



All Souls Episcopal Church  
Washington, D.C.

Notes from Parish Family Meeting on Reconciliation  
January 17, 2021

**Rev. Dr. Robert Phillips, Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care**

I am here to help level-set us regarding the reconciliation process. Breathe on this. God has a mandate for us to be in healthy relationships with God, others, and self. The need for reconciliation stems from conflict. Conflict occurs when healing and growth are trying to take place but can't because people don't feel safe.

Safe space occurs when people feel they are being seen and heard. The sense of being seen and heard leads to feeling valued. When you sense you are valued, you are open not only to loving others but letting others love you.

Creating safe space through a process of reconciliation does not happen overnight. It takes time. The pathway for All Souls to help parishioners feel safe involves inclusion and transparency. The reconciliation process will give us opportunities to establish and experience what inclusion and transparency at All Souls mean and look like. Each parish is different and stands on its own.

As the reconciliation process continues, be intentional about marking the distinct differences in ways of being that now exist that didn't exist at the start of the reconciliation process. These need to be practical and tangible differences. Examples (not necessarily reflective of All Souls)

- We used to quickly blame others for distressing situations, but now we claim our own responsibilities in those situations.
- We used to express our feelings in ways that were attacking to others, but now we express our feelings in ways that reveal what may be going on in us personally.
- There was a part of us that used to hold back our pledges, but now we have freed up our wallets.

I know there is anxiety at All Souls. Some of you are asking about getting the next clergy on board. I am working with 12 parishes now in active transition.

Those examples I shared (that show the difference in how we used to act vs how we now act) provide the substance I need to present to Bishop Mariann to support the calling of a priest-in-charge or interim to All Souls. Once the different ways of being are identified, then I can present All Souls to Bishop Mariann in support of you having a next clergy leadership person. *(Robert's initial position at EDOW was Canon for Leadership Development; he asked to have Congregational Care added to his portfolio. We are all in this together.)*

The priest-in-charge model is based on a trial period. Typically a 2-year Letter of Agreement with reviews at 6, 12, and 18 months. At 18 months, a decision is made whether to call the priest as rector. If not, the vestry starts a search and, for the remaining 6 months, the priest-in-charge explores other opportunities. Robert only recommends this model if 2 things are in alignment:

1. The parish is clear about the totality of their identity. Clarity results from doing work to truly understand who you are. Recognize our institutional history and our parish DNA. Example: We are a parish that is understanding and very tolerant AND we have a history of conflict and aggression seldom addressed and often glossed over.
2. Clergy person who is skilled to meet the parish where we are in context of history and parish DNA.

E.g., You don't want to call a conflict-avoiding priest if you are a parish that has a history of conflict that must be dealt with. *(Robert has had to facilitate several dissolutions.)*  
A priest-in-charge might feel like rector-light. Clergy are more looking for tenured positions rather than stepping into this model. Thus, the pipeline may be very limited.

**Interims** come on board to do heavy lifting.

- Preparing the congregation for the next phase of life together
- Helping the congregation deal with the sense of loss and any unresolved issues stemming from the departure of the prior clergy
- Dealing with internal conflicts.
- Helping the vestry, lay leaders, and staff make changes in order to align parish life with the diocese
- Working with the vestry and lay leaders to maintain a regular schedule of worship, preaching, and education
- Calling upon the sick and shut-in (pastoral work)
- Supervising all parish staff
- Supporting the vestry in its responsibilities

These are similar responsibilities to those of a Priest-in-Charge. The work is a heavy lift.

*(Robert noted there is a concern about the reasoning Fr. Jadon left).* I want to share with you that the reason Fr. Jadon left was his own decision. He did not resign, nor was he forced out. He chose to offer to depart due to his love for the parish and the need to take care of himself. You have received his letter [*Note: this is posted on the All Souls Governance page*] expressing his feelings and what he wanted to communicate to you regarding his departure. And that is what we have. The bottom-line truth is that the accommodation of this particular reality as to why he left is also a practical exercise that could be used toward healing and reconciliation. Seek to accommodate that reality as opposed to letting it fall over into other spaces where it will produce more anxiety and take energy away from being life-giving.

## **Kim Fletcher and Kathleen Schotto, Reconciliation Consultants**

Kim reiterated that Bishop Mariann will want evidence that All Souls is different. The change to a different way of being can't happen in a month. People heal and learn to love one another at different paces. Kim mentioned that Robert talked about distinct examples of difference in terms of "We used to do X, and now we do Y." She asked that we consider shifting this to "I" statements, i.e., "I used to do X, and now I do Y."

