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Developing a Curriculum for the Training of Pastors as Agents of Communal Reconciliation in Post-Conflict South Sudan

Charles S. North

DEVELOPING A CURRICULUM FOR THE TRAINING OF PASTORS AS AGENTS OF COMMUNAL RECONCILIATION IN POST-CONFLICT SOUTH SUDAN

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ABSTRACT

This doctor of ministry thesis presents the process and findings of a curriculum development project resulting in a pastor-training manual to be used in South Sudan. The project involved the staff and board members of Sudan Evangelical Alliance Partners and Christian Relief Partners in a series of sessions in the fall of 2013, bringing together various sources for theological reflection and practical in-field use. The team utilized the reconciliation theology of Ephesians 2, Miroslav Volf's theology of embrace, examples of political and social reconciliation from the African continent, and their own experience and leadership in educational settings. The sessions were designed so as to generate material that would be included as teaching modules in the evolving curriculum.

A qualitative evaluation of the project involving data triangulation revealed several key insights: 1) Genuine forgiveness and lasting reconciliation comes at the cost of acknowledging truth and embracing justice. To "forgive and forget" is not helpful if justice has not been done. 2) For communal reconciliation to be lasting, the community has to be inclusive and embrace notions of equality and tolerance. 3) The church is a new community where diversity is celebrated as a gift from God and uniformity is not a prerequisite for unity. This new vision of the inherent dignity of the human person is only possible because of the cross of Christ.

Developing a Curriculum for the Training of Pastors as Agents of Communal Reconciliation in Post-Conflict South Sudan

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Wherever two or more persons live in any identifiable community, there exists the potential for conflict. Conflict has always been present among God's people, who are not immune to the human desires of power and greed. While conflicts are fraught with danger, they present opportunities to demonstrate Christ-like virtues and practice reconciliation, which is a core aspect of ministering as Christ's body on earth.[1] How those who profess to be followers of Christ work through conflict and engage with others creates an environment in which conflict can be either detrimental or beneficial. Conduct in the midst of conflict has moral and spiritual consequences, not only for the resolution of any particular issue but also as a witness to the world. The church, therefore, is in need of tools to assist in its role as a witness of peace.

In African countries that have experienced genocide, civil war, and ethnic violence, the role of tribal community in fueling hatred and inciting retributive violence is hard to ignore. Even as conflicts are managed, latent resentments continue to fester so that many communities are always on the brink of violence.

Those assuming the role of Christian leadership in post-conflict areas must play a significant role in tearing down barriers of hate and promoting peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. This is not an easy task. Some have noted that Christianity has been

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[1] Hugh Halverstad, *Managing Church Conflict* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/ John Knox Press, 1991), 3.

unable to stop modern genocide. For example, Rwanda has been described as the "most Catholic country in Africa."[2] Any serious attempt at reconciliation must begin by acknowledging such critiques.

Despite such critiques the power of biblical forgiveness and Christian reconciliation is a model that has already resulted in transforming communities in Africa. However, many communities are still shackled with generations of hatred and resentment. The fledgling government of the world's newest country (South Sudan) is seeking to train officials, civic leaders, police officers, and lawyers in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. A credible and long-term way to implement reconciliation through the practice of biblical forgiveness is to equip local pastors to teach and model this Christ-like behavior in their communities.

This thesis addresses the need to develop a curriculum that will be used to teach peacebuilding and communal reconciliation to pastors in Boma, South Sudan. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the project, its title, a brief history of violent conflict in the Sudan, a preliminary ethnography of the region, the unique role of the Sudanese church, present realities, further clarification of the problem and purpose of the intervention, basic assumptions, and delimitations. Chapter 2 outlines the theological framework of the project by utilizing the theology of reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22 and Volf's theology of embrace as a counter to tribalism and exclusion. Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach by describing the format of the intervention, project participants, session content, and means of evaluation by use of qualitative research methods.

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[2] Michael L. Budde and Robert W. Brimlow, *The Church as Counterculture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 215. In his essay "Pledging Allegiance: Reflections on Discipleship and the Church after Rwanda," Budde has referred to this as the "irrelevance of Christianity."

Title of the Project

The title of this thesis is "Developing a Curriculum for the Training of Pastors as Agents of Communal Reconciliation in Post-Conflict South Sudan." The project is not simply the presentation of a predetermined model, but involves the development of a curriculum for conflict resolution, forgiveness, and communal reconciliation specific to the community in which it will be utilized. Project participants were selected because of their knowledge of the community, experience, and probability that they will actually use the curriculum in future pastor training sessions. All participants should have a sense of ownership of the material.

Ministry Context

In 2004 Sudan Evangelical Alliance (SEA) Partners identified an isolated and impoverished tribal community in the southeastern corner of South Sudan called Boma. Sometimes referred to as "Itti," Boma is home to three ethnic groups: the Murle, Jiye, and Kachipo. The community has a combined population of roughly 50,000.[3] Due to displacement during the war, many who lived in fertile upper Boma moved the ten miles down the mountain to the more arid lower Boma. This relocation became necessary in order to access aid supplied by the United Nations and other relief organizations. While this aid was desperately needed at the time, a consequence has been the creation of a society dependent upon outside sources for survival. This has crippled the community and left them with little hope for a secure future. SEA Partners is committed to moving away from a paternalistic model of aid in order to embrace an understanding of the

[3] Information on the community has been gleaned from the U.N. World Food Programme, as well as from Merlin Medical's Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) Boma, Pibor County, South Sudan, June 3, 2013.

human person, rooted in the desire to unlock the creative potential of persons who have been created in God's image. Skills training is an important component of such a model.

In 2004, the Sudan Evangelical Alliance adopted a prioritized list of five issues deemed urgent in order to move the process of community restoration forward. SEA Partners has thus incorporated a holistic approach in serving the Boma community by addressing each of these five concerns: 1) education, 2) food security, 3) clean water, 4) community health, and 5) evangelism.

The goal of SEA Partners is to slowly work itself out of Boma by training community members towards greater independence. Any success will be measured by the increased capacity of the people to become responsible for creating and sustaining a more peaceful and prosperous community.

A History of Violent Conflict in the Sudan

The Sudan is an infinitely complex country with a population of over thirty million, covering a region of about one million square miles. Indicative of a deeply divided populace, the people speak fourteen languages, further subdivided into over one hundred dialects. It is easy to reduce the conflict between north and south to issues of culture, ethnicity, or religion.[4] This must be avoided. There are larger historical reasons for the sustained posture of conflict between north and south that spans centuries, if not millennia. These factors include the Arabization of North Africa, the rapid spread of Islam, subsequent Christian raids of the Islamic periphery, massive slave-raiding, inclusion in the Turko-Egyptian Empire, British colonial policy, and the marginalization

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[4] Douglas H. Johnson, *The Root Causes of the Sudan's Civil Wars* (Oxford: The International African Institute, 2003), 1.

of minority populations.[5] Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this thesis and reconciliation project, but suffice it to say that an awareness of these historical root causes is important.

The first Sudanese civil war was a conflict from 1955 to 1972 between the northern part of Sudan and the southern region that demanded more regional autonomy based on a system of federalism. Approximately half a million people died during the seventeen years of war. The agreement that ended the war in 1972 failed to completely dispel the tensions that had caused it, resulting in a re-igniting of the conflict during the second Civil War (1983 to 2005). Thus the period between 1955 and 2005 is considered to be a single conflict with an eleven-year ceasefire.[6]

Until 1946, the British government administered south Sudan and north Sudan as two separate regions. Just prior to independence, however, the two were merged into a single administrative unit as part of the British post-war strategy in the Middle East. The southerners (primarily Christian and Animist and considered to be ethnically and culturally sub-Saharan) feared being subsumed by the political power of the north. Concerns reached a boiling point when it appeared that northern leaders would not create a federal government with substantial southern autonomy. On August 18, 1955, members of the Equatorial Corps mutinied in several southern cities and towns. These insurgents developed into a militaristic secessionist movement but remained crippled by internal ethnic divisions. The decades that followed saw escalating levels of guerilla conflict in the south and increasingly Islamist military coups in the north, further complicated by

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[5] Ibid., 4-5.

[6] Edgar O'Ballance, *The Secret War in the Sudan: 1955-1972* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1977), 5.

Marxist factions within the Islamic factions of the military government.[7]

In 1971 the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) gathered disparate rebel groups together for a final offensive, which led to the Addis Ababa Agreement of March 1972, ending the conflict. Southerners were granted a semi-autonomous administrative region with various defined powers. However, the agreement proved to be only temporary. Infringements by the north led to increased unrest in the south starting in the mid-1970s, leading to the 1983 army mutiny that sparked the second Civil War.[8]

A decade of relative peace was shattered in 1983 when a new extremist government took power in Khartoum and began a renewed campaign to unite all of Sudan under Sharia law. Once again, the southerners, led by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and John Garang, defiantly rejected this imposition and a second phase of the war began, which lasted until 2005.

This second war was, in a sense, more complex than the initial struggle, with deep-rooted tribal conflicts, religious and ethnic persecution, outside influences (both Islamic and Western),[9] and the discovery of oil in the South. The twenty-two year war resulted in over two million killed either by direct military action or starvation, over four million displaced, villages and social structures destroyed, women and children enslaved, and the church left scattered.

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[7] Ibid., 8.

[8] Ibid.

[9] See the U.S. Sudan Peace Act (50 U.S.C § 1701). The Act was passed to facilitate a comprehensive solution to the war and condemned violations of human rights, government use of militia forces to support slaving, and aerial bombardment of civilian targets. It authorized the U.S. government to spend $100 million in 2003, 2004, and 2005 to assist the population in areas of Sudan outside Sudanese government control.

Peace talks made substantial progress in early 2004. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in January 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya. The terms of the treaty gave the south autonomy for six years, followed by a referendum on independence, which took place in 2011. In addition, both sides were to merge portions of their armed forces into a 39,000 member "Joint Integrated Unit," oil revenues were divided equally between the government and the SPLA during the six-year autonomy period, civil service jobs were split according to varying ratios, and Sharia law was applied only in the north, while the use of Sharia in the south was to be decided by locally elected assemblies.[10]

In January 2011 the referendum on independence took place with nearly 99 percent of the population declaring for separation. On July 9 2011, South Sudan became the world's newest country. However, tensions have persisted as the secession has progressed, especially with regards to the oil-rich Abyei region.

Perhaps those who fought and suffered for their independence best contextualize the war. The following statement is from the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM):

> The Sudanese reality consists of these two diversities, the historical and contemporary. Yet this reality has been ignored, swept aside, by all the governments that have come and gone in Khartoum since independence in 1956. These governments have failed to evolve a Sudanese identity, a Sudanese commonality, a Sudanese commonwealth that embraces all Sudanese, and to which all Sudanese pledge undivided loyalty irrespective of their religion, race, or tribe. Instead, all the governments of post-colonial Sudan have emphasized only two parameters of our reality—Arabism and Islam—and attempted, and continued to attempt to impose an identity, based on these two elements, on all Sudanese, only to be confronted with rebellions and wars. Thus, the 'Old Sudan' has been characterized by racism and religious bigotry as the main parameters governing national politics, economic opportunities, and social interaction. It is this system of injustices that led to two bitter wars between the south and the center. It is this

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[10] Brian Raftopoulos and Karin Alexander, *Peace in the Balance: Crisis in the Sudan* (Cape Town: The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, 2006), 19.

> system of injustice that led to devastating civil wars between this same marginalizing center and the west and east. The central problem of the Sudan, therefore, is that the post 1956 Sudanese state is essentially an artificial state, based on a political system and an institutional framework of ethnic and religious chauvinism, and after 1989, on Islamic Fundamentalism. It is a state that excludes the vast majority of its citizens. The African Sudanese have been excluded from the center of power and wealth since 1956, and after 1989 (following the coup of the National Islamic Front) the system further excluded non-fundamentalist Muslims, while women have always been excluded at all times. The Islamic Fundamentalist regime is the culmination of the policies of the Khartoum-based governments that have come and gone since independence.[11]

The Boma Community: Regional Ethnic Makeup

Sudan's population is one of the most diverse on the African continent. There are hundreds of ethnic subdivisions and language groups. This diversity contributes richness to the culture but can also make collaboration between groups a major political challenge. The Boma community is located in the far southeast sector of the country. It is home to approximately 50,000 persons, largely from three groups—the Murle, Jiye, and Kachipo. For the purposes of this project, two other groups—the Nuer and Dinka—will be included in this preliminary ethnography because of their continued conflict with the Murle (and each other). These are sub-groups of the Nilotic people, who occupy the Nile Valley, the African Great Lakes region, and southwestern Ethiopia. Nilotes practice an age-set system of social grouping, consisting of people of a similar age who have a common identity, maintain close ties over a prolonged period, and pass through a series of age-related statuses together.[12] This primary identity often eclipses kinship ties and further explains some forms of conflict.

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[11] http://www.splmtoday.com/index.php/about/historical-background.

[12] R. M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology: A Contemporary Perspective,* 3rd ed. (London: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1997), 2.

The Murle number about 400,000 and inhabit Pibor County in southeastern Upper Nile (Jonglei Province).[13] They are predominantly pastoral and their economic activities center around the herding of cattle. They practice subsistence agriculture and hunt extensively. Murle society is primarily interested in the present rather than the past. However, respect for their traditions and customs remains so that that many of these customs have the force of law.

Murle social and cultural life is centered on cattle. The Murle breed them, marry with them, eat their meat, drink their blood and milk, and sleep on their hides. Raiding and stealing of cattle is a question of honor. Even the Murle language has a considerable vocabulary of cattle terminology. When a young man wishes to marry, his parent's relatives provide the marriage cattle. The Murle speak of relatives as "people who have cattle between them." Regarding spirituality, the Murle are extremely conscious of the spirits and do not distinguish between religious and secular aspects of life.

The Murle political system honors the "drum-chiefs" at the head of the four drum-ships. Their powers are paramount; the pronouncements of chiefs are treated with great respect. The Murle "neighbors" are the Nuer and Dinka, the Anyuak, the Toposa, the Jiye, and the Kachipo. Tensions often flare up due to their cattle raiding practices. The Murle have been only marginally affected by modernity due to deliberate neglect, marginalization, and political exclusion. The recruitment of young men to fight with the SPLA was the exception.[14]

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[13] The following preliminary description has been garnered from the Gurtong Trust: http://www.gurtong.net.

[14] See B. A. Lewis, *The Murle-Red Chiefs and Black Commoners* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1972).

The Kachipo (also known as Suri) people number about 30,000 and live on the Boma plateau of southeastern upper Nile, bordering the Murle, the Jiye, and the Anyuak. The Kachipo are predominantly an agrarian community with their economy built on agriculture. Following a somewhat nomadic existence, the tribe has been settled near Boma since the 1920s.[15]

The Kachipo have sub-chiefs whose authority is not administrative, but spiritual. The chiefs' duties consist of leading their villages in war and peace and judging disputes. The Kachipo believe in the existence of a supreme being—one God. But they also believe in the existence of spirits and offer prayers and sacrifices to God and the spirits.

The Kachipo have bad relations with the Murle, who raided them until the Boma plateau was occupied by the military. The Kachipo have been marginalized; their participation in the social, economic, and political life of South Sudan has been virtually nonexistent. Many Kachipo, however, have been receptive to Christianity.[16]

The Jiye are a pastoral community inhabiting the area along the border between upper Nile and Equatoria. They number a few thousand households and are now being counted as one of the ethnic groups in Pibor County. The Jiye live on the plains at the foot of the Boma Plateau. They herd cattle, sheep, and goats and also engage in the subsistence cultivation of sorghum and tobacco.[17]

Due to conflict with the Toposa over extensive cattle rustling and competition over water and pastures, the Jiye moved to Upper Nile and have now become the fourth

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[15] Gurtong Trust: http://www.gurtong.net.

[16] See R. L. Lyth, *The Suri Tribe*, SNR Vol. 38 (1947), 106-15.

[17] Gurtong Trust: http://www.gurtong.net.

tribal community in Pibor County, along with the Murle, Kachipo, and the Anyuak. The most important social events that bring the Jiye together include marriage, hunting, cattle raids, and warfare.

The Jiye, like the Toposa, have no clear political organization. They also do not have a clearly defined set of religious beliefs. However, they do believe in the existence of a supreme being and the spirits of their departed ancestors. They pray and make sacrifices for the spirits as they communicate with them through a medium, usually during times of disaster.

The Jiye border the Murle and Kachipo. Cattle rustling and competition over the scarce resources of water and pasture has affected the relationship between the Jiye and the Murle. However, Jiye children have now been enrolled in the school in Boma, and many of them have converted to Christianity.[18]

The Dinka form the largest single ethnic group in South Sudan, numbering about three million. The Dinka region includes Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, and Southern Kordofan. Each Dinka sub-section has established rights to a well-defined territory. The Dinka economy is largely traditional herding, subsistence agriculture, and hunting. Ownership of livestock is a basis of social standing in Dinka society. The larger the herd, the more prestigious the family. Dinka culture is centered on cattle. It is the medium of exchange in marriage, payment of debts, and for sacrifices.[19]

The Dinka lands in Upper Nile and Abyei contain massive oil reserves, further establishing Dinka economic and political dominance. Dinka chiefs have persuasive

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[18] See C. G. Seligman and B. Z. Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1932).

[19] Gurtong Trust: http://www.gurtong.net.

authority, and their spiritual leaders exert great influence. The spiritual leaders tend to reject secular authority. The Dinka have cultural and linguistic ties to the Nuer, but many have converted to Christianity and Islam. In the new Republic of South Sudan, the Dinka primarily hold the reins of government power, a status that has earned the resentment of other, often excluded groups.[20]

The Nuer, who are believed to have separated from the Dinka, form the second largest ethnicity in South Sudan. The Nuer homeland is located in the swampy areas of Upper Nile. The Nuer are pastoralists, balancing subsistence agriculture with cattle herding.[21]

The Nuer myth of origin states that Naath (Nuer) and Jieng (Dinka) were sons of the same man who had promised that he would give a cow to Jieng and its calf to Naath. Jieng deceived the father and took the calf instead. Naath's contempt for the Dinka still survives. The Nuer believe in God the creator, but have not systematized their beliefs.

Nuer notions of independence include invading others to take their property, particularly cattle, which causes violent relations with the Dinka and the Murle. They fiercely resisted the Arabs from the north and express bitterness towards the Murle for perceived disloyalty during the war. Recently, increased violence has resulted in the massive displacement of Nuer people.[22]

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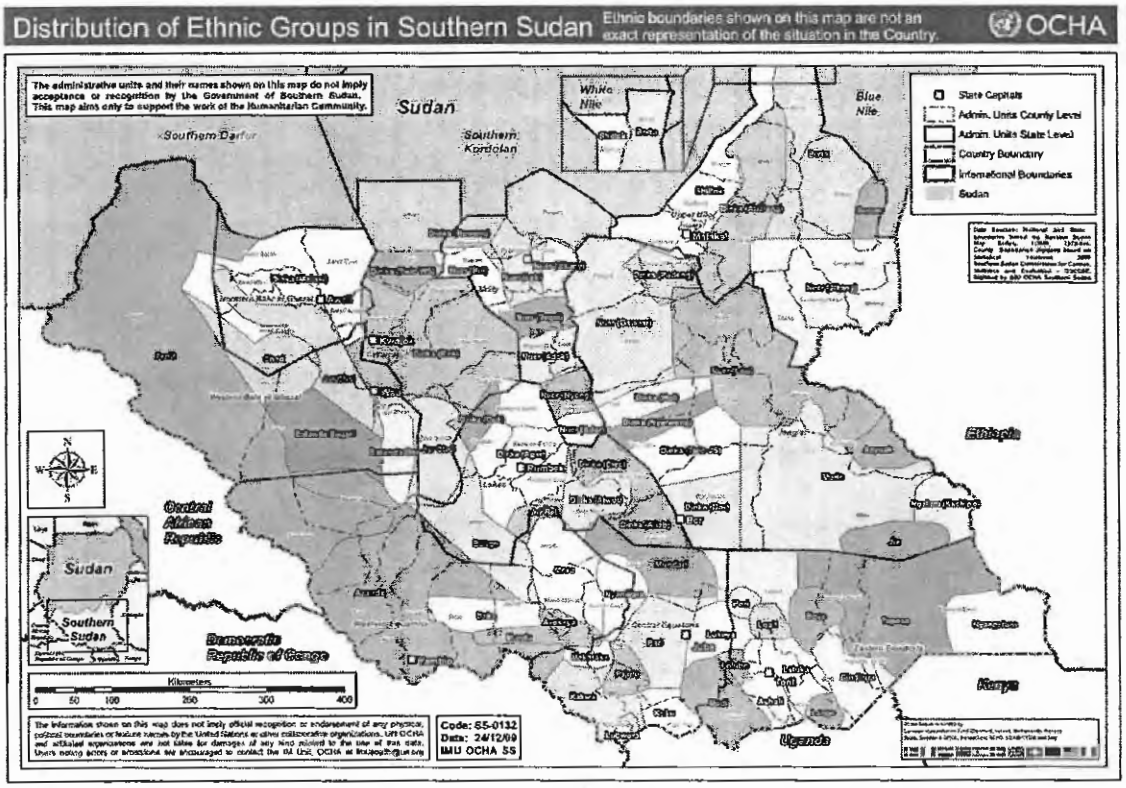
[20] See Robert O. Collins, *Land beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); John Ryle, *Warriors of the White Nile: The Dinka Peoples of the World* (Amsterdam: Time-Life Books, 1982).

