Most administrators and many faculty members were very supportive of the move toward multiculturalism. A higher education association with which the college was associated was already recognizing Nyack College as a model site for diversity. In fact, a Commission on Diversity was a major encourager of the efforts, and one of Nyack's faculty members was an active member on the Commission.

One of the efforts of the Commission was the conducting of a survey on campus of attitudes toward race and the movement toward diversity. The faculty member was eager for Nyack to participate, so at the end of a chapel service, he required the students to stay longer to fill out the form. This was not met with a great deal of appreciation, and some of the responses may have been a reflection of this inconvenience. Shortly before the Board of Trustees met in February, the school newspaper was printed and distributed. *The Forum* was always eager to stir controversy, as college newspapers seem destined to do. In that issue several letters to the editor were printed that expressed very negative opinions about the diversity on campus. Allegations were made by Caucasian students that the college was corrupting the academic integrity of its program and compromising its reputation by admitting under-prepared students. This was a rather unveiled reference to our Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), a highly successful New York State supported entitlement program that enrolls mostly minority students who would not qualify for regular admission.

Fueling the controversy was the polarization of the Nyack College faculty on the identity and mission of the college. The president had established a faculty governance committee, which was led by the same (African American) faculty member who headed up HEOP and the Commission on Diversity. Some of the faculty members were convinced that the college was leaving its denominational moorings by taking on more students from other persuasions, many of them being minority students from pentecostal churches. They wanted the power to remain in the hands of administration under the authority of the trustees. Other faculty members were advocating a greater role of governance for the faculty so they could sculpt the mission of the school toward a more urban agenda.

These tensions reached a head when during a meeting of the board of trustees, the academic dean (who advocated greater faculty governance) urged the president (who advocated administrative governance) to

allow a few students to bring invitations to the trustees to attend a banquet being sponsored by the Hispanic Heritage Association. The two students came into the board meeting, but used their opportunity to verbally attack the leaders of the school for perpetuating a racist agenda. Clearly things were out of control.

## ACTIVITIES

Quite obviously the board of trustees needed to intervene in this explosive situation. Fortunately, the board was united. On the one hand the board wanted the leadership to stay in the hands of the administration; on the other hand, the board was positive about the emerging mission of ministering to a broader constituency of students, including those often marginalized in the world of higher education.

Other factors outside the scope of this studies were already at work in motivating the board to replace some of the existing leaders, so when these events surfaced, the board took action to dismiss the president. Then they asked the denominational director of higher education, who sat on the board, to meet with the students to explain their action and to begin to seek ways of bringing healing and reconciliation to the campus community. They also formed a search committee for the next president, and put on that committee two faculty members, the head of the faculty governance committee and the head of the Bible department, who was a bit more “old school.”

The upshot of the search was that out of three candidates interviewed by the search committee, the board chose the director of higher education to become the president. That enabled a smooth transition in activities that worked toward reconciliation. The new president took the following initiatives:

- Dismissed the academic dean for insubordination to the previous president
- Affirmed to the college students and personnel that multiculturalism was very much at the heart of our founder’s vision and part of our early history
- Dismantled the Commission on Diversity, and set up a President’s Advisory Panel on Cultural Enrichment, a group of faculty and students who met with the president every few weeks to discuss racial and cultural attitudes and programs
- Addressed the topics of racial harmony and cultural diversity from a biblical perspective in chapel sermons every week
- Hired qualified minority leaders for key positions in admissions and student development
- Met with groups of students giving them opportunity to air their grievances, including the various ethnic clubs
- Disbanded the faculty governance committee, telling the faculty he would not interfere with their work if they would allow him to give administrative leadership to the college
- Published for the community the data that showed that a higher percentage of HEOP students graduated and with a higher GPA than the traditional students
- Established a multicultural celebration week
- Advocated for transformational diversity, not just additive diversity, evidenced in chapel worship styles, food service menus, hiring practices, curriculum revision, et al.

The chapel messages focused on ideas like:

- God's eternal family is described in Revelation 7 a people from every nation, tribe, people and language group
- Jesus gave the Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations
- Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles
- Paul admonished the Corinthians of diverse backgrounds to be in unity
- In Christ the dividing wall between ethnic groups has been destroyed

Worship became a unifying element on the campus, and each year a non-Caucasian spiritual emphasis week speaker ministered on campus, emphasizing how the deeper Christian life intersects with reconciliation.

Faculty who could not adapt to the movement toward biblical multiculturalism were confronted lovingly and encouraged to change their perspective or try to find another place to teach. The president built a team of officers who were in agreement about the mission of the school embracing minority students and those often marginalized by higher education.