Kim proceeded to review the schedule for coming weeks and noted that the schedule farther out will depend upon the progress being made.

Prior to turning the leadership of the meeting to Kathleen, Kim asked that we make space to accept each other's views.

Kathleen mentioned she is in second year at VTS and has done work in conflict resolution. She shared with us a prayer from the Corrymeela Community

### **A Prayer for Reconciliation**

*(p. 45; Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community)*

Where there is separation, there is pain.  
And where there is pain, there is story.

And where there is story,  
there is understanding, and misunderstanding,  
Listening and not listening.

May we – separated peoples, estranged strangers,  
unfriended families, divided communities –  
turn toward each other,  
and turn toward our stories,  
with understanding and listening,  
with argument and acceptance,  
with challenge, change and consolation.

Because if God is to be found,  
God will be found  
in the space  
between.

Amen.

Ó Tuama, Padraig, and Corrymeela Community.  
Daily Prayer with the Corrymeela Community.  
London: Canterbury Press, 2017.

Corrymeela Community: <https://www.corrymeela.org>

### **Question asked to the community**

- How will we know that reconciliation has happened at All Souls?
- Send thoughts/answers to this question to Kathleen Schotto by January 23 at [kschotto@vts.edu](mailto:kschotto@vts.edu)

## Notes from Kathleen's talk

What reconciliation is and is not

- It is NOT
  - Forgive and forget – which is a fable. We will always remember hurt or harm caused to us. We will, ideally be able to eventually move past it.
  - Moving forward and putting behind us everything that has happened before without ever having a conversation about it.
- It is NOT these things because forgiving, moving forward, taking on new challenges cannot happen without first having conversation that leads to reconciliation.
  
- It IS
  - Secular definition
    - end to a disagreement or conflict with somebody and the start of a good relationship again.
      - We cannot backtrack to where we were before the issues happened.
      - But with reconciliation, with understanding, we can begin again.
    - the process of making it possible for two different ideas, facts, etc. to exist together without being opposed to each other.
      - When a situation between people happens – each person involved, even if they were in the same room hearing the same speaker, each person has their own recollection of what happened; they hear the words in different ways. It is possible to be understanding of each other in a way that makes those realities able to exist side by side.
  - Episcopal Church definition
    - A ministry committed by Christ to his Church, exercised through the care each Christian has for others, through the communion prayer of the Christians assembled for public worship, and through the priesthood of the Church and its ministers declaring absolution. (p. 446; BCP; see below)
  - It is a rite that can occur between one person and a priest, AND
  - it is a prayer we say every time we gather for public worship.
    - Morning prayer, evening prayer, Eucharist, compline..... We are people who need this all the time! We need to be reconciled with God and we need to be reconciled with others.

What is needed for reconciliation?

- An understanding that what has happened or what was done has caused harm to someone. That does not mean that the intent was to cause harm (often it isn't) but the impact is what is important.
  - There is a difference between intent and impact.
    - Car accident – generally speaking no one gets up in the morning and says, "I'm going to run my car into someone else's today." And yet, sometimes it happens. The impact of the action is that it caused harm, apologies need to be made and possibly restitution paid.

- In a church setting, no one says “I’m going to do whatever I can to create issues that cause division within the body of the church.” Instead, individuals more likely believe that they are acting within the best interest of the community. But perhaps they are not listening to all the constituent members. Perhaps it was not prayed about enough or talked through with others who can help with the situation and provide a fresh perspective.
- Being truly sorry for what was done, or not done, which has caused hurt or division.
  - A sincere apology is necessary – with the understanding that hurt/harm was caused even if the intent was not that. Understanding that someone else was hurt even if you cannot understand why.
  - Without a sincere apology and an understanding behind it there is not real healing. All that is happening is putting a bandage on a wound and then leaving it alone – all it will do is fester and get infected.
  - For reconciliation to occur it is vitally important to listen to another person’s story. To talk with them about how they were affected by what took place. To simply HEAR them; without comment, criticism, or an attempt at explaining what was intended OR by trying to justify what happened OR by telling the storyteller that they were remembering the situation incorrectly.

Part of what we hope to do with All Souls is listen to one another. In a way that has perhaps not happened before. The hope and prayer is that this will ultimately bring about reconciliation and a challenge for a path forward.

### **Confession of Sin**

*(Book of Common Prayer)*

Most merciful God,  
 we confess that we have sinned against you  
 in thought, word, and deed,  
 by what we have done,  
 and by what we have left undone.  
 We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
 we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
 We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
 For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
 have mercy on us and forgive us;  
 that we may delight in your will,  
 and walk in your ways,  
 to the glory of your Name. Amen.