[21] Gurtong Trust: http://www.gurtong.net.

[22] See E. Evans Pritchard, *Kinship and Marriage Among the Nuer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951).



The Role of the Sudanese Church in Fostering Reconciliation

The Sudanese Church in general, and formally as the Sudan Council of Churches, has a long history of brokering peace between various factions of the country, and it remains committed to the ministry of reconciliation. The Addis Ababa agreement of 1972, which ended hostilities between north and south during the First Civil War, was in fact brokered by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).[23]

The Sudan Council of Churches continued to be actively engaged in peace efforts throughout the Second Civil War. In 1996 the SCC drafted a document titled "Here we Stand, United in Action for Peace." This position paper spelled out in clear terms what

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[23] Statement made by WCC General Secretary, Rev. Samuel Kobia, April 8, 2008 in Juba. http://www. http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents.

the churches saw as their vision for a new Sudan after the war. In 1997 the Kejiko Conference, which took place in Yei, promoted a platform to engage the SPLA in an open way. In 1999 the Wunlit Agreement—essentially a church-brokered truce between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic communities—was signed. From 2000 to 2002, there were a number of strategic conferences led by Sudanese Christians to coalesce around key leaders who hammered out the peace process, leading to the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005.

The Sudan Council of Churches met in Nairobi in March 2012, where they took responsibility for the ministry of reconciliation. The Council drafted a document titled "Statement of the Ecumenical Consultation on Healing and Reconciliation in the Sudan and South Sudan." The paper highlights four concerns: 1) national healing and reconciliation, 2) peace and harmony between Sudan and South Sudan, 3) Christian unity as a prophetic voice, 4) the need for African governments to continue their support.[24]

The 2012 conference also resulted in the following statement regarding the church's role in the peacemaking process:

> To roll out a new people-to-people peace and reconciliation process of dialogue to counter internal conflicts in the south, the marginalized areas and other parts of Sudan. This new people-to-people peace and reconciliation process will deliberately involve communities at the grassroots, as well as other levels, to make and maintain peace. We believe that our communities desperately need peace and will respond to this process as they did in the 1990's before the CPA. The new process began with a church leaders forum (March 2010) and includes a dialogue between the church and government (June 2010), dubbed "Kajiko 2," in light of the first historic dialogue between the church and SPLM in Kajiko town in 1997. It will be supplemented by other programs to bring peace, reconciliation and healing in the nation.[25]

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[24] Sudan Council of Churches, "Statement of the Ecumenical Consultation on Healing and Reconciliation in the Sudan and South Sudan." Nairobi, March 9, 2012.

[25] Ibid.

The Role of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners in South Sudan

The mission of SEA Partners is to "empower the Sudan Evangelical Alliance and its denominational members for cooperative evangelistic efforts and united actions for spiritual and social transformation of the Sudanese people."[26] As stated earlier, SEA Partners adopted a prioritized list of five issues they deemed urgent in order to move the process of restoration in South Sudan forward. SEA Partners has incorporated a holistic approach to serving the Boma community by addressing each of the following five concerns: 1) education, 2) food security, 3) clean water, 4) community health, and 5) evangelism.

There has never been a functioning school in Upper Boma. The village chiefs gave fifty-two acres of land to SEA Partners for the project, and ground was broken in 2006. Faith Learning Center opened in January 2008, with ninety students in two classes: kindergarten and first grade. Two additional classrooms were completed in 2009, two more in 2011, and another three in 2012. Currently, there are almost 300 students in nine classes. Professional teachers from Kenya, who have enlisted Sudanese assistants, teach all classes. Additionally, the school construction has become an opportunity to train local men in masonry, carpentry, and other construction skills.

As part of its focus on education, SEA Partners conducts several pastor-training seminars each year. In the past, there have been a few attendees from the Kachipo and Jiye tribes, but recent participation has been exclusively Murle. The number of pastors attending these sessions varies from half a dozen to sometimes twenty-five men. The pastors have no fixed denominational affiliation, though missionary activity in the area

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[26] http://www.sea-partners.org.

has been primarily Pentecostal, which has influenced local theology. About half of the pastors understand English, and most of them can read—either in Murle or English. Portions of the Bible (Genesis, the Psalms, and the New Testament) have been translated into the Murle language.

The goal of Christian Relief Partners (CRP) is to connect those with needs to those with resources. Often, people with the desire to help are so overwhelmed that they don't know where to start. CRP has established relationships with organizations that minister to children in need by providing prayer, financial support, and volunteers to partner organizations. This particular project is born out of the desire to provide physical and spiritual support to partner organizations such as SEA Partners.

In 2011, CRP became one of the founding members of PovertyCure, an international network of organizations seeking to ground the battle against global poverty in a proper understanding of the human person and to encourage solutions that foster opportunity by unleashing the creative potential of the human person. PovertyCure challenges aid organizations to rethink poverty, encourage discussion, promote effective compassion, and advance solutions to poverty informed by sound economics, local knowledge, the lessons of history, peacebuilding, and reflections from the Christian tradition about what it means to be human.

Present Realities: Post-Independence Ethnic Tensions

Ethnic wars in Africa are often brutal. They are often motivated by revenge and may last for generations with severe consequences. Though secession from Sudan marked a major milestone and opportunity for South Sudan, many issues still plague the world's youngest country. Violence in Jonglei state (where Boma is located) and other

regions of the South are driven by widespread underlying issues such as the proliferation of small arms, a lack of accountability to government officials, and limited opportunities in cattle-based economies. Southern militias with primarily ethnic loyalties are a major source of insecurity for South Sudan.

South Sudan has struggled with cyclical violence for decades. Notably, a flare-up of heavy fighting between the Nuer and the Murle began in December 2011. These groups have a history of rivalry over access to water and grazing land. Both groups have easy access to arms, and youth from both communities have perpetrated retributive justice for past grievances. South Sudan's army and police are unable to provide adequate security to prevent this violence, which displaced an estimated 140,000 people in Jonglei state from late 2011 through February 2012.[27]

In December 2011, over 6,000 Nuer youth led an attack on two Murle towns in Pibor County. The county commissioner reported that over 3,000 Murle had been killed. This happened despite the presence of 400 peacekeepers from the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). It was clear that the age-old vendetta between the two groups over stealing cattle and abducting children had escalated to unknown proportions.[28] After decades of civil war, South Sudan is awash in small arms. Government attempts to disarm the militias have further magnified these disputes, particularly amongst the Murle, who feel as if they have no voice in the new centralized government in Juba.

Rebel militias have been operating in South Sudan for years, beginning with the first civil war and persisting to the present. It is widely believed that the government of

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[27] http://www.enoughproject.org/conflicts/sudans/conflicts-south-sudan.

[28] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/06/world/africa/in-south-sudan-massacre-of-3000-is-reported.html.

Sudan is supporting some of the militias operating in South Sudan. As the fighting continues, thousands of Sudanese have been forced to flee their homes. According to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 23,000 persons have fled Jonglei province.[29]

The current conflict impacting the Boma community involves a Murle uprising against the SPLA. David Yau Yau, a theology student turned rebel guerilla, leads the uprising. The Jebel Boma Declaration—issued in April 2013—calls for a new transitional government and the transformation of the SPLA into a national army, drawing on all the people and religions of South Sudan. The declaration maintains that the "SPLM elite have fused public and private institutions in order to advance and serve their partisan and sectarian interests."[30] To this end, the declaration calls for both the civil service and the military to be de-politicized. Accusing the "ruling elite" of emerging "as a new dominant group by simply stepping into the shoes of the Arabs they replaced," the Boma Declaration calls for the restructuring of South Sudan into a "multinational federation."[31]

According to Murle politician Ismail Konyi, Yau Yau was only able to attract supporters due to the abusive methods used in the SPLA's post-war disarmament campaign. The Murle, many of whom fought in pro-north militias throughout the bitter civil war, are not regarded favorably by the forces that fought for South Sudan's independence. There is some suspicion that Konyi (who led the Pibor militia during the

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[29] http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan-republic/south-sudan-humanitarian-snapshot-pibor-region-jonglei-state-18-july.

[30] Jebel Boma Declaration. http://www.cobrassda.com/en/index.php/about-us.

[31] Ibid.

civil war) is backing Yau Yau as part of an attempt to destabilize the region.[32]

Since April 2012 Yau Yau's forces have been engaged in a struggle with the SPLA, primarily in Jonglei state, which has claimed the lives of hundreds on both sides and resulted in the destruction of villages and the displacement of thousands of civilians. On May 5, 2013, rebels attacked Boma, killing over fifty SPLA soldiers. This was a symbolic capture since Boma was the first town captured by the SPLA in 1983. However, on May 18 the SPLA retook Boma. As a result, many Murle have fled, fearing SPLA retaliation. The school has been temporarily closed, and SEA Partners' staff have been evacuated to Nairobi. The following report was sent out by Konyi during the fighting:

> A SPLA force, which is the military wing of SPLM party, has launched an attack on 18 May 2013 on our forces in Boma hills. The fighting is still going on up to now around ETTE Payam. Those forces of the SPLA have entered to our liberated areas from behind coming across the border of one of neighboring countries into South Sudan. Our forces now are still controlling with iron fist whole Upper Boma, while the fighting in Ette outskirts areas is going on, SSDA forces are now surrounding SPLM Regime Forces and they will not be given a chance for escaping. We want to say to our people in South Sudan your SSDA forces are capable to repel SPLM regime forces. It is just a matter of time [sic].[33]

On June 3, 2013 Medair and Merlin Medical issued their Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA). Less than 300 civilians, most Jiye women and children, remain in Boma. Murle civilians remain unaccounted for. Approximately 50 percent of housing structures were burned. All NGO facilities have been vandalized, and all vehicles have been seized. Food security, medical care, and clean water are urgent priorities.[34]

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[32] http://www.sudantribune.com/IMG/pdf/HSBA-Armed-Groups-Yauyau.

[33] http://www.cobrassda.com/en/index.php/news/14-spla-forces-sneaked-to-boma-through-the-one-of-neighbouring-countries-border.

[34] Merlin Medical's Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) Boma, Pibor County, South Sudan, June 3, 2013.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problem this project addresses is that pastor-training seminars in Boma, South Sudan, lack a curriculum in conflict resolution and communal reconciliation practices. Since 2007 the staff of SEA Partners has conducted annual pastor-training seminars, drawing up to twenty-five pastors at times. These pastors typically have only a slightly higher level of literacy and education than the population. While this training has included basic biblical instruction, it has not included a component dedicated to peace-building practices and communal reconciliation. There is a great and urgent need for political, social, and tribal reconciliation if South Sudan hopes to succeed as an independent country.

In addition, most contemporary studies of forgiveness tend to be individualistic and therapeutic in their approach. Even theological discussions on forgiveness tend to dwell on the personal and individual experience of divine forgiveness. But this is a Western phenomenon. This project recognizes that corporate forgiveness is central and that there still exists the need to consider forgiveness as a communal action—something that has the capacity to create and sustain spiritual and social unity in the communities in which the church is called to witness.[35]

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this project is the development of a curriculum to be utilized in pastor-training seminars in Boma. SEA Partners and CRP believe that for transformation to take place, the church must play a role as an agent of reconciliation. In South Sudan

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[35] Celestin Musekura, *An Assessment of Contemporary Models of Forgiveness* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 5.

the church has been severely affected by the latest unrest and is struggling to address ethnic intolerance in a comprehensively biblical manner. In areas hardest hit by violence, church leaders experience not only their own suffering, but have to minister to others as well. The cry for vengeance in the name of justice is often louder than the biblical message of forgiveness and reconciliation and causes church leaders to align themselves with warring groups and condoning their acts of violence.

It should be reemphasized that a consequence of aid has been the creation of a society dependent upon outside sources. CRP and SEA Partners are committed to moving away from a paternalistic model and in 2004 adopted a prioritized list of five issues deemed urgent in order to move the process of community restoration forward. Already mentioned, this holistic approach addresses five concerns: 1) education, 2) food security, 3) clean water, 4) community health, and 5) evangelism.

Basic Assumptions

The following assumptions influence the purpose and methodology of the project. Since conflict is inevitable, we should expect some level of conflict. But while violence in Africa is common and often predictable, it is not normative, and Christian participation is not acceptable. Within South Sudanese communities, pastors function as civic leaders and therefore can be effective peacemakers and agents of communal reconciliation.

Delimitations

The project involves the staff and board of SEA Partners and CRP. Participants include American and African staff. Some have spent time in Boma and have an intimate knowledge of the culture, while others have teaching and curriculum development

expertise. The curriculum, however, will be implemented as a later project in South Sudan. Because of the volatility and unpredictability of the situation in Boma, such implementation is outside the current scope of this project.

Conclusion

The development of a biblical and culturally relevant curriculum in reconciliation practices has the potential to bring together church leaders from different ethnicities and to train them in peacebuilding, conflict resolution processes, biblical forgiveness, reconciliation, mediation of conflicts, human rights, and ethnic tolerance. This training can provide a framework in which the church can develop and implement transformative strategies for healing and reconciliation of the broken communities they serve.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

It is important to understand the biblical concept of reconciliation. In this section Eph. 2:11-22 provides the basis for reconciliation among believers who, despite their reconciliation with God, often find it difficult to reconcile with one another. The church in Africa needs a basis for a ministry of reconciliation where pastors can serve as role models in their communities. A Christian approach to reconciliation is imperative because followers of Christ often fall back into their ethnic identity in times of conflict and tend to resort to non-Christian solutions to these problems. An appropriate Christian approach must be theologically grounded and must combine biblical teaching with personal living testimonies in daily life and ministry.

The theological framework includes the work of Miroslav Volf, who has written on the theology of identity, reconciliation, embrace, forgiveness, and memory. Concerned with the problems of nationalism and ethnicity as well as the demand to bring justice, Volf developed a theological response. He defines sin as exclusion of the "other" by highlighting group identity. His counter to this is a "theology of embrace."[1]

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[1] Miroslav Volf, "Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Christian Contribution to a More Peaceful Social Environment," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney L. Petersen (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 42.

The Theology of Communal Reconciliation in Ephesians 2:11-22[2]

Human reconciliation is derivative of the reconciliation between God and people, and it is imperative that believers understand the biblical dynamics of this reconciliation if they are to heal broken relationships between families, neighbors, and ethnicities.

Ephesians: Overview and Purpose

Ephesians can be classified predominantly as a letter of exhortation—a blend of paraenesis and specific advice.[3] In Ephesians the writer has mixed a lengthy theological introduction with the second half of the letter, which consists of exhortations encouraging the Christian community to walk morally sound in proper unity according to the will of God and their new status in Christ.[4]

Discerning the purpose of Ephesians is a complex task since the letter lacks the necessary specificity for identifying a particular setting through which to explain its composition. Ephesians may have multiple purposes as it has been understood in a number of ways: a baptismal homily, a wisdom discourse, a refutation of insipient

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[2] The consensus among contemporary scholars is that Ephesians is pseudonymous. While the issue of authenticity of authorship is beyond the scope of this thesis, a few brief remarks are in order. A majority of scholars argue that the literary relationship between Ephesians and Colossians makes Pauline authorship unlikely. For example, Lincoln states that "most decisive against Paul as author of Ephesians is its dependence on Colossians and its use of other Pauline letters, particularly Romans." Andrew T. Lincoln and A. J. M. Wedderburn, *The Theology of the Later Pauline Letters* (ed. James D. G. Dunn, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 84. In the context of this thesis Ephesians will be referred to as "Pauline" in order to locate it within the biblical tradition while not making a claim as to specific authorship.

[3] Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks, Library of Early Christianity, no. 5 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 108-9.

[4] Abraham J. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation, A Greco-Roman Sourcebook*, ed. Wayne A. Meeks, Library of Early Christianity, no. 4 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986), 122-29.

Gnosticism, an apology, or perhaps a pseudonymous introduction to Pauline literature.[5]

Harold Hoehner considers the purpose of Ephesians to be the promotion of love as the basis for unity.[6] Unity lies at the theological heart of the letter, and the fundamental importance of unity is presupposed throughout the letter. The text seems to presuppose the existence of alienation and hostility. But it also affirms that God will bring peace through Christ.[7] The unity that the author promotes seems to be directed toward a particular manifestation of disunity, namely between Jewish and Gentile believers, and therefore has a corollary to the situation addressed by this project.

Andrew Lincoln holds that the problem addressed in Ephesians may be related to an insufficient sense of identity. This in turn led to a diminished confidence, unity, and sense of calling for the church.[8] As a response the writer attenipts to remind the church of its blessings and purpose in the plan of God.[9] Although it is difficult to ascertain the precise occasion, the content demonstrates that the author sought to create a sense of gratitude that would encourage the church to live a unified communal life.[10] God's creation of peace and unity is mentioned several times, particularly in Eph. 2:14-18. The

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[5] Jody A. Barnard, *Unity in Christ: The Purpose of Ephesians*. The Expository Times, 120 no. 4 (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 167.

[6] Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002), 97.

[7] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, 1999), 58.

[8] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), xxxvi.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ben Witherington, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 221.

epistle contains strong calls for unity, as well as affirmations of a sense of oneness, and promotes this by helping readers envision their existence in the unified body of Christ.

In the first half of the epistle, the writer reminds the readers of the new life they share as believers in Christ and members of the church, Christ's body. The opening (1:3-14) affirms this by naming the blessings of election, adoption, redemption, inclusion, and the inheritance given to believers in Christ. The writer of Ephesians employs the imagery of the body of Christ to assist the church in viewing itself as part of God's plan to bring all things together in Christ.[11] This theme continues as the letter contrasts their former status with their being a new creation in Christ (2:1-22). This new status is bolstered with the words "grace," "love," and "mercy" to describe the transformation. Through Christ they have been brought near to God and unified with God's people. The first half concludes by reflecting on the ministry of the apostles and prophets to underscore the faithfulness of what has been handed down to them. In 3:14-21 the writer affirms the riches, power, and love of God through a prayer for the church.

The first half of Ephesians shows Christ to be an exalted ruler, ascended to the right hand of God. The church is honored to participate with Christ as his body. Christ relates to the church as its head, leading the church while at the same time filling it (1:22; 2:22). Through the church God is making his wisdom known, and in a sense, the church is a revelation of divine wisdom. This understanding of a new identity through Christ provides the Ephesian church with a new perspective of their core identity.[12] The church

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[11] Edna Mouton, *Reading a New Testament Document Ethically* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 122.

[12] Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (New York: T&T Clark, 1997), 2.

is the resurrected body of Christ, and can now join him in the heavenly realms (2:1-7). It is this unity with Christ that unites them with all God's people into a temple, filled with God's presence (2:19-22).

The Ephesian letter challenged the believers to see their communal life as a place of God's activity in the world and to take encouragement from that, despite being threatened by false teaching, temptation, and disunity. The church participates with God by imitating him (4:23-24; 5:1-2), which is part of the full experience of being filled with Christ. This experience is demonstrated through the kind of unity that destroys barriers.

As the body of Christ, the church is called to live in the world in a different manner.[13] Through the church, filled with the presence of Christ, God is restoring His world. As the body of Christ, the church makes known God's wisdom (3:10) and practices kindness and compassion (4:32), while getting rid of "bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander" (4:31). As a new man the church becomes a temple in the Lord (2:14-21). Even marriage among believers is a reflection of life in this new, realigned reality (5:22-33).