## **OUTCOMES**

The enrollment of the college began growing rapidly, with the minority percentage staying near the 40% mark. When faculty and students realized that the new administration was not urging diversity to meet the expectations and win the accolades of others, but because it is a biblical value and a fulfillment of the school's historical mission and identity, attitudes on campus began to change. Marketing for admissions began to send out a consistent, unified message that welcomed a multicultural student body. Denominational student enrollment climbed, but not as fast as other student enrollment. The administration announced to the trustees and denominational leaders that in keeping with our founder's perspective, the college did not exist to serve the denomination, but existed as part of the denomination to serve others.

This set a climate for expanding the urban focus, and the administration initiated a branch campus in New York City in 1995. That campus now has more than 1000 Christian students.

Enrollment growth tripled during the next decade, and racial and ethnic strife is very rare. The college has made good progress in hiring minority faculty members and administrators. The trustee board has become more diversified. The college has been recognized each of the past five years for being one of the most diverse higher educational institutions in the United States.

The success of the HEOP program inspired the administration to begin a similar program entirely funded by the college. It is called NIA, for Nyack's Introduction to Academia (also Swahili for "purpose"). This has caused the college to expand its department of academic development for remediation, especially for students who have had inadequate secondary school preparation.

Undoubtedly, some people, including alumni, who liked the old mono-cultural Nyack have stopped supporting the college, and students who might have come to Nyack have opted for other schools. A few statements and letters have expressed a negative outlook when they see or hear of inter-racial dating of Nyack students. And some faculty members have thought the administration has tried too hard to hire minority professors. By and large, however, Nyack College has been a peaceful and unified campus. A large number of faculty from the Nyack campus have gone to the Manhattan campus to teach courses, and some students have taken courses on both campuses.

Perhaps the greatest advantage the college has experienced from the ethnically diverse community is the ongoing sense of spiritual renewal. The vitality of worship in chapel is fueled by minority students. The number of student groups that minister weekly in the city has grown from four to fourteen. And a wonderful surprise has been the fact that quite often the student leaders are non-Caucasians.

In many ways, this multicultural phenomenon has been a great encouragement to many churches. Pastors that bring their young people to campus see the harmony and begin to think that they could work toward greater diversity in their congregations. People from the Village of Nyack are impressed that a conservative Christian college would have such a diverse student body. So, achieving reconciliation on the campus has had huge dividends.

## ANALYSIS

Healing the rift between groups on the college campus began by the trustees seeing that the issue was very serious and steps needed to be taken, which the administration was not willing to do. The trustees took the painful and expensive step of changing the administration to one that would take decisive action that would continue the movement toward ethnic diversification while maintaining the historic mission of the college.

The new president espoused a conservative theological position and a socially progressive agenda. The administrators he chose were on board with this mission, and gradually the faculty also reflected this identity.

Gaining ethnic harmony on the Nyack campus emboldened the administration to reach into New York City to start a branch campus. Many churches of the city support Nyack by sending students to the Manhattan campus. The impact of a racially integrated, ethnically friendly college is felt throughout the greater New York area.

As good as the situation is, Nyack College is not Camelot. The administration is still dominated by Caucasian males, the curriculum has not advanced adequately toward an urban focus, the college has not been able to attract funding to support its programs, and the denomination has not done a good job of placing the minority graduates in ministry. While finding minority faculty members for the city campus has not been difficult, the Nyack campus is still too Caucasian in its faculty makeup. The college has had a few minority faculty casualties that have set the program back. In one case a competent African American social work professor tried to split the faculty and undermine his Ghanaian African department head. He also evidenced a complaining experience. Fortunately, after one year he chose to move on to another college where he would receive greater financial compensation.

A few faculty members are still rather elitist in their attitudes. This shows up in subtle criticism of the HEOP program and the substantial academic support department the college funds. These critical faculty members, however, are not respected as good teachers so their impact is minimal.

While overt racial strife does not seem to exist, there are still times and places where ethnic students “keep to their own.” The dining commons is an example of this. Some years there seems to be an African American section and a Korean section of the cafeteria. But in most sections, the groups are very diverse, and the students seem to enjoy interacting during meal times.

Because the college admits only students who have made a profession of Christian faith and has a faculty which holds to the authority of scripture, it has been possible to foster a climate of reconciliation based on biblical values as the pattern for the college community. Because the college’s historic purpose was to

prepare missionaries to be sent to the nations of the world, the administration has been able to leverage this idea to show how hypocritical it is to value ethnic people who live in other nations but not accept them in our own community.

Pursuing this multicultural agenda without the biblical and spiritual base the Nyack College community affords would be very difficult. And it would be much more difficult to enact without a sympathetic, proactive board and administration.

Other communities of faith would do well to use scripture as the base for enacting multicultural activity. A college may be a more fertile context than others because younger people are not set in their ways, and are open to attitude adjustments if they trust those in leadership. In Nyack's case, it was certainly beneficial to be in a part of the country where the general population is quite diverse. But regardless of one's context, seeking first the kingdom of God means welcoming and working for reconciliation.