Ephesians was written to promote unity, particularly between Jewish and Gentile believers, to affirm the supremacy of Christ over every power and to remind believers of their privileges in Christ. The specific occasion notwithstanding, the letter cautions believers not to allow pride and division to reduce their appreciation for Christ's sacrifice or dull the efficacy of their witness.[14] The theology of Ephesians calls for a different

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[13] Andrew T. Clarke, *Library of New Testament Studies*, ed. Mark Goodacre, *A Pauline Theology of Church Leadership* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 186.

[14] Lincoln, *Ephesians*, xxxi.

understanding of Christian existence and community and a realignment of Christian loyalty more consistent with God's purposes and the church's new identity.

The Structure and Message of Ephesians 2:11-22

A basic provision resulting from the redemptive work of Christ is the union of Jewish and Gentile Christians into a single church. This singular identity is not accomplished by ignoring or destroying cultural, ethnic, or social distinctions, but by celebrating something they share that surpasses their differences. Ephesians 2:11-22 addresses this tension. Since God has reconciled both Jew and Gentile, there are significant implications for the church regarding how Christians approach racial and ethnic differences and tensions.

This pericope can be divided into three sections: 2:11-13; 2:14-18; and 2:19-22. The text begins with a strong reminder of the Gentile's past relationship with God. What follows is a personal and ethical application of the previous discussion—that Gentile Christians ought to contemplate their past from which God has graciously delivered them.[15] To further enhance this contrast, Gentile believers are commanded to never forget their pre-salvation condition.

The physical difference (circumcision) was symbolic of a completely separate way of life. What had once served as a symbol of spiritual loyalty had degenerated into a source of ethnic tension. As a consequence, a wall of separation existed between them—both socially and spiritually.[16]

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[15] E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 58.

[16] H. C. G. Moule, *Studies in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1977), 75.

Because the Gentiles were not God's chosen people and lacked the physical sign of the covenant, they also lacked three important privileges that had been given to Israel. (1) They were separate from Christ. They did not have a relationship with Christ, and they had no messianic hope. (2) They were excluded from citizenship in Israel. To be identified with Israel was to be identified with God. Israel's salvation was inseparable from her national identity. Notwithstanding individual proselytes, the term "excluded" contrasts a complete stranger with someone who is at home.[17] (3) They were foreigners to the covenants of the promise. As God's chosen people, Israel could look forward to future blessings. They lived for this hope, which had been promised to Abraham. But Gentiles had no such hope.[18] In a sense, they could only envy from a distance. Jews took pride in the hope of their future deliverance, but it created a shunning of the nations that oppressed them—"dogs" who were unworthy of Israel's hope.[19] Phrases such as "formerly" and "but now" mark this contrast. Being "in Christ" nullifies the past yet they have not become Jews. They are not citizens of Israel; circumcision has not been imposed on them. A more inclusive status has been established.[20]

Christ's sacrificial death allowed the Gentiles to gain all that they lacked in comparison to the Jews. The phrase "brought near by the blood of Christ" includes not only the death of Christ, but also the atonement made possible by the obedient act of

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[17] T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Colossians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977), 58.

[18] Moule, *Studies in Ephesians*, 77.

[19] Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 625.

[20] Ibid.

dying for his people.[21] The removal of the barrier of separation by Jesus' atonement does not simply establish a common relationship between individuals and God; it acknowledges that human groups also have a new relationship to one another.

In Eph. 2:14-18 the writer makes it clear that because of Christ's redeeming work all believers share a common peace with God and with other believers. The new union consists primarily of peace—horizontal peace between Jew and Gentile and vertical peace between God and people.[22] Again, it is worth noting that Christ did not subsume one group into the other—he created something completely new. To accomplish this, the barrier, "the dividing wall of hostility," was destroyed. Regardless of the source, Christ has destroyed these hostilities. Without destroying racial or cultural identities, Christ gave to every converted Jew and Gentile a new citizenship that enabled each to worship equally with the other. Rather than homogenization, this demands that there be visible unity regardless of race, language, or culture.

The "dividing wall" has been interpreted in a number of different ways. One view identifies it with the wall in the Jerusalem temple that separated the court of the Jews from the court of the Gentiles. In that sense, those visitors who were unable to worship alongside the Jews could be branded as "far away." A second view suggests that the writer may be referring to the curtain (veil) that separated the Holy of Holies in the temple. The gospels refer to the tearing of this veil at the hour of Christ's death, and Heb.

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[21] E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1968), 610.

[22] Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Collins, 1960), 39.

10:19-20 speaks explicitly of this access as a result of Christ's death.[23] Yet another suggestion is that the rabbinic tradition of "fencing" the law is at reference here. Thus the purpose was to keep the nation secluded from the world.[24] A fourth view is that the dividing wall does not refer to an actual physical barrier, but rather to the state of hostility between Jews and Gentiles.[25] Contextually, the first view seems to fit with the exhortation here. Viewing the "dividing wall" in terms of the barrier between Jew and Gentile in the Jerusalem temple also may suggest overtures to the events in Acts 21-22.

Christ's physical death implies the death of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Jewish separation from Gentiles was largely affected through obedience to the law; the removal of the law's presence would therefore also remove the reason for the separation and hostility. While the law itself may not have been the reason for the enmity, strict adherence to it was a cause of separation and hostility.[26] But through Christ, Jews and Gentiles shared something greater than law or ethnicity. What Christ accomplished was not the making of one man where two had existed, but the making of one *new* man.[27] In this new man some might argue that Jews cease to be Jews and Gentiles cease to be Gentiles. But Christ's death and the subsequent destruction of the barrier of hostility and the creation of a new man create not only a new identity for the church, but a new purpose and a new witness to a bitterly divided world.

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[23] William Rader, *The Church and Racial Hostility: A History of Interpretation of Ephesians 2:11-22* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1978), 294.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 625.

[26] Ibid., 626.

[27] Ibid.

In Eph. 2:14 reconciliation takes place between Jew and Gentile, and in 2:16 God and people are reconciled. Thus all believers live in peace and enjoy "access to the Father by one Spirit" (2:18). The unity that is derived from the redemptive work of Christ challenges boundaries Christians may impose on other believers, rejecting "insiders" and "outsiders" through mutual acceptance of one another.[28]

In Eph. 2:19-22 Jewish and Gentile believers together form the household of God. In closing this pericope, the writer reinforces God's desired unity between Jews and Gentiles by developing a metaphorical image of the unity of the body of Christ as consisting of a building under construction in which God is dwelling in both Jews and Gentiles who now form a common dwelling through the Spirit. Though this unity represents "one new man," the writer reminds the Gentiles that the result of this unity is that they have become "fellow citizens with God's people" (2:19).

The writer uses three ideas to convey the meaning of conversion.[29] At one time, all Gentiles were strangers, but now those who have affirmatively made the decision to follow Christ have become "fellow citizens." Secondly, those believers who were at one time distant have now become "members of God's household." Third, the writer uses an architectural metaphor as he compares the Gentile addition to the household of God to the process of adding materials to put up the wall of a building. The phrase "in Christ the whole building is joined together" emphasizes the unity of the structure rather than calling attention to its parts.

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[28] Barth, *The Broken Wall*, 39.

[29] Barth, *Ephesians*, 276.

This pericope is replete with imagery from the Jerusalem temple, which grounds it in the historical reality of visible separation between Jew and Gentile and is perhaps closely tied to the events of Acts 21 and 22: "Circumcision" (2:11)—though not related to the temple as such, only the circumcised could enter; "brought near" (2:13)—a phrase typically used to refer to the offering of a sacrifice; "by the blood" (2:13)—a phrase also referring to sacrifice, indicating forgiveness and purification; "barrier of the dividing wall" (2:14)—the barricade that separated the court of the Gentiles from the temple; "the law" (2:15)—like circumcision, the law does not pertain directly to temple worship, but still served to separate Jews and Gentiles; "access" (2:18)—a phrase relating to the entrance of the high priest once a year into the Holy of Holies; "holy temple" (2:21)—the word here denotes the area where deity resides, the Holy of Holies. Thus both Jews and Gentiles have access to the Father because Christ has demolished the dividing wall, the source of hostility between them.[30]

Christ is the very person on whom the parts of the house of God depend for direction and stability. Christ's followers make up their specific part of God's house, his temple, in which he dwells through the Holy Spirit. These metaphors, strung together in this way, say clearly that there are no dividing walls in the body of Christ. The church's unity does not come from organization, ritual, liturgy, or worship. It comes from Christ.

Reconciliation Made Possible Through Christ

Ephesians 2 not only speaks of the reconciliation between people and God in Christ, but also the social implication of such a status. The section starts with an

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[30] See A. T. Lincoln, "The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians," *JSNT* 14 (1982) 25-26.

inferential "therefore," linking the thoughts expressed in the previous paragraph with the condition of the Ephesian believers prior to their conversion and the privilege they now enjoy—a privilege appreciated all the more by keeping in mind the state of life from which they had been delivered.[31]

The discussion on reconciliation begins with the imperative to remember. Remembering implies action, the setting of precedent. Remembrance is foundational in producing a "new holy community."[32] What is remembered is painful because it not only highlights their spiritual inferiority, but also their present relationship with the "circumcision." The writer, however, is quick to point out that the circumcisionists have nothing to boast about, since an external mark in itself holds no spiritual significance. The real circumcision is of the heart.[33] Remembrance leads to a greater appreciation of God's grace and is the theological warrant for how they act towards one another.

In this act of remembering their pre-conversion condition, the Gentile believers understand that in Christ both Jews and Gentiles acquire a new status. They have both become a new messianic community, which is all-inclusive. It consists of all who have come to faith in Christ. Ethnic background is no barrier to citizenship. True reconciliation in the new community is possible because there is no discrimination or distinction.[34]

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[31] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 292.

[32] Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians 2*. Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 132.

[33] Frank Ely Gaebelein, ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 11.38.

[34] Yusufu Turaki, *Tribal Gods of Africa: Ethnicity, Racism, Tribalism, and the Gospel of Christ* (Jos, Nigeria: Crossroads Communication, 1997), 67.

Only through Christ can all races receive a new status. The message of reconciliation in Christ is more than simply the message proclaimed about Christ. There is a sacramentality about Christ's death and the church's identity as his body. Christ draws people not only to God, but to each other as well.

> It is in him, as fellow members of his body that his people enjoy their twofold peace. This twofold sense is that not only has he reconciled his people to God through his death, but he has reconciled them to each other; in particular, he has brought the formerly hostile groups into a new unity, in which the old distinction between Jew and Gentile has been transcended.[35]

The crucifixion of Christ marks a turning point. He is the bringer of peace, and the only one capable of both providing access to God and creating unity for those living in enmity. Reconciliation affects the relationship between God and people, but God's gift of peace through the shed blood of Christ necessarily leads to peace and unity among those who now share access to God through Christ.[36]

Peace is an essential element of God's new creation. This peace is different from the *shalom* of the Old Testament, which encompasses the cessation of hostility and salvation from God. Christ is not simply a peacemaker, but "peace in person."[37] This new society characterized by peace is a new creation, a new race whose chief characteristics are reconciliation, unity, and peace.[38]

The construction of Christian unity takes place in a specific way—one that has as its ultimate goal the production of unity embodied in the church. Ephesians 2 offers a

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[35] Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 295.

[36] Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 199.

[37] Lincoln, *Ephesians 2*, 140.

[38] John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1979), 110.

narrative interpretation of unity in Christ, where differences are subsumed into a "new man." But those differences are not altogether erased or ignored; they are organized and controlled.[39] According to Eph. 2:11-22 the church must organize itself and operate with a priority of unity achieved through mutual acceptance. The church was founded on the proposition that Christ's death has destroyed all dividing walls. Though they continue to exist in the world, they have no place among the fellowship of believers.

The Theology of Embrace as a Model of Forgiveness

In 1993, Miroslav Volf had finished a lecture in which he argued that followers of Christ ought to embrace their enemies, when his mentor, Jürgen Moltmann, asked him, "But can you embrace a *cetnik*?"[40] Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* was born out of the struggle between the demand for justice and the demand for forgiveness. Concerned with the problems of nationalism and ethnicity as well as the demands of justice for the victims, he developed a theology of embrace as a response to global problems of exclusion and group identity.[41]

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[39] Benjamin H. Dunning, "Strangers and Aliens No Longer: Negotiating Identity and Difference in Ephesians 2." *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006): 15.

[40] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 9. Volf recounts how the notorious Serbian fighters, known as "*cetnik*," had been targeting civilians.

[41] Miroslav Volf, "A Vision of Embrace: Theological Perspectives on Cultural Identity and Conflict," *ERev* 47, (95): 203. Volf perceives group identity as both positive and negative. Group identities offer us homes in which to belong and a space to be amongst our own. They provide us with the bases of power to engage in the struggle against oppression. However, these identities can also be stifling, suppressing differences in those who do not conform, while turning "homes" into fortresses, dividing "us" from "them." Group identities can thus be havens of belonging or suffocating enclosures.

In his opening chapter, "Distance and Belonging," Volf orients the Christian community in the cross. Volf states, "Christ unites different 'bodies' into one body, not simply in virtue of the singleness of his person ('one leader—one people') or of his vision ('one principle or law—one community'), but above all through his *suffering*."[42] Unity is the fruit of Christ's self-sacrifice, which destroys enmity. From a Pauline perspective, the dividing wall is less about differences than it is about enmity (Eph. 2:14).[43] "Hence the solution cannot be 'the One.' Neither the imposition of a single will nor the rule of a single law removes enmity. Hostility can be 'put to death' only through self-giving. Peace is achieved 'through the cross' and 'by the blood' (2:13-17)."[44] Volf's theology of embrace incorporates the Pauline view, as expressed in Eph. 2, that Christ does not erase differences, but allows access into one body to people with differences.[45]

In Volf's theology, sin is not only spiritual defilement, but the exclusion of others from one's world. Sin against a person is also sin against God because sin creates a triangle involving not only the victim and the offender but God as well. Sin is "a refusal to embrace the other in the otherness, a desire to purge him from one's world, by ostracism or oppression, deportation or liquidation. The exclusion of the other is an exclusion of God."[46] Exclusion is made possible by the categorization of people.

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[42] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 47.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 48

[45] Ibid.

[46] Miroslav Volf, "Exclusion and Embrace: Theological Reflections in the Wake of 'Ethnic Cleansing,'" *JES* 29 (1992): 241.

With these distinctions in place, exclusion involves elimination, assimilation, and abandonment. Elimination purges the "other" based on the logic that what is not our own pollutes what is pure in us. Assimilation, as a form of exclusion, is allowing others a place in our proximity where we determine their identity. This kind of assimilation is followed by abandonment. According to Volf, abandonment "is becoming increasingly prevalent not only in the way the rich of the West and North relate to the poor of the Third World, but in ways in which the suburbs relate to inner cities, or the jet-setting creators of high value to the rubble beneath them."[47] Those who abandon their neighbors can remain untouched by the plight of those outside their immediate circle. "Like the priests and the Levites in the story of the Good Samaritan, we simply cross to the other side and pass by, minding our own business. If others neither have goods we want nor can perform services we need, we make sure they are at a safe distance."[48]

The will to love enables Christ's followers to embrace the otherness in those considered different. Volf sees this as an expression of solidarity with the Trinity. Referring to John 10:30, where Jesus says, "The Father is in me, and I am in the Father," Volf writes, "The one divine person is not that person only, but includes the other divine persons in itself; it is what it is only through the indwelling of the other. The Son is the Son because the Father and the Spirit indwell him; without this interiority of the Father and the Spirit, there would be no Son."[49]

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[47] Miroslav Volf, "A Theology of Embrace in an Age of Exclusion," in *Reconciliation: A Theology of Embrace in an Age of Exclusion*, ed. World Vision International Forum (Washington: Institute for Global Engagement, 1997), 92.

[48] Volf, "A Vision of Embrace," 203.

[49] Ibid.

The will to give ourselves to others and to welcome them by readjusting our identities can counter the powerful negative effects of group identities.[50] A culture of embracing the enemy, while still acknowledging their evil deeds finds its anchor in the cross of Christ. The biblical declaration of unity is tangibly present by virtue of the "other's" constant presence in our midst.

> The unity of the human race is no longer an abstract notion. The closer humanity's unity, the more powerfully we experience its diversity. The "others"—persons of another culture, religion, economic status, and so on—are not people we read about from distant lands; we see them daily on the screens in our living rooms, pass by them on our streets. They are our colleagues and neighbors, some of them are even our spouses. The others are among us; they are part of us, yet they remain others, often pushed to the margins.[51]

"Otherness" involves the realization that Christians are strangers in the world. "When a person becomes a believer, then he moves from the far country to the vicinity of God. There now arises a relation of reciprocal foreignness and estrangement between Christians and the world."[52] All "otherness" is absorbed by Christ, whose death made the two one—creating what Volf calls a "catholic personality."[53]

The central theme is "the self-giving love of the divine as manifested on the cross of Christ."[54] As such, there is a close relationship between embrace and forgiveness. Forgiveness involves two important actions: 1) Naming the wrong and condemning it and

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[50] Miroslav Volf, "Forgiveness, Reconciliation, and Justice: A Christian Contribution to a More Peaceful Social Environment," in *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation*, ed. Raymond G. Helmick and Rodney L. Petersen (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 42.

[51] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 234.

[52] Ibid., 236.

[53] Volf, "A Vision of Embrace," 199.

[54] Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 25.

2) giving wrongdoers the gift of not counting their actions against them.[55]

The cross of Christ defines the identity of the Christian community as well as its relationship to the society. Following the example of Christ and having God at the center of all relationships, Christians maintain identity by embracing others, not by safeguarding from contamination. Having received forgiveness, Christians offer it to others.

> Because God has forgiven, we too have the right to forgive. We don't have the right on our own. But we have the right and the obligation to make God's forgiving our own—to forgive on our part what has already been forgiven by God. We have both the right to forgive and, in principle, the power to forgive. In a word, we have the authority to lift the burden and wash away the stain of guilt. It's a derivative authority, dependent completely on God's. Nonetheless, it is genuine. Without such authority, the warning that God will not forgive our sins if we don't forgive the wrongs committed against us would only mock us.[56]

Pope John Paul II once warned, "He who forgives and he who is forgiving encounter one another at a crucial point, a point which cannot be lost and the affirmation of which, or its rediscovery, is a source of the greatest joy."[57]

Volf claims that the cross removes enmity not only between God and people, but also between people. Reconciliation is the elimination of enmity, not differences.[58] This eases the tension between universality and particularity.[59] For example, passages such as Gal. 3:28 do not literally eliminate gender and sexuality but rather the "culturally coded

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[55] Miroslav Volf, *Free of Charge: Giving and Forgiving in a Culture Stripped of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 129.

[56] Ibid., 198.

[57] Pope John Paul II, *Forgiveness: Thoughts for the New Millennium* (Kansas City: Andrews McMeel, 1999), 131.

[58] John Barton, "Confusion and Communion: Christian Mission and Ethnic Identities in Postgenocide Rwanda." In *Missiology: An International Review* Vol 40 (July 2012): 233.

[59] Ibid., 234.

oppositions between the genders that have developed since the fall."[60] God's mission is not the elimination of identities, but the elimination of enmity between people. As it relates to Ephesians, the Pauline tradition does not erase Jew/Gentile differences, but rather it eliminates the "dividing wall of hostility" (Eph. 2:14).[61]

Conclusion

Christ's reconciling work on the cross is transformational. It forever changes the believer's perception of self, others, and God. The Christian community, the body of Christ, reconciled to God and to itself as a multinational, multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual community, must show its internal life to have integrity by virtue of its new identity in Christ. This new community must serve as a tangible sign to the world of God's mercy, peace, and involvement in human affairs. "The life of reconciliation is a life which itself exercises a reconciling power. It is the ultimate witness to that in God which overcomes all that separates man from himself and men from each other."[62]

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

[62] James Denney, *The Biblical Doctrine of Reconciliation* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1985), 329.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to develop a curriculum to be utilized in pastor-training seminars in South Sudan. The staff and board of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners, as part of their commitment to education initiatives, believe that for lasting transformation to take place, the church must play a role as an agent of communal reconciliation. In South Sudan the church has been affected by unrest and is struggling to address ethnic violence in a comprehensively biblical manner. The demand for vengeance drowns out the message of forgiveness and reconciliation, resulting in church leaders' aligning themselves with warring groups and condoning their acts of violence rather than aligning with fellow believers. The integrity of the church's witness is at stake.

Format

During the ministry project I facilitated several staff and board members of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners in a collaborative curriculum development. The project was grounded in a theological understanding of the message of reconciliation and Christian unity found in Eph. 2:11-22. The project was comprised of seven sessions of varying format as well as an evaluation session. Because some of the participants were unable to attend in person, the sessions were conducted with the aid of online tools, such

as email lessons and weekly questions. This correspondence contributed to the various modules of the curriculum.

The first session took place on October 5, 2013, and the final session took place on November 16. Since those were the only proposed in-person sessions, sessions 2 through 7 were sent out every Monday, starting on October 7. We used an appropriate setting at Irving Bible Church's facility for any in-person sessions. The curriculum took shape as a synthesis of my field notes and the weekly set of email questions sent to the participants. The final exercise of each session added a new component to the emerging pastor-training curriculum.

Description of the Participants

The participants were selected by virtue of their having been involved in the Boma community or for their expertise regarding curriculum development and education. The following persons represented SEA Partners: Micheal Harris (U.S. director), Donnie Brake (president), Henry Okumu (African project director), and Rosemary Khamati (former African director). The following represented Christian Relief Partners: Ryan North (president), Micah Terry (board member), Ernest Langat (African missionary), and Kayla North (teacher at Coram Deo Academy). It was important that these participants have a sense of ownership over the curriculum, as they would be utilizing it in pastor-training seminars in South Sudan.

As the executive director of Christian Relief Partners, I have a close relationship with each participant. Two of the board members are family, and I have spent time in the Sudan with most of the other participants.

Description of the Sessions

Session 1: Introduction and Orientation

As part of the introduction and orientation to the project, I addressed the process of developing a curriculum, my role as facilitator, expectations, weekly feedback via email, the session schedule, and how the curriculum will function in Boma. I also addressed the need for confidentiality and anonymity and asked for a commitment that all communication regarding this project be kept strictly confidential. This initial session also included a history of conflict in the Sudan (from ch.1 of this thesis). This historical overview served to further define the problem. As part of the introductory lesson, session 1 introduced the basic principles of conflict resolution to the participants, especially the difference between issues (which are tangible and identifiable), positions (sides taken with regards to the issues), and interests (hidden, often emotional, motivations).

Following a *lectio divina*[1] reading of Eph. 2:11-22, I asked the participants what meaning of "reconciliation" emerged from the text most clearly. I then invited those who had been to South Sudan to share their vision of what the community could look like in the future after the curriculum had been implemented. We closed with a time of prayer for the process and for the people of South Sudan.

Session 2: Biblical and Theological Definitions

Session 2 was sent out as an email module to the participants with a set of open-ended questions relating to the material; the answers form a module of the curriculum. Wherever significant overlap and patterns emerged in terms of what the participants

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[1] See Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 79.

deemed to be "important information," that information was included in the curriculum. Each week the participants were asked how the material could be implemented in a way that would cause the pastors to engage with their churches and their communities in a significant way.

Biblical forgiveness draws its understanding and meaning from the narratives of the Old and New Testaments and must be understood alongside related themes such as mercy, compassion, grace, atonement, redemption, restitution, restoration, confession, and reconciliation. Scripture presents us with a narrative of a merciful, compassionate, and just God, who patiently redeems people in order to bring them into communion with himself and with each other.

This session forms a basic biblical foundation with regards to sin, forgiveness, reconciliation, and the teaching of Jesus regarding peace. While there are psychological models of forgiveness, which usually involve notions of individual attitudes, action, and healing, this session will introduce the concept of communal forgiveness—the collective action of one community forgiving another and seeking forgiveness in return. This session forms the philosophical backbone of the project—preparing ourselves (and the Sudanese pastors) to think of forgiveness in terms of community action and community responsibility.

Session questions: 1) What comes to mind when you hear the word "forgiveness"? 2) How is forgiveness implemented/lived out in terms of how Christians live in community? 3) How do you extend grace and forgiveness without undercutting the severity of what has taken place? In other words, what is the relationship between justice and forgiveness? 4) What do you think the following expression means:

"Forgiveness is an immediate act; reconciliation is a process"? How might this look in Boma? 5) How is forgiveness usually understood as an individual endeavor? How might it be communal—especially in African societies? 6) How did Jesus use terms such as "forgiveness" and "peace" in the gospels?

Session 3: Reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22

Session 3 forms the theological heart of the project. The New Testament teaching on reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22 is consistent with Jesus' teachings and the larger biblical narrative of repentance, forgiveness, restitution, and reconciliation. Ephesians 2 describes the new relationship that is formed when former enemies are united in the bonds of Christian fellowship. Human reconciliation is therefore a derivative of the reconciliation between God and people, and it is imperative that believers understand the biblical dynamics of reconciliation between God and humanity if we are to heal broken relationships between families and neighbors.

Peacebuilding is central to the theological reflection and moral teaching of Ephesians.[2] Though many "cores" have been suggested for Pauline theology (such as justification by faith), peace—as a synonym for "reconciliation"—is an integral description of the church as a new community, reflecting God's true intention for human living in community. Session 3 was largely composed of materials from chapter 2 of this thesis.

I asked the participants to dwell in the text of Ephesians 2 before engaging any questions relating to the material. I shared basic theological constructs from Ephesians, including tension between Jew and Gentile Christians. I also shared Volf's personal story

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[2] Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace*, 190.

and described the process of seeing the "other" as a form of classification, purification, and exclusion, juxtaposed with his theology of embrace as a way of promoting communal forgiveness.

Session questions: 1) In what ways do we practice exclusion of the "other"? (Those of a different background, culture, language, or ethnicity) 2) Forgiveness redeems us from God's wrath, but what does forgiveness redeem us for in terms of how we relate to and treat others? 3) How does the situation in Ephesus describe the Boma community, and how might it inform a vision of peace for that community? 4) What practical things would Christians in the Boma community have to do in order to live out the message of Ephesians? 5) Does unity erase differences? Why or why not?

Session 4: Transitional Justice in South Africa and Rwanda

Session 4 incorporated two prominent examples of reconciliation from the African continent. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was convened in 1994 in a time of transitional justice by dampening the need for vengeance while promoting national healing. While the TRC was political and legal in terms of structure and format; it had a theological foundation in terms of purpose and vision. The TRC was largely the brainchild of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whose memoir "No Future Without Forgiveness" informed this lesson. I shared portions of Bishop Tutu's book with the participants as well as actual testimony from TRC hearings to demonstrate the principle of reconciliation.

Likewise, the story of Rwanda in the years since the 1994 genocide, in which almost one million people were slaughtered, has been an inspiring example of healing and reconciliation. The church in Rwanda has been an instrument of hope and restoration

in the midst of hatred and animosity. At first, the message of repentance was not popular, but it has served as a challenge to both Hutus and Tutsis to seek relief in something other than the endless cycle of vengeance and retributive violence, and to place their loyalty and faith in Christ first. There are valuable lessons to be learned. I told the story of the slaughter at the church in Ntarama to bring up the point that Christianity does not necessarily prevent ethnic violence, and action must be taken to counter what has been referred to as the "irrelevancy of Christianity."

Though South Africa and Rwanda employed different approaches, both countries have experienced remarkable progress and healing. These stories are worth telling, and the differences worth noting as we use these examples to craft a similar path for South Sudan.

Session questions: 1) Can forgiveness be made "too cheap"? 2) What differences are there in the South African approach and the Rwandan approach to reconciliation? 3) How can communities overcome the tensions between justice, vengeance, and healing? 4) Is the cliché "forgive and forget" helpful or not – if the goal is reconciliation?

Session 5: Communal Forgiveness

In session 5 we explored the concept of forgiveness as a communal responsibility rather than an individualistic action. This lesson forms the practical backbone of the curriculum. If the modern world is facing revived tribalism in the context of larger clashes of ethnicities and civilizations, then forgiveness has a political facet to it. In that sense, forgiveness functions not simply within theological categories, but also from a political perspective. While this lesson builds on session 2, it goes beyond it by asking how Christians ought to engage each other and the world in deliberate acts of

forgiveness, embrace, and reconciliation.

There has always been a divergence of opinion within the church about whether Christians should be involved in social and political causes such as peace, justice, reconciliation, and political action. Can there be such a thing as a specifically Christian approach to social reconciliation? In a fractured world, the church must develop appropriate and effective approaches to social reconciliation that will help believers play a role as peacemakers. The answer lies in seeing forgiveness, not as individual action but as something mediated through community because the Christian community does not live in social isolation. The result is that communities of forgiveness have the collective power to inspire social transformation. God's community is called out; it is sent, it is reconciled, it spreads, and in so doing it inspires social transformation.

Session questions: 1) How would you describe a "community of forgiveness"? 2) What is political forgiveness? How might the church be called to practice this type of forgiveness? 3) How does the church offer an alternative to the ethnic divisions of the world without attempting to erase those distinctions? 4) How might this collective understanding of forgiveness impact how Christians in the Boma community act?

Session 6: Compilation of the Curriculum

Session 6 entailed actual compilation of the curriculum. The format of the curriculum includes a series of classes that will be taught to pastors during a pastor-training seminar, typically ranging from three to five days in length. These training seminars typically take place within the SEA Partners compound in Upper Boma. Based on input from sessions 1 through 5 as well as my field notes observing patterns, slippages, and silences, I constructed a template with a basic outline of the curriculum.

The participants then added to it based on their understanding of the materials and their perception of what needs to be taught in Boma. Care was taken that the curriculum remain faithful to the message garnered from the Pauline theology of reconciliation in Eph. 2.

Session 7: Curriculum Review and Edit

Utilizing further input from the participants, I drafted the curriculum to reflect the materials from sessions 1 through 5, the participant's input during the sessions, emails, field notes, as well as input on the curriculum itself. The criterion for formation was "how does this lesson/material inform an understanding of communal forgiveness? Is it consistent with the reconciliation theology of Eph. 2? Can it be utilized in a way that is practical and has real implications in the Boma community?" Care was taken not to create a curriculum for Americans but for Sudanese pastors, contextualized in the Boma community. I sent each participant the draft version for further review and edits, consistent with the theme of reconciliation. After a second round of edits, the final version of the curriculum was ready for evaluation.

Session 8: Final Evaluation

As with the first session, we began with a *lectio divina* reading of Eph. 2:11-22. After orienting the group around the text, I presented the curriculum to the team. After reviewing, I facilitated an open-ended interview using a predetermined set of questions.[3] These questions were used as a tool to evaluate the curriculum. This discussion and evaluation allowed the participants to feel a sense of ownership of the curriculum.

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[3] See appendix G.

Method of Evaluation: Qualitative Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology collects data in the following ways: 1) in-depth interviews, 2) direct observation, and 3) written documents (questionnaires, journals, records, etc.).[4] A qualitative approach seeks contextual engagement rather than detached objectivity. A qualitative methodology is also better suited to evaluate a human system, where individuals exist in a social setting. This research methodology shows interest in how people arrange themselves in their context, and how they interpret their context through symbols, rituals, structures, and roles.[5]

Any single evaluative approach provides only a limited data set. Triangulation, however, incorporates multiple instruments and provides a more complex assessment of the project, thus enabling a "thicker" interpretation.[6] Triangulation involves comparing several data sets by way of observation, interviews, questionnaires, and independent experts. Researchers must test the data for consistency over time and then attempt to understand why differences exist.[7] Triangulation serves to refine the data and explain perceptions. This ensures reliability and validity. There are four types of triangulation: 1) data, 2) investigator, 3) theory, and 4) methodological.[8] This thesis relied on data triangulation through the use of field notes, an open-ended questionnaire to gauge

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[4] Michael Quinn Patton, *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1987), 7.

[5] Bruce L. Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 7.

[6] Ibid., 60.

[7] Ibid., 161-63.

[8] Ibid.

participant opinions, and an evaluation by an independent expert, representing the Sudanese community.

Field Notes

Field notes collect raw data, which aids in writing a descriptive narrative of a session or the project as a whole. As the researcher, I recorded field notes after each session. I typed descriptive notes in a Word document. These notes served to gather raw data and decode information specific to the development of the curriculum, while avoiding premature judgments and vagueness. I took note how the information shaped the week's particular component of the curriculum. I further noted how the information contributed to the evolving curriculum as a whole. I took notes of my own input in order to monitor how I affected the development of the material (reflexivity).[9]

During in-person sessions I observed participation or non-participation in discussions and activities, the participants' style of interacting with each other and with me, the content of the conversations, non-verbal behaviors, and also what was said casually within a few minutes after the sessions concluded, as well as input during the weekly emails. Since I know many of these participants well and we correspond frequently, I was in a position to make detailed observations and notes regarding their participation, correspondence, and input.

Regarding the weekly emails, I recorded key phrases that have a bearing on reconciliation consistent with Eph. 2. These included, but was not limited to, words such as "formerly/previously," "separate," "excluded," "foreigners," "peace," "promise,"

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[9] Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research. A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock, 2011), 43.

"hope," "in Christ," "barrier," "hostility," cross," "access," "Spirit," "reconciliation," and "God's household." These themes relating to Eph. 2 were identified using a coding protocol.[10]

I carefully read through all the data and attempted to construct a record of emerging themes and topics, clustering similar themes, noting where interrelationships exist by recording my own reflections and questions. I then assigned codes to these emerging themes and topics, categorizing them in order to determine the effectiveness of the project.[11] I identified various themes and categories through the following coding protocol: 1) read through all the data, recording my reflections and questions in the margins of the document; 2) constructed a record of emerging themes and topics in columns in a separate document; 3) stored re-occurring terminology; 4) clustered similar items and topics; 5) assigned codes to themes and topics, inserting these into the data records; and 6) categorized themes and topics, preparing the record for an interpretation of the project's effectiveness.[12] The principle of convergence informed this process as I noted patterns, silences, and slippage.

Inside Perspective: Interview of Participants

Session 8 consisted of an open-ended questionnaire for the participants to evaluate the curriculum, its development, its ease of use, and its ability to be used in the

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[10] See appendix C and D for the protocol for taking field notes and the protocol for coding field notes.

[11] For a process of steps for coding data, see John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 153-59.

[12] Ibid.

South Sudan.[13] The participants were permitted to express honest answers to these questions in a descriptive manner. I asked the following questions:[14] 1) Is the theology of reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum? 2) Of the resources utilized and the lessons presented, which materials did you find most useful? Least useful? 3) When or if you travel to South Sudan, would you feel comfortable teaching this material to pastors in that community? 4) What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool for your use?

The development of the questions for the group interview roughly followed a protocol suggested by Judith Bell:[15] 1) list items that require information for evaluating the project (session content, format, process, activity, and evolving perceptions and understandings among participants); 2) write the questions down and label question types; 3) check the wording of the questions for assumptions, ambiguity, technical language, presumptions, and offensive material; and 4) develop several open-ended questions. I provided instructions and allowed ample time for detailed responses. After the session I recorded the participant responses following the same field note protocol I have already outlined.

Outside Perspective: Evaluation by Sudanese Expatriate Pastor

Though there are several experts in the field of conflict resolution who could have been utilized to evaluate the curriculum, Dallas is host to a fairly large Sudanese

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[13] Patton, *How to Use Qualitative Methods in Evaluation*, 111-12.

[14] See appendix G.

[15] Judith Bell, *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Sciences* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1999), 131-33.

expatriate population whose first-hand knowledge of the history, culture, and values of South Sudan proved invaluable in the evaluation.

Michael Yemba is a pastor from South Sudan. After pastoring in Juba, Mr. Yemba spent some time working with the underground church in Saudi Arabia. A personal friendship with the U.S. ambassador resulted in his move to the United States to attend seminary. Mr. Yemba now resides in Dallas, Texas, and leads a ministry serving Sudanese refugees (Ilchmoi Ministry). There are several Sudanese pastors among this expatriate community.

The curriculum was given to Mr. Yemba to share with a group of Sudanese pastors. Using the same protocols as were used for the participant interview, I crafted several open-ended questions to be used as an evaluation of the curriculum: 1) Is the theology of ethnic reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum? 2) What would a community in South Sudan look like if this material were to be implemented? What impact could it have on the church's witness? 3) Would you feel comfortable teaching this material to other pastors in that community? 4) What Christ-like virtues does this curriculum promote? 5) What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool?

These questions were developed as a tool with which to determine the curriculum's effectiveness in providing pastoral guidance in conflict situations. Mr. Yemba submitted a written evaluation, which was incorporated into the information already garnered from field notes and the participant interviews. The conclusion of this project involves the triangulation of this data set with the other two methods of evaluation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to facilitate the staff and board members of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners in the development of a curriculum with which to train pastors in war-torn South Sudan. I accomplished this by leading the participants in eight sessions that combined Christian tradition, contextual engagement (South Sudanese history and culture), and experience in a process of communal discernment. The teaching on reconciliation in Eph. 2.11-22 served as the theological focus. The qualitative evaluation methods give some insight into the project's effectiveness, bearing in mind that this project could radically alter life in a community devastated by strife.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The eight project sessions functioned to lead the staff and board of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners to develop a curriculum to be used in pastor-training seminars in South Sudan. I also sought to inform the participants' understanding of reconciliation practices by bringing a variety of sources into conversation, creating an opportunity for theological reflection. A qualitative research methodology was used to evaluate the project—one that focuses on the perspectives of the participants. To allow for a thick interpretation of the project, I made use of three data streams: 1) field notes, which represented my perspective as the project facilitator; 2) an open-ended questionnaire, which sought reflective input from those who participated in the project; and 3) an evaluation by an outside independent expert. This chapter describes the findings and results by analyzing each data stream and then bringing the findings into conversation to understand the overall effectiveness of the project.

Description of the Results

Field Notes

I recorded field notes following each of the project sessions. I typed these notes, observed emerging themes and patterns, and coded the data according to the protocol

established for this project (appendix B). As I coded the raw data, I filtered the organization through the following set of queries: 1) How do the participants understand their role in providing leadership assistance to the pastors in South Sudan? 2) How do the participants deal with conflict in their own lives? 3) How do the participants relate spiritual maturity, unity, and the church's witness? 4) How committed are the participants to the ministry of reconciliation as a core function of the church? 5) How do the participants understand primary loyalty—socio-political or spiritual/religious?

The project sessions also brought a number of sources regarding African culture, history, and conflict resolution into conversation. The participants were given the opportunity to reflect on Scripture through the lens of the Boma community as well as their own experience. At the beginning of every session, I encouraged a *lectio divina* reading of Eph. 2:11-22. This activity was connected to the particular topic of that session, thus allowing me to pinpoint theological themes and also to ascertain where different sources of engagement paralleled the data from another source. These areas of convergence resulted in emerging themes and topics in the sessions and identification of which sources may have been particularly useful in developing those themes.

After coding the participant responses and my field notes through the coding protocol, three major themes emerged—justice, inclusivity and equality, and unification through Christ. All responses to the session materials fell within these categories. There were also significant silences with respect to themes relevant to the topic of forgiveness and reconciliation.

One of the most significant themes that emerged from the sessions concerned the need for justice, given the particularly cruel and violent acts that have been perpetrated in

the community. Terminology that converged into a theme of justice included: "role-models," "credibility," "internal peace first," "reconciliation takes generations," "surrender," "public acts," "truth telling," "confession," "forgiveness as remembrance," "justice," "retributive justice is necessary," and "forgiveness is a process." These terms and ideas tend to place reconciliation as the result of meeting the requirements of "justice" rather than as the next step following biblical forgiveness.

Much of the discussion involved moves towards reconciliation in South Africa and Rwanda. South Africa's TRC involved reconciliation through amnesty and truth telling, while Rwanda's approach leaned more towards traditional notions of justice. While the project participants certainly understood the motivation and process of the TRC and Bishop Tutu's views on the African philosophy of *Ubuntu*, most identified with Rwanda's justice-oriented approach. Perhaps this has to do with Americans' understanding of justice as consequences for wrongful acts within our own legal system.

The participants highlighted that genuine forgiveness comes at the cost of acknowledging truth and embracing justice. Most admitted that "forgive and forget" is not helpful if justice has not been done and that reconciliation can be achieved only by embracing both truth and justice. Virtually all participants admitted that forgiveness can be made "too cheap" if retributive justice of some form is completely removed from the picture. In that context forgiveness could become mere words, and reconciliation would be only a pretense. Consensus among the group was that forgetting is not automatically linked to forgiving because humans are "wired to seek justice," and ignoring this need will not help the reconciliation process move forward. The participants also seemed skeptical that reconciliation could be achieved any time soon in the Boma community.

But they did admit that however painful it may be, if the hearts of the people are in the right place, reconciliation could be achieved in a generation or two, thus putting an end to the cycle of retributive violence that has plagued the community.

Within the theme of justice, participants said that flippant forgiveness disregards the consequences that should necessarily follow a perpetrator's harmful actions against another. Forgiveness without justice contains little substance. In order for those who have caused hurt to others to move in a healthy direction, those persons must understand the cost of their actions and the full extent of the damage they have done. Cheap forgiveness, which may have an emotional appeal, circumvents the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation demands that the perpetrators come to terms with what they have done. If forgiveness takes place too quickly, depths of feelings and attitudes cannot be fully mined so that what ought to facilitate long-term reconciliation becomes trivial.

In terms of substantive justice to correct past wrongs, the participants identified some specific things that need to happen—the restoration of stolen cattle, the return of abducted children, more representation in the central government, infrastructure development, control over water sources, the establishment of social and economic institutions under local control, and the protection of local customs and culture.

When discussing the inherent tensions between justice, vengeance, and healing, however, the participants stated that in order to understand violence directed toward the community from outside, one must be able to evaluate the community's tendencies towards such violence. In order to see one's enemies as persons in need of inner peace, it is important first to see oneself and those in the community in the same light. The participants pointed out that justice and vengeance are not the same. Justice can lead to

healing, but vengeance is a doorway to a continuous cycle of hatred and violence.

The second theme that emerged from my field notes and the participants' weekly responses was the idea of inclusivity (within the community) and equality (between communities). This was a positive development in the overall evolution of the curriculum and the session materials and was largely based on Volf's theology of embrace, as articulated in chapter 2 of this thesis. A remarkable array of phrases converged into this stream of inclusivity and equality, including "new community," "one body," "tolerance," "co-existence," "educational interests," "healthy," "giving up rights," "relationship interests," "healing," "forgiveness is reciprocal," "participation," "image of God," "embrace," "God's household," and "recognition of others' humanity."

Because of the embedded theology of reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22, this theme of inclusivity and equality has some obvious overlap with the third theme—unity through Christ. But in terms of viewing the church as a counterweight to the cultural norms of ethnic loyalty and tension, it is worth categorizing this theme separately because of the potential for real-world action. The participants spoke in terms of the practicality of teaching the church to engage their communities here and now, not simply in terms of theological knowledge.

I noted a distinction between the evils of racism, tribalism, and divided humanity and the possibility of a new community, formed on the basis of peace and reconciliation. Specifically, inclusivity was mentioned in the context of community recognition, power-sharing, economic opportunity, and access to education. Every participant spoke of "educational interests" as a positive way to affect how the community views inclusivity and equality despite ethnic differences. The current school operates on the basis that

education is available to all children of the community regardless of ethnic affiliation.

Theological perspectives aside, the participants used the verbiage of toleration to describe what a peaceful co-existence might look like. Perhaps the definition of "toleration" can be further clarified by comparing American and African perspectives. The American participants mentioned economic factors that could lead to toleration, such as trade. The African participants mentioned more familial aspects, such as cross-cultural marriage as a vehicle to promote toleration.

The meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation took on a meaning within this theme of inclusivity and equality that reflected the giving up of rights. Several of the participants mentioned "giving up the right to be right." This is seen as a healthy shift in thinking since so much of the violence that has taken place has been done in the name of enforcing "rights." In that same light the participants spoke of reciprocity—not only of violence, but also of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Participants noted that it is impossible to truly live in community without the ongoing grace of forgiveness present in all relationships. Despite the project's intended purpose of exploring the idea of communal forgiveness, most participants still spoke of forgiveness as individual action and reconciliation as the healing of personal relationships. While these understandings are not wrong, this project had hoped to project a more communal aspect of forgiveness rather than individual attitudes and actions. Forgiveness was referred to as a "personal step taken towards freedom from guilt based on the decision to let go and move on." Aside from the psychological definition inherent in such a comment, individual action, even within a tight-knit community, is not the same as communal action. Even the participants who represent African ethnicities and cultures

used the language of community, but within the framework of individual forgiveness. Reconciliation was still spoken of as individual action—though admittedly public, and with the blessing of the entire community.

Regarding the materials on exclusion, the participants identified exclusion as communities that refused the "other" permission to participate in important community events. But beyond ritual and celebration, the participants—especially those familiar with the culture—made other identifications of exclusion: the denial of justice and a fair trial, employment discrimination, refusal of medical treatment, intermarriage opposition, and ethnic voting. In a sense, exclusion is the refusal to go beyond our comfort zone. The participants agreed that followers of Christ should not gravitate towards those of a similar societal position or ethnicity. Interestingly, the participants identified this seeking comfort in the familiar as a hindrance to forgiveness and reconciliation—actions that require one to move away from the comfortable. By excluding others we forfeit the opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to perform a deeper work in our hearts. In that sense the participants did perceive that there is an unbreakable chain connecting God's forgiveness of us with our forgiveness of others. Forgiveness frees us from God's wrath, but it also frees us to a life of inclusion, embrace, and equality.

Most of the participants in some way identified with the message that not only is the church "God's household," but all people are part of the family of God by virtue of having been created in God's Image. There was the explicit recognition of others' humanity. All but one of the participants agreed that unity does not erase differences. The true strength of unity and the church's witness to the world is the ability to accept and care for those who are different. Unity is a celebration of our differences under the

Lordship of Christ. The effort to accept and embrace someone who is "far off" creates a bond of unity far stronger than the comfortable bonds of sameness and familiarity. Dwelling in God's presence does not erase our differences, but it does make them inconsequential as a source of enmity.

The third overall theme that emerged from my field notes and the participants' weekly responses was the theological conviction that unity in the church can be achieved only through Christ. He is the unifying factor. This third theme resonated throughout the responses and was particularly important since it demonstrated that the participants grasped the fundamental theological basis of the project. This was another positive development in the evolution of the curriculum and the session materials because it reflected a proper understanding of the theology of forgiveness and reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22, as articulated in chapter 2 of this thesis. Terminology that reflected Eph. 2 and the role Christ plays as the church's unifying factor include "were without hope," "peace," "peace through Christ," "God's forgiveness," "unconditional forgiveness," "Holy Spirit," "freedom," "new community," and "one body."

The participants used the language of Eph. 2 in a number of responses, especially the condition of being without hope apart from Christ. It is encouraging that the message of Eph. 2 resonated with the participants to such an extent. Most responses were comfortable with integrating the theology of Eph. 2 into a practical framework of ongoing instruction so that the pastors had the tools to be able to function as role models in the community. The participants genuinely struggled with the inherent tension between extending forgiveness and undercutting the severity of what had taken place. It was in this context that the participants expressed the idea that God's forgiveness of us is

unconditional; thus the forgiveness we offer ought to be the same.

The text of Eph. 2 seemed to shepherd the participants through the notion that forgiveness is an event, while reconciliation is a process. As an expression of having a Christlike attitude participants pointed to Matt.18 as a guide to reconcile with other believers. Two people, who both see Christ in the other, have no recourse but to reconcile their differences in light of what Christ has done on the cross. Without Christ's centrality, harmful behaviors that are embedded in the culture would not be overcome in pursuit of long-term reconciliation.

In particular, the participants relied on the message of Eph. 2 in describing the church as an alternative to the ethnic divisions of the community without trying to erase those distinctions. The Boma community is not dissimilar to the Ephesian community and therefore both can be a redemptive community, reflecting the new humanity in Christ. In the context of the church as a new temple, the dividing wall has been shattered by the cross, thereby allowing for a multiethnic and multiracial church.

Part of coding and interpreting the participants' responses to the weekly sessions was to take note of silences—not only things that were not mentioned at all, but important themes mentioned only once or mentioned by only one person. The following terms and ideas were either not mentioned at all or were mentioned by only one participant: the need for and requirements of repentance, the power of storytelling, the acknowledgment of collective sin/guilt, the church's responsibility to take social action and be a catalyst for significant engagement with the social structure, love for our enemies, and sin as the reason for conflict. These silences percolated through the various sessions, but were most prominent in session 6—compilation of the curriculum. Overall,

the theology of Eph. 2 was well understood and integrated into the curriculum. But these silences show that other important and relevant theological themes and practical application of those themes, though not ignored altogether, were not highlighted by most participants.

Participant Questionnaire

The project's final session consisted of an open-ended questionnaire to be used as a second method of evaluating the inside participants' understanding of the project. The questions garnered input from the participants concerning the overall evolution of the curriculum, as well as the final curriculum itself, through the following questions: 1) Is the theology of reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum? 2) Of the resources utilized and the lessons presented, which materials did you find most useful? Least useful? 3) If or when you travel to South Sudan, would you feel comfortable teaching this material to pastors in that community? 4) What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool for your use?

Concerning the use and integration of Eph. 2:11-22, all the participants thought that the curriculum incorporated basic understandings of forgiveness, reconciliation, and Christian unity. This text, which has been taken as the basis for a theology of reconciliation, describes and reflects well on how the language of reconciliation is explicitly used. Theologically, this view of reconciliation corresponds to shalom—that there is completeness to human relationships, which in other Pauline letters is referred to as the kingdom of God. Jesus often used this term in the Gospels. The kingdom is an eschatological concept designating, in its fullness, a perfectly redeemed creation, a vision only perfectly fulfilled when God is present. In this world the kingdom is both "now" and

"not yet." If reconciliation corresponds to the kingdom, we should expect to find the same tension between the now and the not yet in reconciling human relationships. Paul's own set of experiences bear witness; he rejoices in knowing that he is already reconciled to God in Christ; he experiences God's love through the gift of the Spirit; yet he still finds himself struggling with sin. We might also draw parallels with his personal relationships: he has a deep sense of unity in the body of Christ, but his letters reveal times of rejoicing in that unity, as well as times of conflict. One participant, in particular, appreciated the blend of Scripture, psychology, and practicum in a single format.

Regarding resources used (in the sessions) and lessons presented (in the curriculum), the participants appreciated that terms were defined in the context of the stages of conflict, conflict management styles, and peacemaking. For project sessions, most participants gravitated towards session 2: biblical definitions of peace and reconciliation and a theological model of forgiveness. Most also stated that the format of the curriculum provides good theory development as well as practical application for the learner. The discussion methodology of the curriculum was seen as a plus—large group discussions for general principle material and small group discussions for self-learning exercises.

The participants who have previously traveled to the Sudan noted that story-telling is a big part of Sudanese culture and that giving people ample opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts becomes an essential element of any training situation. Participants noted that the questions posed for personal sharing in all the sessions will be useful, both in forcing critical thinking and in determining the extent to which people are understanding what is being taught. Participants who have led pastor-

training sessions in South Sudan stated that most Sudanese love the times they get to share, and facilitators have had to adjust the curriculum accordingly.

These same participants were appreciative of the definitions and saw them as helpful for those doing the training but balked at the challenge of defining the terms in ways that pastors with limited education can grasp and build on. One participant phrased it this way: "The cookies need to be on an appropriate shelf." Another participant said that "the Holy Spirit can bring to heart and mind the true essence of reconciliation found in God's Word in ways that learning terminology cannot."

When asked if they would be able to teach this material to pastors in South Sudan, all the participants responded with yes. They stated that there is an urgent need to give a biblical basis for forgiveness and reconciliation and that they want to be a part of changing hearts and communities in South Sudan. Someone noted, "You have provided a very thorough outline of what essentially needs to be taught in this area and given an opportunity for those involved in training to both learn the concepts and give their own words to them for the benefit of everyone involved." The participants were especially receptive to the assertion that church leaders be the ones to model reconciliation practices.

Regarding prospective changes to the curriculum that might render it either more user-friendly or more understandable, the participants mentioned more storytelling—a narrative approach more suited to African culture. Participants also suggested more practical exercises at the end sessions in order to challenge the pastors to be catalysts of peace and the necessity of implementation in their communities. In terms of the nuts and bolts, one participant suggested rearranging the sessions into three distinct parts:

objectives, content, and methodology. Such an arrangement would allow the facilitator much more flexibility in lesson presentation. Overall however, the curriculum was warmly and appreciatively received by the participants.

Independent Expert Evaluation

The final component of the qualitative evaluation of the curriculum employed Mike Yemba as an independent expert to provide feedback from an outside perspective on the effectiveness of the project and the curriculum it produced. He shared the curriculum with several other pastors at a Dallas-area Sudanese congregation. Mr. Yemba was asked to answer the following questions: 1) Is the theology of ethnic reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum? 2) What would a community in South Sudan look like if this material were implemented? What impact could it have on the church's witness? 3) Would you feel comfortable teaching this material to other pastors in that community? 4) What Christlike virtues does this curriculum promote? 5) What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool?

Mr. Yemba's assessment was that the modules covered in the curriculum reflect the teaching of Eph. 2:11-22. He stated, "This passage, which has been taken as a basis for a theology of reconciliation, describes and relates well on how Paul explicitly uses the language of reconciliation. Theologically, Paul's state of reconciliation corresponds to shalom, that is, completeness to human relationships, which in other Pauline letters is a complete society and is referred to as the kingdom of God." He also noted that the term was used in the gospels in the preaching of Jesus. The kingdom is an eschatological concept describing a perfectly redeemed creation, "a vision only wholly fulfilled when

God is all in all. In this present world the kingdom is both 'now' and 'not yet.'" If a state of reconciliation with God and others corresponds to the kingdom, we should expect to find the same tension between now and not yet in the case of reconciliation. Regarding the Pauline theology of reconciliation, Mr. Yemba's assessment was that "we can see this is the case in Paul's own experience: he rejoices in knowing deeply that he is already reconciled to God in Christ; he experiences the flow of God's love in his heart through the gift of the Spirit; yet he still finds himself struggling with sin and needing to grow in grace." The Sudanese pastors seemed to have an understanding that sin poisons communities and that reconciliation has a lot to do with repentance.

In critiquing individual sessions, Mr. Yemba found session 1 to be the least useful. The materials did not directly address the meaning of peace. It was noted that people in the Sudan understand conflict more easily than they can conceptualize peace. "For this reason," Mr. Yemba said, "I suggest that at the beginning of the session, small groups should be asked to discuss what peace is and what peace is not. Then, as they report their answers to the whole class, this will throw light onto their understanding of peace. The facilitator may then help them move from what they know to what they do not know in their learning about the meaning of peace."

It was also stated that "talking is a very big part of the Sudanese culture." The sessions need to give the participants ample opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts. This needs to be an essential element of any training situation. Mr. Yemba stated, "I think the questions you have posed for personal sharing in all the sessions will be very useful, both in forcing critical thinking and in determining the extent to which people are 'getting' what is being taught. Most Sudanese love those times they get to

share." He also noted that other "Western" teachers have had to adjust their curriculum and training based on what the participants shared. The critique was that there needs to be more flexibility and less technical structure. "I think the definitions you have provided in the lessons are very helpful for those doing the training to have a sense of what is being taught; the challenge will be to define these terms in ways that people with limited education can grasp and then build upon. You have given a presenter a very good outline and direction in training community leaders in the basics and means of reconciliation; the presenter will have to be sensitive that the ideas and actions of reconciliation are communicated over mere terminology."

Mr. Yemba acknowledged that concepts can be more easily understood during times of personal sharing. "This becomes yet another reason for basing this training on the truth of Scripture: the Holy Spirit can bring to heart and mind the true essence of reconciliation found in God's Word in ways that learning terminology cannot." He closed the evaluation with the statement, "This is a very useful curriculum and well presented. It is my prayer that God will use it to bring people back to his kingdom."

Conclusion

The process of developing this curriculum and its evaluation has shown that peace cannot be imposed from the outside or from the top down. The community-led reconciliation process outlined in this thesis promotes the idea that communities have the resources they need for their own healing within the community itself. The very people and places most ravaged by war can also be the most powerful resources in the work of rebuilding lives, restoring communities, and reconstructing nations. Yet the people most impacted by war are often the least consulted in post-war rebuilding efforts. As this

project has developed and been evaluated by both "insiders" and "outsiders," the process has shed light on the courage and grace of ordinary people, the impulse to be whole again and to move past the ravages of war, and the wealth of traditional and biblical reconciliation practices.

It is my prayer and hope that this curriculum will serve to model a community-led approach to post-war reconciliation that helps ordinary people reawaken godly practices of acknowledgement, apology, and forgiveness; rebuild their communities; and lay the groundwork for a sustainable peace.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction: Present Conditions

This project thesis was undertaken to address a need in my ministry context by applying practical lessons and theological competencies learned through the doctor of ministry program and training in the discipline of conflict resolution. The thesis addressed a specific problem—that pastor-training seminars conducted in the Boma community of South Sudan lack a curriculum to address issues of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and communal reconciliation. This project focused on leading the staff and board members of Sudan Evangelical Alliance Partners and Christian Relief Partners through several sessions of intentional theological discernment, engaging with a number of biblical, historical, and cultural sources. The project sessions resulted in the production of a pastor-training manual to be used in South Sudan. This final chapter discusses personal learning and understanding, implications for future ministry, generalizability of the project, and its sustainability.

It is appropriate to end this thesis in much the same way as it began—with a current assessment of the situation in the Boma community. Since this project is highly contextual, its application must have a certain degree of flexibility built into it in order to meet needs that currently exist in the community and not perceptions from afar. On December 11, Henry Okumu (a participant in this project) visited the SEA Partners

compound in Upper Boma and issued the following report: The rebels under David Yau-Yau had used the compound as their operational base, resulting in significant damage when SPLA government forces attacked the village and recaptured it. However, the Murle have started to return to the area as security has been restored and reprisals minimized. Approximately 900 Murle are now in the village of Kiawa; Jonglei remains occupied by SPLA forces; and Bien is currently abandoned. As for the SEA Partners compound and immediate surroundings, over 3000 SPLA troops are currently housed there. During the battle the staff dining hall, kitchen, and storage facility were burned down. The school lost all its doors, windows, desks, teaching materials, and supplies. The following pieces of equipment were looted: solar panels and batteries, refrigerator and freezer, gas cylinders and stovetop, kitchen utensils, beds and bedding, satellite dish, laptops, printer, generator, power saw, and all construction supplies and equipment.

Despite this bleak report, SEA Partners and CRP remain committed to Boma. Resuming operations will have to be implemented in stages. The first step will be to resume teaching. This simple action will restore credibility with the Murle that we are committed to their children's education as a key for a better life. It is important to restart agricultural programs in and around the compound in order to sustain the staff and the students while awaiting aid from the U.N. World Food Programme and other NGOs. As life returns to "normal," supplies and equipment will have to be steadily replaced. For the foreseeable future there will be feelings of ill will among the various ethnicities in the region. Much of this ill will, particularly from the SPLA, will be directed towards the Murle. Now, more than ever, the leaders of the community need tools to heal themselves and then begin to foster communal reconciliation.

Personal Learning and Understanding

The study of forgiveness and reconciliation from a theological point of view confirms the fact that a systemic and sociological study of the phenomenon is in its infancy. Because of its inherently religious connotations, the topic of forgiveness has not garnered much consideration. As William Bole has stated, "The concept is foreign to most secular political philosophies and peripheral at best to traditional Christian theories of the common good and a just war."[1] Scholars have not fully explored the effects of human forgiveness and its importance for the church's witness. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has filtered into the consciousness of many, but even that remarkable event has been driven by sporadic media attention and the personalities of Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela. Even those who offer Christian-based counseling tend to depend on psychological models of forgiveness that change with culture and are individualistic in nature. But forgiveness and healing within broken communities must be done in a way that nurtures individuals for the sake of the whole community.

Forgiveness must be learned as any other craft is learned. Its doctrinal significance also has social implications. It is the expression of God's will that vertical reconciliation should have horizontal consequences. Forgiveness is the way that believers restore one another and prevent sin from poisoning the community. Even discipline is spoken of in the New Testament in terms of a vehicle for rehabilitation and healing of relationships. Forgiveness is a test of obedience. It is usually costly and sometimes unpopular in a world that demands justice and revenge. As Pope John Paul II stated, "The church is aware of the difficulty, the 'folly' of forgiveness, but does not see it as either a

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[1] William Bole, "The Politics of Forgiveness," in *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, ed. Bob Abernethy (New York: Thirteen/WNET, 2005), 13.

sign of weakness or cowardliness. Quite the contrary. The church proclaims the way of pardon because of her unshakeable confidence in the infinite forgiveness of God."[2] The church's witness is not only measured by its preaching of the gospel in order to spiritually transform societies; it is also measured through its participation in activities that foster communal life and sociopolitical transformation.

Implications for Further Ministry and Future Actions

Christian Relief Partners' mission statement is "We partner with international relief organizations and the people of sub-Saharan Africa, working to connect those with resources to those with needs in a way that promotes reconciliation, dignity, and the creative flourishing of the human person." In terms of the goals and implications for future ministry, any chosen strategy must fall within this vision and mission. A plan for further action helps focus on aligning the unique gifts and resources that God has given us to take advantage of opportunities. Ministry is not just projection-based planning, but the realization that through prayer and obedience we can be a catalyst to help bring about a future that is in alignment with God's will. Hopefully, these eight weeks of reflection will continue to clarify the mission of the organization, its vision, values, areas of strategic focus, objectives, and a way to achieve those objectives.

Since 2004 SEA Partners has worked with Christians in South Sudan. Using the school (which opened in 2006) as a focal point, SEA Partners has employed a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the community with emphasis on ensuring all elements

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[2] Pope John Paul II, "The New and Old Faces of Contemporary Racism: Document of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on Racism, Racial discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance," *The Pope Speaks* 47, no. 1 (Jan./Feb. 2002), 50.

of the project are both Sudanese and sustainable. SEA Partners exists to offer financial, educational, and spiritual support in bringing new life and restored hope to the people of Boma, South Sudan. SEA Partners has incorporated a holistic approach in serving the community by addressing five concerns: 1) education, 2) equipping leaders, 3) exercising compassion (food security, fresh water, health, etc,) 4) evangelism and 5) establishing churches.

Christian Relief Partners and SEA Partners are motivated by the belief that Christ has called us to transform this community. Our goal is that together with other Christians we will be able to accomplish this, but we have to empower and engage local leaders in order to bring about positive change. We operate on the basis of a number of core values: accountability, biblical authority, commitment, diversity, excellence, faith, fellowship, holiness, and servanthood. Equipping leaders is a vital strategy. This includes not only pastor-training, but educating children as well.

Any forward-looking plan helps maximize strengths, minimize weaknesses, address threats, and take advantage of opportunities. Throughout this process, I have discovered that we have a number of strengths. Both organizations are served by dedicated and capable leaders who have a good relationship with the governments of Kenya and South Sudan. Both organizations have also established a number of strong ministry partners. As the current situation stands, SEA Partners still has land available as an asset in a strategic region of South Sudan. The availability of an educational facility, semi-permanent staff houses, and ministry training programs has the potential to transform the community. The encouragement of volunteer service and the availability of

several trained staff members are a credit. The holistic approach to ministry puts SEA Partners in a strategic position for future growth and development.

This process also led to the discovery of opportunities that are available for SEA Partners and CRP. The availability of Sudanese expatriates in what has come to be termed "the diaspora" can provide a great opportunity to build a stronger support base. There are many like-minded potential local and international partners. Although South Sudan has experienced "birth pains," the opportunity for investment encouraged by the free market economy is also seen as a great possibility.

However, the current environment poses a number of threats to future success. The unstable political leadership, an environment of war, ethnic tensions, crumbling infrastructure, and lack of modern technology hinder development in Boma. There is still a strong attachment to traditional beliefs, which pose a threat to the full embrace of the church. This includes traditional religion, negative cultural practices, and the growing influx of secularism. There are also threats from growing levels of insecurity, the influx of drugs and substance abuse, poor living conditions, extreme weather conditions, HIV, and other terminal illnesses. The adoption of a Kenyan education system (and Kenyan teachers) currently used in Boma may also pose some challenges.

Despite these inherent challenges, however, the commitment to educating the youth and training adult leaders remains a vibrant opportunity. The equipping of leaders begins in early childhood development. SEA Partners' board (with the support of CRP) has adopted the following strategic objectives:

- To ensure that at least 100 pastors and teachers are trained by 2017
- To establish a ministry training location with appropriate facilities by 2017
- To ensure that the school has a local chaplain by 2017
- To triple the intake of students in the school by 2018

- To improve the infrastructure of the school so as to support the increased number by 2018
- To facilitate a leadership seminar every year
- To ensure the recruitment of a full-time local pastor by 2017
- To restructure the school's curriculum in order to improve the quality, duration of study, and adoption of the South Sudanese system by 2014
- To train teachers on using the new curriculum by mid 2015
- To recruit and train local Sudanese teachers by 2015

Another arm of the organizational strategy involves what the board has termed "social compassion." This entails meeting both physical and spiritual needs. Such a focus helps realize the mandate of taking a holistic approach to ministry in Boma. The following strategic objectives will be implemented to accomplish this exercise of social compassion:

- To establish a health facility by 2017
- To facilitate the development of good hygiene in the region
- To organize public health promotions annually
- To train at least ten local members to serve as a dispensary committee by 2017
- To organize peace and reconciliation programs in five communities by 2017
- To organize one civic education seminar per region on the importance of participating in general elections by 2016
- To facilitate five holistic transformational trainings by 2017
- To facilitate the rehabilitation of 300 victims of alcohol, drug, and substance abuse in the region by 2017
- To facilitate support for orphans through the provision of clothing, shelter, medication, and education by 2017
- To ensure economic sustainability of widows in the region by 2017
- To ensure the development of a food security program in Boma by 2017

With the full commitment of all stakeholders, particularly those in the Boma community, the implementation of these objectives and strategies would promote and sustain the spiritual and physical growth of CRP and SEA Partners, allowing both organizations to contribute to the growth of God's Kingdom by meeting the needs of the Boma community in a holistic manner.

These objectives describe the context in which any curriculum must be utilized. It is important to understand, theologically, that forgiveness becomes the means through which believers restore one another and prevent sin from poisoning the communal life. Forgiveness is redemptive, but it is also restorative. This theology must undergird every aspect of this pastor-training curriculum.

While the purpose of this thesis was the development of a pastor-training manual and the assessment of several qualitative evaluations of the process, the curriculum produced can be an evolving guide. It should be noted that many of the insider participants will be using this curriculum in future pastor-training seminars in South Sudan. One of the critiques of the curriculum as currently formatted is that the discipline of conflict resolution, with its lists of definitions and technical terms, has overwhelmed the theology of the material and will not serve its intended purpose "in the field."

Though beyond the scope of this thesis, further revisions of the curriculum will divide the materials into two: The first curriculum will be used to train those facilitators who will teach peacebuilding to pastors in the Sudan. This first curriculum will make greater use of the materials in chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis: the historical background, theology of Eph. 2, and Volf's theology of embrace. The more technical aspects of formal conflict resolution will be taught to the facilitators as a means of preparing them to teach Sudanese pastors. The second curriculum will consist of materials to be taught to the pastors. It will contain more storytelling and be sensitive to the concerns raised by the independent outside expert and others (particularly other Africans who offered an evaluation of the material). This training of the facilitators is an important next step in the evolving development and implementation of this project.

Generalizability and Sustainability

This thesis yields some implications that may be generalized to apply to other similar projects. The selection of a team of participants who were invested was critical to the success of this project. Relief work in Africa can be demoralizing, so participants must have a vested interest. I chose participants based on the criteria that they have traveled to South Sudan or they have experience in the field of education. The project also depended on a balance of American and African participants. CRP and SEA Partners wish to eschew any hint of Western paternalism, so input from both Americans and Africans, working together on equal footing, not only utilizes a cross-cultural approach to the curriculum development but is an example to the Sudanese of how a community reconciled through the cross functions.

A project of this nature will fail if the participants perceive it to be purely an academic exercise, removed from practical application. This project demanded a substantial commitment from the participants for several weeks. Participants were in Texas, Arkansas, Oregon, Kenya, and South Sudan throughout the project. Though there were times when 100 percent participation was not possible, the majority was willing to put in the effort because they were (and remain) committed to the goal of the project—a more peaceful and prosperous South Sudan.

The result of this project was a quality curriculum, relevant to the needs of both the facilitators and the learners who will benefit from the training. This project was successful because it met a real need. As described in chapter 1 of this thesis, the community of Boma is in turmoil. People have died violently. The cry for retributive vengeance is stifling. The future is wholly uncertain. Most of the participants and I have

walked through these villages, have seen the children laugh and cry, have bled with workers, and have often feared for our own lives. Throughout this process, I never had to persuade others of the problem; it was constantly on their minds and in their hearts.

In terms of sustainability, the monitoring and evaluation of CRP's SEA Partners' strategic plan is key to tracking progress and determining if results are achieved. The U.S. and Kenyan boards should closely monitor progress on the ground. In management training, a maxim holds that "if something is not measured, it will not be done." It is therefore critical to develop a mechanism of measuring performance, implementation, quality, and other aspects of developing the Boma community. Several approaches will be used: 1) setting of targets for each area of performance and ensuring that those targets are relevant, challenging, and able to sustain the planned objective; 2) conducting surveys and feedback from facilitators and students using the same kinds of qualitative methodology employed in the thesis; 3) establishment of a team evaluation mechanism following pastor-training sessions and other development efforts; 4) completion of post-training reports. The implementation team will review these on a regular basis and make recommendations. Some areas will need reinforcement while others will need recasting. Sustainability depends on flexibility. Where it is not practical to implement an objective or certain training sessions, the situation may necessitate re-planning and ensuring that all necessary factors are considered. The curriculum is a roadmap, not the destination.

Conclusion

The problem this thesis set out to addresses is that pastor-training seminars in Boma, South Sudan, lack a curriculum in conflict resolution and communal reconciliation practices. Since 2007 the ministry staff of SEA Partners have conducted annual pastor-

training seminars. While this training has included basic biblical instruction, it has not included a component dedicated to peacebuilding practices and communal reconciliation. This thesis addresses the great and urgent need for political, social, and ethnic reconciliation if South Sudan hopes to succeed as an independent country.

Most contemporary studies of forgiveness tend to be individualistic and therapeutic in their approach, but this is a Western phenomenon. This thesis recognizes that forgiveness is a communal action—something that has the capacity to create and sustain spiritual and social unity in the communities in which the church is called to witness. CRP and SEA Partners believe that for transformation to take place, the church must play a role as an agent of reconciliation.

This thesis is committed to moving away from a paternalistic aid model, standing shoulder-to-shoulder as partners with the Sudanese so that they can stand with their brothers and sisters, thereby moving the process of community restoration forward. The practice of communal forgiveness and reconciliation serves as a witness of the unconditional forgiveness of God embodied in his followers.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-4920 • Fax 325-674-6785

August 12, 2013

Mr. Charles North
Department of Graduate School of Theology
ACU Box 29411
Abilene Christian University

Dear Mr. North,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Developing a Curriculum for the Training of Pastors as Agents of Communal Reconciliation in Post-Conflict South Sudan" has been approved for a period of one year (IRB # 13-066).

If this project is continued beyond a one-year period, you need to submit an additional request for review. Please notify this office when you have completed your study.

If any problems develop with the study, please inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs promptly.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Mark Billingsley, M. A.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

cc: Dr. Curt Niccum

APPENDIX B

STATEMENT OF THE ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN THE SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

STATEMENT OF THE ECUMENICAL CONSULTATION ON HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN THE SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN

HEALED AND RECONCILED TO BRING HEALING AND RECONCILIATION (2 Cor 5:17-19)

We, the leaders and the heads of the member churches of the Sudan Council of Churches, met in Nairobi, Kenya, on March 7-9, 2012. We met to pray and reflect on healing and reconciliation in our lives and in our nations. In this prayer and reflection, we all are still traumatized by long years of war and suffering in our own countries. Consequently, we realized we need to be healed as we heal others. As it were, we are 'wounded healers' who are entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation. Our reflection and prayer highlighted the following concerns:

1. **National Healing and reconciliation:** we are concerned that since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, there has not been any national healing and reconciliation among our communities. The trauma of more than 50 years of war and suffering has been manifesting itself in tragic and violent ways in our country. We believe the time for our nation to be healed is now.
2. **Peace and harmony between Sudan and South Sudan:** we are concerned that since the declaration of the independence of South Sudan in July 2011, there has been increasingly uncomfortable relationship between these two neighbouring countries. It is our belief that the unsettled remaining issues of oil, border demarcation, citizenship, foreign debts, and other issues can be resolved peaceably. It is our well considered view that resorting to war will never solve anything as the history of war has shown in our countries. In our opinion war is not an option. Instead, we believe that serious negotiation and dialogue in good faith can bring meaningful and lasting solution to these vital issues.
3. **Our unity and prophetic voice:** we repent of our shortcomings and disunity. We have failed to apply the same vigour we did during the liberation to nation building. We were united in suffering; we must now be united for peace and nation building. We therefore renew our commitment and resolve to work together for God and for our people. After all, God has called and commissioned us to be ministers of reconciliation.
4. **Call on African governments and people to continue their support:** We as church leaders have resolved to continue to work for the good neighbourliness of our countries and people and urge the African governments, people of the region and the international community to keep up the momentum for peace and security in the Sudanese nations.
5. **In conclusion:** We appreciate the fellowship and the support of our Ecumenical partners in our journey to bring about the Kingdom of God in our nations. We appreciate the significant role that the Ecumenical envoy to Sudan has and continues to play in accompanying the Sudanese people. It is our appeal that the All Africa

Conference of Churches continues to accompany the Church in the Sudanese nations. We request the Special Ecumenical Envoy to Sudan maintains this role for a few more years under the auspices of the All Africa Conference of Churches so as to accompany the church in the process of reconciliation and healing.

Signed By:

Name	**Church**	**Signature**
1. His Grace Paulino Lukudu Loro	Catholic Church	
2. Fr. Bishay Al Antony	Coptic Orthodox Church	
3. Bishop Dr. I saiah Majok Dau	Sudan Pentecostal Church	
4. Rev. Barnaba Mattias	Sudanese Church of Christ	
5. Rev. James Par Tap	Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church	
6. Evangelist John Daniel	Greek Orthodox Church	
7. Bishop Michael Taban Toro	Chair SCC	
8. Bishop Arkangelo Wani Lemi	Africa Inland Church	
9. Fr. Antonios Fakious	SCC Co-Chair	
10. Rev. Mark Akec Cien	SCC Acting General Secretary	

SUDAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES Head Office Branch Juba

APPENDIX C

PROTOCOL FOR TAKING FIELD NOTES

1. Guidelines for researcher:

   Field notes need to be:
   - Detailed
   - Descriptive
   - Void of judgments and vagueness

2. Observations of in-person sessions should include:
   - Attendance
   - Seating
   - Participation and non-participation
   - Style of interaction
   - Silences and other non-verbal cues
   - Key phrases recorded each time used (this is particularly important to record during the weekly email correspondence). Including but not limited to:
     formerly/previously
     separate
     excluded
     foreigners
     peace
     promise
     hope
     in Christ
     barrier
     hostility
     cross
     access
     Spirit
     forgiveness
     reconcile/reconciliation
     God's household
     justice
     relationship
     truth

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR CODING FIELD NOTES

Coding field notes:

1. Type up notes according to date in a Microsoft Word document.
2. Read through data taken by observation, and data taken from correspondence, and record reflections and questions.
3. Keep track of themes and topics in a separate document.
4. Cluster similar items, taking special note of any emerging relationships/correlations.
5. Assign codes to the themes for more efficient tracking of the data.
6. Categorize themes and topics so that an evaluation of the project's effectiveness will begin to take shape.

Analysis of the coding:

1. How do the participants understand their role in providing leadership assistance to the pastors in South Sudan?
2. How do the participants deal with conflict in their own lives?
3. How do the participants relate spiritual maturity, unity, and the church's witness?
4. How committed are the participants to the ministry of reconciliation as a core function of the church?
5. How do the participants understand primary loyalty—socio-political or spiritual/religious?

APPENDIX E

THE CURRICULUM: A PASTOR-TRAINING MANUAL

Communal Reconciliation in South Sudan

A Pastor-Training Manual

FOREWORD

It is sad but true that conflict is inevitable, and that wherever two or more persons live in any identifiable community, there exists the potential for conflict. Conflict has always been present among God's people, who are not immune to the human desires of power and greed. While conflicts are fraught with danger, they present an opportunity to demonstrate Christ-like virtues and behavior, and practice reconciliation, which is a core aspect of ministering as Christ's body on earth. How those who profess to be followers of Christ work through their own conflict, and how they engage with others who are experiencing strife creates an environment in which conflict can be either detrimental or beneficial. Christian conduct in the midst of conflict has moral and spiritual consequences, not only for the outcome of any particular issue, but also as a witness to the world.

Specifically, in African countries that have experienced genocide, civil war, or ethnic violence, the role of tribal community in fueling hatred and inciting retributive violence is impossible to ignore. Greed has prompted some leaders to use their communities as pawns—pointing to their poverty and hopelessness to stir up dissention and hatred, and creating an environment of fear and hostility. Even as these conflicts are managed and new leaders come into power, latent resentments and tribal hatred continue to fester, so that many of these communities are always on the brink of violence. Africa groans under the agonizing burden of conflict and is unable to progress because of these tensions. There is a great need in Africa to foster peace so that development can take place in families, communities, and nations at large.

Those assuming the role of Christian leadership in post-conflict areas must play a significant role in tearing down barriers of hate, and promoting peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The power of biblical forgiveness and Christian reconciliation is a model that has already resulted in transforming communities in Africa.

I am excited that members of Christian Relief Partners and Sudan Evangelical Alliance Partners have contributed to this manual on reconciliation practices. The material in this manual can be taught to any Christian community, but it is specifically tailored for pastors ministering in the South Sudan. It provides simple, clear, and effective teaching. The discussions foster greater knowledge and awareness, but also demand that the participants become involved in finding solutions to the issues of ethnic conflict in their communities.

Charles S. North
Executive Director, Christian Relief Partners
Dallas, Texas

INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity is a fundamental factor in human life. It is a phenomenon inherent in the human experience. In spite of the immense contribution of social science to the study of ethnicity, there still exists a gap between the sociology and application to ordinary people. This seems especially true in African contexts, where cyclical strife characterizes so much of life. The negative use of ethnicity is a burden in many communities. This only serves to hamper their human capital and resources for economic development.

There is also a disturbing disconnect between the rapid growth of the church and its dismal impact on transforming the culture and values of multi-ethnic African countries. The church's embrace of the ministry of reconciliation has been wanting, especially in light of its profession that it is God's new society in Christ. For example, Rwanda has been describes as the most Christian country in Africa—a distinction that mattered little during the genocide of 1994.

This manual approaches ethnicity not simply in terms of social definition, but in terms of the beauty and brokenness of God's image. The curriculum presented in this manual consists of several modules. Module 1 deals with the basic principles of understanding conflict and conflict resolution; Module 2 addresses the challenges of ethnicity and conflict; Module 3 speaks to forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation; and Module 4 explains the dynamics of communal forgiveness and social reconciliation.

It is important that this curriculum balance the New Testament theology of forgiveness and reconciliation with practical aspects from the field of conflict resolution. The two disciplines ought to be utilized in a complementary way. But bear in mind that Eph. 2 forms the heart of this curriculum. This is especially important given the sensitive and painful nature of the social landscape in South Sudan. This cannot be just another "western" attempt to "show Africans" how to live at peace. It must be built on a solid theological foundation, respectful of Sudanese norms and culture, and capable of promoting social action and healing.

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR USERS

How to Use this Training Manual

This manual is comprised of four modules, each containing several sessions. It is designed to help pastors as well as community leaders understand and formulate a biblical response to the issues of conflict and ethnicity. The curriculum contained in this manual can be utilized with a great deal of flexibility, depending on the needs and schedule of the teacher and students. The material can be adapted for use over the course of a week, just a few days, or even a single day of intense learning.

Tips for Facilitators

There are a few principles central to the way adults learn and how this manual should function:

- **Voluntary learners.** Adults learn best when they willingly participate and are seeking something specific out of a training session.
- **Self-motivation.** Adults gain insights when they feel personally motivated. The way a training session is conducted must support this.
- **Opportunities for sharing.** Participants as well as teachers enhance the learning environment when they share experiences. These narratives enrich the collective wisdom of the group.
- **Active involvement.** Adults learn best in an atmosphere of participation where they are actively involved in the learning process.
- **Real world application.** Adults learn best in an environment where understanding and skills learned can be applied in the context of their daily lives. This generates a desire to act.

Leading a Session

When leading a group session, the following principles and practices ensure maximum effectiveness:

- Have each participant and teacher/facilitator introduce themselves and share something of their background. Express appreciation for their attendance.
- In collaboration with the participants set guidelines that should be adhered to. Some rules might include: keeping time, seating, and respecting the perspectives of others. Let the participants "own" the rules.
- State the purpose of the training clearly. The purpose of this training is to equip and empower pastors to nurture and promote healthy relations among the various ethnicities within their churches and communities, thus addressing one of the root causes of violence in Africa.
- Have the participants mention what their expectations are, and then manage those expectations throughout the training.
- Treat each participant with respect and show appreciation for their input.
- Ask open-ended questions. Questions ought to invite participants to reflect and share with the group. Avoid yes or no questions.

- Encourage equal participation and acknowledge differing points of view.
- Use a variety of teaching methods to accommodate all types of learning styles. Don't underestimate techniques such as intentional silence.
- Avoid lecturing. Listen as much as you talk.
- Keep the group focused on the specific topic at hand. Within reason, watch out for discussions that derail the objectives of the session.
- Summarize the sessions and review the main points.

Methodology

Make use of interactive methods that will engage the participants. Group discussions are an important part of this methodology. The facilitator should divide participants into groups of various sizes, depending on the activity. Smaller groups allow individuals to express their views more freely. Storytelling is not only an important part of how adults learn; it also reflects the values of African cultures.

Objectives

This training manual is designed to equip church leaders with the skills needed to:

- Understand and help others understand the causes and effects of conflict.
- Assist others in working through their own trauma relating to conflict.
- Equip those working in areas of conflict to balance the need for justice with the biblical mandate to practice forgiveness.
- Equip pastors to act as "agents of reconciliation" by using the narratives of those who have gone through conflict in a manner that will promote reconciliation.

Teaching Sensitive and Painful Issues

Because much of this teaching takes place in the midst of ongoing social upheaval and painful loss, it is important that students are emotionally prepared to handle the sessions. These issues are not to be taken lightly. But when these issues are raised constructively and in the proper context, the emotional learning can be powerful and productive. The positive outcomes and potential for change are worth the effort and preparation. Please consult the following resource:

Susan Jones, "10 Point Model for Teaching Controversial Issues." Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility – TeachableMoment Classroom Lessons, November 7, 2011.

See (www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/10-point-model-teaching-controversial-issues)

MODULE 1
Understanding Conflict and Conflict Resolution

Session 1: Understanding Peace

Objectives:

- Explain the meaning of peace within a community setting.
- Define various terms associated with enhancing peace.
- Demonstrate peace from a biblical perspective.
- Understand and appreciate the role that storytelling plays in promoting peace and healing.

Definitions of Peace:

Peacemaking
The term "peacemaking" is used in different ways, depending on the context or community involved. In situations of armed conflict, peacemaking is any activity which brings hostile parties to an agreement.

Peacebuilding
The term "peacebuilding" is often used to address structural sources of injustice or conflict. It is a long-term commitment to a process that includes the transformation of relationships, investment in communities, coordination of resources and planning, and power sharing, resulting in sustainable stability.

Peacekeeping
"Peacekeeping" is usually associated with the practice of an independent international military force entering a region in order to separate warring parties and thereafter to maintain any negotiated ceasefire or peace arrangement.

Reconciliation
Reconciliation is that restoration of relationships that have been broken due to offenses previously committed by one or both parties. Reconciliation can only take place when and if those involved in the conflict are willing to live in peace and harmony with one another.

Biblical Perspective (Shalom)
The Hebrew word "shalom" refers to a society where all the intertwining social structures operate in harmony with each other. Communal Hebrew society reflected in the Old Testament has close similarities with African communal life. Shalom involves bringing a sense of completeness or wholeness to human relationships, with God at the center.

Small Group Discussion

In groups of 5, have the participants list Bible verses (from both the Old and New Testaments) that touch on peace. Group the references in themes of:

- Peace with God;
- Personal peace;
- Social peace;
- Other manifestations of peace (such as resources).

Storytelling as an Instrument of Peace in the Community

The fostering of "shalom" requires the application of a key skill – telling your story and listening to someone else's. This may sound simplistic, but in cultures with a highly interwoven social fabric, storytelling allows for healing to begin, while silence increases pain.

The facilitator should narrate a realistic story involving pain and loss. This could be taken from contemporary news headlines or involve a compelling personal story. The important thing is to communicate the facts clearly, the emotions of the characters involved, and a deeper (symbolic) meaning of the story. After telling the story, involve the whole group in a discussion about these elements.

Small Group Activity

In groups of three, one person will tell a story involving personal loss and grief. One other person will listen for the facts of the story, while the third person will listen for feelings portrayed in the story. These "reporters" will then communicate these facts and feelings to the large group, and if the storyteller concurs, ask the large group to indentify any deeper or symbolic meaning.

Session 2: Understanding Conflict

Objectives:

- Understand and explain the meaning and nature of conflict.
- Identify types of conflict and their causes.
- Analyze recent family and community conflict and be able to identify positive and negative effects of conflict.
- Name several practical things that could help heal wounds caused by conflict.

We are living in a rapidly changing world, and every change naturally creates conflict. Unfortunately, some conflicts have caused bloodshed and the destruction of communities and nations. Understanding conflict is the first step towards its resolution. What makes an effective peacemaker is not mastery of methods, processes, or tactics, but the development of a way of thinking, a set of values, and a commitment to peacemaking.

Small Group Activity

Divide the participants into groups of 4. The groups should discuss a common definition of conflict, and report back to the whole group. As the discussion unfolds, be sure to discuss the following ideas inherent to conflict:

- An expressed struggle between at least 2 interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals and scarce resources in achieving their goals.
- A struggle over values and claims to power.
- The Bible speaks of unfulfilled desires, wants, and pleasures within one's heart, spurred on by selfish motives (James 4:1).
- Does conflict result in feelings of hopefulness or hopelessness?
- Is conflict good, bad, or neutral?

Common Views of Conflict

Discuss with the large group which of the following views they most often find true about conflict:

Conflict is wrong and dangerous: People who hold this view are uncomfortable with differences of any kind. They will usually avoid controversy altogether because conflict represents failure.

Conflict is an inconvenience: People who hold this view want to get through conflict as soon as possible. Consequently, they often pursue superficial solutions. While this may work with minor conflicts, it cannot work with major disagreements because it sets up a situation where cooperation is absent.

Conflict is neutral: Conflict is neither good nor bad. This categorization tends to eschew all moral attitudes relating to conflict. Sin, righteousness, repentance, confession, and forgiveness are replaced with utilitarian devices such as improved communication and compromise settlements. This view is not necessarily wrong, but can be temporary if the root causes of the conflict are not addressed.

Conflict is a contest: This view sees conflict as an opportunity to assert rights, to control others, and to take advantage of the situation. Conflict is not avoided since winning a dispute means more than preserving relationships.

Conflict is natural and sometimes beneficial: This view holds that unity does not necessarily mean uniformity, and that conflicts come about because of individual uniqueness and diversity. Rather than avoid conflict or try to prevail, people who hold this view learn to accept and to work with others. A well-managed conflict can result in increased community cohesion.

Common Misperceptions About Conflict

Harmony is normal: Quite the opposite is true. Conflict is not abnormal; it has been the norm over the course of human existence.

Conflicts and disagreements are the same: Disagreements can be healthy; conflict happens when people can't handle disagreements.

Conflict is pathological: Someone engaged in conflict may be described as "sick," and the behavior may be labeled as neurotic, hostile, paranoid, antisocial, etc.

Conflict management should be polite: Conflicts do not follow the societal norms of polite conversation. As conflicts intensify, interactions become increasingly less orderly, less clear, and less goal-directed. Conflict management certainly needs to be orderly. But it also needs to be blunt.

Anger is the predominant emotion: Conflict is rife with the bitter experience of broken-heartedness. Avoidance, bitterness, and eventual retaliation is a painful human experience, much more complex and layered than anger.

Small Group Activity: Causes of Conflict

In groups of 4, have 1 person share a conflict they have recently been involved in. The others in the group should be able to answer the following:

- What was the cause of the conflict?
- How did it affect you and those close to you?
- What are some common causes of conflict in your community? Church?
- Has the conflict had mostly negative or positive effects on the lives of people in the community?

The Cycle of Conflict

When systemic causes of conflict are not addressed, a cycle of conflict resumes:

- Tension
- Blaming and demonizing about who caused the conflict
- Fault-finding and calls for "justice"
- Precipitating event (e.g.: an election)
- Confrontation
- Adjustment – usually a delicate truce after negotiations

Levels of Conflict

There are 4 commonly identified levels of conflict:

1. **Intrapersonal conflict:** This refers to conflict *within* a person. Sources of conflict may include ideas, thoughts, emotions, values, or predispositions. The internal struggle between 2 courses of action is an example of this type of conflict.
2. **Interpersonal conflict:** This refers to conflict between 2 individuals.
3. **Intragroup conflict:** This is conflict that occurs within a group or community. This includes conflict within a family, church, or any other close-knit identifiable group.
4. **Intergroup conflict:** This refers to the conflict that takes place between 2 groups. This may include warring tribes, nations, or other identifiable groups. At this stage the conflicts are more complex because of the sheer number of people involved and also because intragroup conflict may still be taking place at the same time.

Intensity Levels

Typically, conflicts heighten through 5 levels, with each level representing an escalation of intensity:

1. **Problem to solve:** This level is characterized by recognition of a problem and a desire to solve the problem. The general focus tends to be on the issue, rather than the personalities.
2. **Disagreement:** At this stage the parties become interested in self-preservation and may be willing to receive help to resolve the conflict. Emotions become more pronounced. There is less openness and disclosure of information between the 2 sides.
3. **Contest:** Here, discussions become more positional. False assumptions characterize this level, and dialogue becomes tense and uneasy. Coalitions emerge, resulting in an "us vs. them" mentality.
4. **Fight/Flight:** At this stage, resolving the conflict is no longer the primary goal. Parties are more interested in winning "as a matter of principle." The parties (and their factions) and now willing to hurt or humiliate the other side. If a conflict reaches this stage, relationships are unlikely to survive.
5. **Intractable:** This stage is characterized by a desire to destroy the opposition. Here, "the ends justify the means." Parties have lost all control over their emotions and objectivity, and any contact between the parties becomes disruptive.

Large Group Activity

Discuss the following causes of conflict, with examples:

- Economic resources
- Political issues
- Ethnic differences
- Religion

Session 3: Understanding Conflict Resolution

Objectives:

- Understand various ways of resolving conflicts.
- Identify biblical methods of resolving conflicts.

How People Engage in Conflict

People trying to meet their perceived needs engage in conflict in a variety of ways:

Power-based approach: This way is often destructive, sometimes violent, and seldom leads directly to improved relations.

Rights-based approach: People attempt to get their needs met by asserting a privilege or right under an established structure of law, policy, regulation, or procedure.

Interest-based approach: This approach concerns working toward a solution that satisfies one's unspoken, often-emotional needs (interests).

Principle-based approach: This is an appeal to fairness. A person might assert some moral right, or just outcome. Rather than focusing on interests (personal needs), the focus is on some external standard of justice or fairness.

Manipulation-based approach: People who feel powerless often address their needs indirectly through manipulation. This way does not confront the issue directly, and issues and interests are not clearly put on the table.

Conflict Management Styles

There are 5 main styles of conflict management, identified through behavioral characteristics:

Avoidance: Conflict is seen as something to be shunned at all cost.

Accommodation: Interpersonal relationships are to be maintained at all cost. Appeasement and giving in often characterize this style.

Compromise: A win/win solution is not possible, so both parties settle for a give and take solution and partial satisfaction.

Collaboration: Both parties achieve their personal goals by seeking a win/win solution and mutual satisfaction.

Competition: A win at all costs style that values the satisfaction of outcome over relationships.

Large Group Discussion

Show the group a mango (*prevalent in Boma*), and ask them to imagine 2 sisters both wanting the same mango. They stubbornly argue. Later their mother asks them what they wanted the mango for. The first sister replies that she wanted it to squeeze out the juice for drinking. The second sister replies that she wanted it for the pulp – to sweeten a stew she had been cooking. Discuss the above styles and how they relate to this illustration.

Escape Responses to Conflict

Denial or Avoidance: This is acting as if the problem does not exist. It is refusing to do what ought to be done to properly resolve the conflict. Avoidance brings only temporary relief and usually results in the problem getting worse.

Flight: Another escape mechanism is to run from conflict. This may involve ending a friendship or other relationships, quitting a job, divorcing, or changing churches. Flight can be recommended in some situations. But in most cases it only postpones a real solution to the problem. Often though, flight precipitates a more destructive conflict because grievances pile up, and grudges wait for opportunities to retaliate.

Attack Responses to Conflict

Litigation: Some conflicts ought to be resolved before a civil judge, but lawsuits often result in broken relationships and no measurable just outcome.

Assault: Some people try to overcome an opponent by using various forms of force and intimidation, such as physical violence or attempts to damage the other person financially or professionally. This usually makes the conflict worse. Abuse, shame, and blame contribute to a retaliatory cycle.

Killing: Some people may be so desperate to win a conflict or they may be so convinced of the justness of their cause that they will end the life/lives of whoever opposes them. Murder is the fruit of harboring hatred in your heart.
Note: This has been a very real problem in the Boma community. So be aware that the participants will be addressing this point from a perspective of experience.

Small Group Activity

Divide the participants into groups of 4. Ask them to reflect on a recent public conflict in their community (or the nation at large) and to discuss how these escape or attack responses caused it to worsen and become a spiral of destruction.

Peacemaking Responses to Conflict

Peacemaking responses to conflict can be divided into 2 categories: Personal peacemaking, and Assisted peacemaking.

1. Personal Peacemaking

Overlook the offense: If we hope to preserve the relationship, we overlook the offense or accommodate the wishes of others. This works when the issues are less important than

the value of the relationship. If we are partly to blame for causing the conflict, this may not be the best way to deal with it. Confession to the other party may result in a better relationship. "*A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense*" (Proverbs 19:11).

Informal discussion and compromise: The biblical way to deal with interpersonal conflict is shown in Matthew 18:15. "*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*" Even serious offenses can often be resolved through confession or loving confrontation.

Negotiation: Substantive issues should be resolved by negotiating solutions that meet the needs and interests of those involved. Negotiation is not a win-at-all-costs approach. Rather, it is a constructive way for each party to have a voice and actively participate in the outcome.

2. Assisted Peacemaking

Mediation: If a dispute cannot be resolved through personal peacemaking, ask a third person who is trusted to meet with you and the other person to help facilitate communication and discuss possible solutions. Mediators create a safe environment for people to resolve their differences, but they have no power to impose solutions.

Arbitration: When you cannot come to a voluntary agreement with another party on a substantive issue, an arbitrator can be appointed to listen to your arguments and render a decision in the matter.

Church discipline: If a professing Christian refuses to do what is right, church leaders can intervene to promote repentance and forgiveness. This is in keeping with the idea that conflict affects the whole community, and the community must sometimes speak to issues of justice and accountability.

Large Group Discussion

Ask the participants if any assisted peacemaking methods have been used in their communities. If not, why? If so, have they been effective? How can they be used in their communities under current circumstances?

MODULE 2
The Challenges of Ethnicity and Conflict

Session 4: Ethnic Conflict and Peacebuilding

Objectives:

- Explain the meaning of ethnicity and ethnic identity.
- Identify the causes of inter-ethnic conflicts.
- Identify and illustrate the consequences of ethnic conflict.
- Suggest peacebuilding solutions for ethnic conflict within their own communities.

Introduction: Large Group Discussion

- When you meet a new person, what are the likely questions that come to mind about the person?
- What is an ethnic group?
- What makes a person from one tribe/ethnicity different from a person from another tribe? (be specific if necessary)
- Share any experience that you have had with a person(s) from a different community – positive or negative.

What is Ethnic Identity?

Ethnicity refers to relationships between members of a group who consider themselves distinct in terms of kinship and socialization. Race, on the other hand, differentiates people based on their color.

Examples of ethnic identification markers/characteristics:

- Commonly recognized names
- Common ancestry or "myth of origin"
- Shared historical memory
- Elements of a common culture and set of customs, language, and religion
- Common ancestral homeland
- Sense of belonging and solidarity (especially politically)

Definition of Terms

Clan: A subsection of a tribe or ethnic group that consists of a group on interrelated families believed to have descended from a common ancestor, and usually sharing the same last name.

Ethnic boundary markers: Sets of distinctive characteristics, norms, and practices that group people together and set them apart from others. Common markers include ancestry, language, food, cultural values, and religious rites.

Ethnic group: A community of people who share a common identity based on birth, traditions, culture, history, and language.

Ethnicity: The social bond that unites a group who consider themselves distinct from other groups, and stand in solidarity with their own group, often against outsiders.

Ethnocentrism: The negative use of one's ethnicity as a measure to judge and exclude others. This is the result of believing that one's own ethnic markers are superior to those of other groups.

Tribe: A group of interrelated families and clans who share the belief in a common ancestor, forming a community which considers itself different from other communities. An ethnic group and a tribe are similar concepts, though the term "tribe" is currently used derogatively to designate others as underdeveloped or "less civilized." The term "ethnicity" is preferred.

Tribalism: Like ethnocentrism, tribalism is the use of one's tribal affiliation, biases, stereotyping, mistrust, and fear to foster hostile sentiments against other groups.

Large Group Discussion

- What are some ways that ethnicity can be used positively?
- In what ways has ethnicity been used negatively?
- How have you experienced this?

Sources of Ethnic Conflict

Cumulatively, these signs are a clear manifestation of ethnocentrism, tribalism, and racism in a society:

- Negative stereotypes
- Poverty and inequality based on ethnic lines
- Nepotism
- Prejudice
- Ethnic-based politics

How Can Ethnic Differences Enhance Peace?

On a personal level, we can choose to make a difference in how we interact with others:

- Meet with a group of mixes ethnic peers on a regular basis.
- Learn about culture and history from a perspective other than your own.
- Steer clear of "us/them" thinking and speech.
- Identify how ethnically diverse your church is. How can the church be more welcoming?
- How are power and privilege preserved in your community and church?
- How and why are people excluded or marginalized in your community?
- Make peace and reconciliation practices a priority.
- Be intentional and proactive.
- Make political choices based on factors other than ethnicity.
- Listen to the stories of other ethnic groups, and be willing to tell your story.

Session 5: A Biblical Response to the Challenges of Ethnicity

Objectives:

- Understand biblical principles related to ethnicity.
- Understand and appreciate the beauty of diversity as a blessing to humanity.
- Be able to put biblical principles into practice in responding to ethnic issues.
- Become committed to practice the virtues of peacebuilding and reconciliation at various levels in the church and the community.

Large Group Activity

Ask the participants to give examples from scripture where people of different ethnic groups interacted:

- To which groups did they belong?
- What was the nature of their interaction? Positive or negative?
- What was the outcome?

Creation:

Genesis 1:11-20

- Rich diversity is part of God's perfect creation
- What does this diversity tell us about God's character – what God thinks of as "good"?

Genesis 1:26-28

- What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
- How can we better reflect God's image in our attitudes and actions toward others?
- How can we honor the dignity of God's image in people who are unlike us?

Church:

2 Corinthians 2:16-21

- The church is meant to be an instrument whereby God brings about the reconciliation of all people in their diverse ethnicity. Through his blood Christ has reconciled people to God and to each other.

The Narrative of Acts

- God's redemption and the growth of the church break down ethnic barriers.
- The story of the early church narrates this expansion across ethnic boundaries.
- We are all one in Christ.
- Our new identity in Christ supersedes our gender, social, economic, and ethnic identities.
- While we still remain members of our ethnic group, that identity no longer determined our relationship with others outside our group; our identity is Christian.
- When we embrace the cross of Christ, we also embrace everyone else who has come to the cross.
- Even those who are not Christians are still created in God's image, and therefore deserve love, compassion, and forgiveness.

God Calls us to be Christ-like

Since we are a new creation in Christ, we have been called to be like him. Christ died for the world, demonstrating his love for all humanity.

Small Group Activity

Divide participants into groups of 4 and discuss the following. Then have each group report back to the large group.

- What makes many Christians elevate their ethnic identity above their Christian identity in times of crisis?
- What can be done to change this?
- What specific Christ-like attitudes and behaviors are important in promoting peaceful ethnic relations?
- Has the preaching of the gospel by your church done enough to communicate unity in Christ?
- What challenges might we face as we try to implement these biblical ideals?

The Basis for Ethnic Reconciliation

While selfishness, pride, and tribalism divide people into "us" and "them," humanity has more in common that people realize. Here are some major bases for ethnic reconciliation. Discuss with the large group:

- Reconciliation is God's mission (*Missio Dei*). His ultimate goal is to gather people from every tribe, language, nation, and ethnic group (Rev. 21:22-26).
- The Christian community is essentially one. Through his death and resurrection, Christ made a way for all who believe in him to have a new and equal identity (Eph. 2:13-22).
- In Christ, all believers are fellow citizens of one Kingdom, and where two kingdoms clash, Christians must choose the eternal values of their new identity in Christ.
- God seeks justice for all humanity.

Conclusion: A Time for Action

- Repent of any personal animosity towards those who are ethnically "different."
- Resolve to accommodate those who are different.
- Include those who are different or weak.
- Engage in sacrificial actions that show others you are willing to put their needs above your own.
- Pray for harmony among the different ethnic groups in your community and in the nation.

MODULE 3
Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Session 6: Ephesians 2:11-22

The text of Eph. 2:11-22 lies at the heart of the material in this curriculum. During this session, lead the participants in a *lexio divina* reading of the text so that their vision for reconciliation is informed by scripture.

The traditional four-fold method of *lectio divina* (dwelling in the text) includes:

- Lectio (read): The deliberate reading of the text.
- Meditatio (meditate): The meditation on key words, phrases, or images.
- Oratio (prayer): These key words or phrases evoke prayer.
- Contemplatio (contemplation): A silent awareness of God's presence and the power of the Word.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Questions for contemplation

- What meaning of "reconciliation" emerged most clearly to you from this text?
- What vision do you have of what the community could look like in the future if the church fully embraces its mission as God's agent of reconciliation?

Consider the kinds of Temple imagery used in the text to make the point about reconciliation:

- **Circumcision** (vs 11) – although not necessarily related to the Temple, only the circumcised could enter beyond the Court of Women and this ritual served as a distinguishing mark that separated Jews from all others.
- **Brought near** (vs 13) – This phrase referred to the offering of a sacrifice to God.
- **By the blood** (vs 13) – This phrase also refers to Old Testament sacrifice, indicating forgiveness and/or purification.
- **Barrier of the dividing wall** (vs 14) – This signifies the barricade that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women which contained warnings of death to Gentile trespassers.
- **The Law** (vs 15) – This does not pertain directly to the Temple but still served to separate Jew from Gentile. The Law of Moses was given specifically to the Jews. Christ removes the Law as an obstacle to universal salvation.
- **Access** (vs 18) – This word served as a technical term for the entrance of the High Priest once a year into the Holy of Holies. What one priest could do solely on the Day of Atonement, Christians do all the time.
- **Holy temple** (vs 21) – The Greek has two words for Temple. One indicates the general precincts of the Temple. The other, the one used here, specifies the area where deity resides. For the Jewish Temple, this would be the Holy of Holies. Thus, Jewish and Greek Christians have constant access to the Father because the church itself is the Holy of Holies.

Why use this Temple imagery?

- The Temple, in both Judaism and pagan religions, represented the place where humans and deity could interact and communicate. (Remember that the Temple to Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus.) Paul writes to emphasize the importance of the church as the true place where God dwells. The Jerusalem Temple would have been well known by the Ephesians. It stood as a constant reminder of the supposed exclusion of Gentiles from God. They were "without hope and without God" (2:12). But through Christ all believers have been built into the true Temple where divisions no longer exist.

- A result of the work of Christ is the union of Jewish and Gentile Christians into a single church. This singular identity is not accomplished by ignoring or destroying cultural, ethnic, or social distinctions, but by celebrating something they share that surpasses their differences. Ephesians 2:11-22 addresses this tension. Since God has reconciled both Jew and Gentile, there are significant implications for the church regarding how Christians approach racial and ethnic differences and tensions. What Christ accomplished was not simply the making of one man where two had existed, but the making of one *new* man. Christ's death, and the destruction of the barrier of hostility and the creation of a new man, creates not only a new identity for the church, but a new purpose and a new

witness to a bitterly divided world. The church was founded on the proposition that Christ's death has destroyed all dividing walls. Though they continue to exist in the world, they have no place among the fellowship of believers.

- Sin is also the exclusion of others from our world. Sin against a person is also sin against God. Sin is a desire to purge the "other." The exclusion of others is an exclusion of God. Those who abandon their neighbors can remain untouched by the plight of those outside their immediate circle. Like the priests and the Levites in the story of the Good Samaritan, we simply cross to the other side and pass by, minding our own business. Embracing the enemy, while still acknowledging their evil deeds finds its anchor in the cross of Christ.

- The cross defines the identity of the Church, as well as its relationship to society. Following the example of Christ, and having God at the center of all relationships, Christians maintain identity by embracing others, not by safeguarding from contamination. Having received forgiveness, Christians offer it to others.

Large Group Discussion

- In what ways do we practice exclusion of the "other"? (Those of a different background, culture, language, or ethnicity)

- How does the situation in Ephesus describe your community, and how might it inform a vision of peace for that community?

- What practical things would Christians in the Boma community have to *do* in order to live out the message of Ephesians?

- Does unity erase differences? Why/why not?

Session 7: Forgiveness

Objectives:

- Define the term "forgiveness"
- Discuss why forgiveness is difficult
- Understand what forgiveness is and what it is not
- Understand how important forgiveness is to our relationship with God

Definition of Terms

Because it has been identified with religious belief and practice, forgiveness has not typically been included in traditional conflict resolution and peacebuilding strategies. However, particularly within the communal context of African cultures, forgiveness is an important part of interpersonal, communal, and socio-political reconciliation.

Forgiveness:

Forgiveness is letting go of anger, resentment, and a need for revenge in the face of injury, hurt, unjust acts, and relationship damage.

Forgiveness is not:

- A legal pardon or clemency
- Forgetting what happened entirely
- Condoning the offense
- Justifying that what happened was fair
- Making excuses
- Finding absolution

Forgiveness is:

- An internal process
- Letting go of the intense emotions attached to past events
- Recognizing that we no longer seek to punish others
- Accepting that nothing we do to hurt those who hurt us will bring healing
- Letting go of grudges and resentments
- Moving on

Why Forgiveness is Difficult

Small Group Discussion

In groups of 3, have the participants discuss their personal experience of forgiving another person. Why is forgiveness difficult?

Discuss the following with the large group:

- Forgiveness takes away the thing that allows us to punish the person who hurt us.
- We place ourselves in the position of being hurt again.
- It demands we look at our own failure and sin.
- If demands submission to God and to others.

Ephesians 4:32 "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*"

Keys to Forgiving

- Forgiveness is a redemptive response to having been wronged and wounded.
- Forgiveness requires 3 basic actions:
    1. We surrender our right to get even
    2. We rediscover the humanity of the wrongdoer
    3. We genuinely wish the wrongdoer well
- Forgiveness takes time.
- Forgiving does not require forgetting or pretending.
- Ideally, forgiveness leads to reconciliation. But not always.
- Forgiving comes more naturally to those who are grateful that they have been forgiven.

The Importance of Forgiveness

- Failure to forgive others ends up hurting us.
- Failure to forgive spoils relationships – even with people who did not hurt us.
- Failure to forgive affects the well-being and mindset of the one who holds a grudge.
- Failure to forgive affects one's relationship with God.
- Failure to forgive prevents the healing process from happening.

Biblical Forgiveness

Reasons We Do Not Forgive:

- Claims to our own goodness
- A Sense of moral superiority
- Placing ALL the blame on others, lets us escape sharing the blame
- We hesitate to fully submit to God and to others

Reasons For Forgiveness:

- Freedom from hostility, anger, rage, and vengeance
- Gratefulness towards God and others
- Loyalty to relationships
- The need for security and continuity
- Love for others
- Avoidance of conflict escalation
- Avoidance of further pain

Forgiving Others and Seeking Forgiveness

Consider the following steps in seeking forgiveness. Discuss:

1. Acknowledge wrongdoing
2. Make amends
3. Commit to change

Repentance and Forgiveness

Though not a precondition for forgiveness, repentance, confession, and sincere apologies may facilitate the process of forgiveness. Discuss the following steps with the group:

- We must see ourselves as we really are – no excuse-making or shifting of the blame.
- Confess our sinful actions with sincere words and actions.
- Commit to "clothe" ourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, peace, and thankfulness. Have the heart and mind of Christ.
- Genuine change of one's heart, words, and actions, especially towards others.

Becoming a More Forgiving Person

- Reflect on why it's important to be a forgiving person.
- Be specific about identifying your greatest wounds from the past.
- Reduce negative emotions and thoughts; cultivate virtue.
- Practice forgiveness as a moral virtue on a daily basis – with little offenses.
- Be willing to open up to someone you trust.
- Pray for your enemies as Christ has commanded us.

Session 8: Reconciliation

Objectives:

- Define the term "reconciliation"
- Explain the differences between forgiveness and reconciliation
- Explain the process of reconciliation

Reconciliation means to win over, to settle a dispute, and to bring the relationship into agreement or harmony. Reconciliation is the restoration of a relationship that was broken due to an offense. It is the gracious and voluntary improvement of a negative relationship by removing the factors that produced enmity between people, groups, or communities. It is not simply to let go of the past; it is to recreate a relationship and bring it to a place of good will and peace through the transformation of attitudes.

Reconciliation is usually the final step in a process. Discuss the meaning of the following attitudes and actions with the group:

- Repentance
- Confession
- Contrition
- Restitution
- Reconciliation

The Difference Between Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Ask the participants to discuss the differences between the two:

- Forgiveness is empowered by emotion; reconciliation is relational.
- Forgiveness happens inside a person; reconciliation happens between two people.
- Forgiveness is a gift; reconciliation is earned through trustworthy behavior.
- Forgiveness promotes reconciliation. But reconciliation requires the deliberate fostering of relationship building.

Elements of Reconciliation

Truth: Truth is opening up and sharing wrongs you have committed. Truth entails honesty, clarity, accountability, and vulnerability.

Mercy: Mercy is about compassion, forgiveness, and acceptance of the other. Mercy, based on compassion and forgiveness, begins the process of healing.

Justice: Justice is about making things right, rectifying the wrong, and restitution where possible.

Peace: Peace involves repentance, transformation, and renewal. Peace brings harmony, unity, and well-being. Peace brings respect and security to relationships and to the community.

The Stages (Circle) of Reconciliation

People in conflict often wage an internal battle between their values and their emotions. Reconciliation of the heart is a cycle through several stages:

- Relationship
- Injury
- Withdrawal

After a period of withdrawal, the head is ready for reconciliation, but often the heart is not ready to take the risk.

- Self-awareness – admission of one's own emotions and culpability
- Commitment to reconciliation
- Act of risk – relationship reestablished

Further Elements

- Reconciliation is hard work
- Reconciliation takes courage
- Reconciliation involves deep and active listening to another's story
- Reconciliation addresses specific wrongdoing
- Reconciliation means risking further injury

Embrace as a Model of Reconciliation

Miroslav Volf's book *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* has become a seminal work dealing with forgiveness and reconciliation in communities ravaged by ethnic conflicts.

There is a close link between the way God deals with humanity and the way we deal with our neighbors. Christians have the responsibility of creating a community of mutual acceptance where God's healing power of forgiveness is passed on through the practices of inclusion, embrace, and forgiveness. Volf discusses 4 "acts":

1. **Opening the arms:** Open arms create a sign that I have made space for another to come in, and that I am not encircled by a boundary.
2. **Waiting:** Open arms wait for the other to respond. Another cannot be forced into an embrace. Waiting means that embrace cannot be one-sided. It is reciprocal in nature.
3. **Closing the arms:** This is the goal of embrace; each holding and being held by the other in mutual acceptance and gentleness.
4. **Opening the arms again:** As the final act, opening the arms again signifies that the other can be embraced, but never assimilated. The differentiated identity of the other must be preserved.

MODULE 4
Communal Forgiveness and Social Reconciliation

Session 9: Peacebuilding in the Church and in the Community

Objectives:

- Explain the role of the church as a peacemaking agent
- Explain the principles of communal reconciliation
- Be able to implement practical strategies to transform the church and the community

Matthew 5:9 "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*"

Godly change in a community comes from within. The church could be a driving force in promoting peace in the community.

Small Group Discussion

In groups of 4, have the participants discuss the assertion that "peacemaking starts inside the church and then changes the community." Have them answer the following questions:

- How is this possible in your own church and community?
- What are the dangers of a church that is unable to resolve its conflicts?
- What must the church do in order to become a peacemaking agent?

Characteristics of a Peacemaking Church

- The gospel informs a vision for preserving relationships
- Church leaders equip Christians to be agents of peace and reconciliation
- Genuine compassion and respect results in a more cohesive community
- Christians seek to practice biblical ways of resolving conflict
- Peace and unity in the church serve as a positive witness to the world.

A Model of Communal Forgiveness and Reconciliation

In order for communities to be reconciled to each other, certain conditions must be met:
Note: Communal forgiveness must remain sensitive to the historical, cultural, and political context of the communities in conflict. The goal of the process is the healing of communities for a better future. This takes time.

Truth Telling: Since truth often becomes the first casualty of human atrocities, telling the truth is the cornerstone of reconciliation. Truth must look back to the root causes of the conflict, and public acknowledgement of wrongdoing must take place. Through public apologies, remorse, and repentance, without any form of justification, one group (or its representatives) admit wrongdoing perpetrated against the other.

Commitment to the Peaceful and Productive Resolution of Conflict: This must be made by all parties before reconciliation can take place. The means must be spelled out and the community must follow. There must be a commitment to mutual understanding.

Intentional Acts That Foster Mutual Embrace: There must be a new vision for life together in united families and friendly communities. The practical possibilities are endless – rebuilding homes, caring for widows and orphans of the "other," and building inter-communal institutions such as schools.

Public Promotion and Encouragement of Individual Forgiveness: Since specific people in the community have done specific things to specific people, communal forgiveness happens in the context of individual actions of remorse and graciousness. The church must take a lead in facilitating these acts and promoting a culture of truthfulness and forgiveness, while eschewing revenge.

Characteristics of Communal (Political) Forgiveness

- Truth telling
- Public acknowledgement of wrongdoing
- The victim(s) must reject the need for revenge
- Restorative justice
- Compassion and empathy for both victims and perpetrators
- Reduction or cancellation of a debt or deserved punishment

The African Philosophy of *Ubuntu*

The word means "humanness," and is roughly translated as "human kindness." It is a philosophy that we are all inter-connected.

"*A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good; for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs to the greater, and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished.*" Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Discuss the following traits with the group:

- Human solidarity
- Respect for human dignity
- Restoration of relationships
- Self-giving
- Compassion and grace
- Hope
- Community building
- Social justice

Ethnic Reconciliation as the Mission of the Church

Forgiveness, reconciliation, and peacemaking are part of the Christian calling. This is an individual as well as corporate charge to inter-personal and inter-community peace. The church is to be an instrument of restoration, healing, and hope. But the church has not always been faithful to this mission. Rather than serving as agents of reconciliation,

Christians have often identified with their ethnic and tribal interests, and in some cases have taken part in acts of violence against their fellow believers of another ethnicity. In order for the church to fulfill its mission, Christians must understand the call, the means, and the message of ethnic reconciliation.

Group Discussion

Discuss the following with the group:

- The church is called to a ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)
- The cross is the ultimate means of reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13-16)
- Jesus is the "Prince of Peace."
- All people matter to God
- We are to "make room" for outsider. How?
- How can reconciliation deliver us from captivity to evil?

"Because of the unity of humankind we demand equal rights and equal respect for racial minorities. Because of the diversity of ethnic groups we renounce cultural imperialism and seek to preserve all those riches of inter-racial culture which are compatible with Christ's lordship . . . Because of the glory of the church, we must seek to rid ourselves of any lingering racism and strive to make it a model of harmony between races, in which the multiracial dream comes true." John Stott

Session 10 (Conclusion): Forgiveness – A Recap

Forgiveness is a Command

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." Matthew 5:23-24

"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:25

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4:32

"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Colossians 3:13

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." Mahatma Gandhi

The Christian community does not exist in social isolation. Believers live their lives as normal people, but with a vision that sees beyond the current social situation. The church's presence in society ought to be transformational, especially when it comes to modeling love, justice, and forgiveness.

Questions to Help Begin the Journey of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- Do I really want to begin the process of forgiveness?
- Who can help me in this process?
- What pain is causing anger, bitterness, and resentment in my life?
- Do my words and actions offer grace or show a need for revenge?
- Have I experienced forgiveness from God and others?
- Am I allowing God's grace to touch my heart?
- Can I face the person who has hurt me?
- Is there someone I am not willing to forgive?
- From whom do I need forgiveness?
- Can I accept forgiveness from others?
- How am I being called to be a witness of forgiveness and reconciliation in my community?

Closing Prayer

APPENDIX F

WORKS USED IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

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APPENDIX G

SESSION MATERIALS

Session 1: Introduction and Orientation

Welcome

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this ministry project. Not only will your participation benefit you personally and spiritually, you will also benefit church leaders in South Sudan who are thirsting for peace and for the tools to bring peace to their communities. We are doing a specific task—developing a curriculum for the training of pastors as agents of communal reconciliation in post-conflict South Sudan. The goal is the creation of materials that can be used to teach Sudanese pastors the theology of reconciliation and the skills to demonstrate and implement change in their communities in a way that honors Christ's vision for his church. The final product of these collaborative sessions is not merely an academic product, but a working curriculum.

The development of a biblical and culturally relevant curriculum in reconciliation practices has the potential to bring together church leaders from different tribes, and to train them in peacebuilding, conflict resolution processes, biblical forgiveness, reconciliation, mediation of conflicts, human rights, and tolerance. This training can provide a framework in which the church can develop and implement transformative strategies for healing and reconciliation of the broken communities they serve.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum to be utilized in pastor-training seminars in Boma, South Sudan. The staff and board members of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners, as part of the commitment to ongoing education initiatives in South Sudan, believe that for lasting transformation to take place, the church must play its God-given role as an agent of communal reconciliation. In South Sudan the church has been severely affected by unrest, and is struggling to address ethnic intolerance in a comprehensively biblical manner. The demand for vengeance drowns out the biblical message of forgiveness and reconciliation, resulting in church leaders aligning themselves with warring groups and condoning their acts of violence, rather than aligning with fellow believers. The integrity of the church's witness is at stake.

Project Participants

All participants are either staff/board members or former staff/board members of SEA Partners and Christian Relief Partners: Donnie Brake, Micheal Harris, Ernest Langat, Kayla North, Ryan North, Henry Okumu, Rosemary Khamati, and Micah Terry.

Confidentiality
All input from participants will be strictly confidential. Notes will not include names or any other identifiers. Emails will be kept in a folder that only will have access to, ensuring the anonymity of participant input: Upon completion of the project emails will be deleted and notes will be deleted or destroyed once the ideas have been incorporated into the curriculum.

Format and Timeline
Since most project participants are not located in the Dallas area, sessions will be conducted via email. Each session's lesson will be sent out via email on Mondays. The lessons will include a reading of Ephesians 2:11-22 (the theological foundation of the project), a brief lesson, and a set of open-ended questions based on the lesson. Participants should return their answers the following Monday (a one week turnaround per lesson). I will then use the information to compile a module of the curriculum, which will evolve over an eight-week period. The final session will be an evaluation of the curriculum.

Descriptions of the Sessions
Session 1: Introduction and Orientation
- Introduction
- Project purpose
- Project participants
- Format and timeline
- Basic principles of conflict resolution

Session 2:
- Biblical definitions of peace and reconciliation
- A theological model of forgiveness
- Jesus' teachings on peace

Session 3:
- Paul's concept of reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22

Session 4:
- Transitional Justice: South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Post-genocide practices in Rwanda

Session 5:
- The politics of forgiveness: A Christian approach to social reconciliation
- Communal forgiveness: A model of reconciliation mediated through the church

Session 6:
- Curriculum compilation: Participants will review the curriculum outline and add to it based on their understanding of Ephesians 2 and what needs to be taught in Boma

Session 7:

- The curriculum will be sent out for the participants to make edits

Session 8:

- Evaluation of the curriculum: Open-ended questions based on the final product

The Basics of Conflict Resolution

When people are in conflict, whatever the context, some basic principles apply. Understanding the difference between *issues, positions,* and *interests* are key in reaching a solution. Issues are identifiable and concrete. They are tangible and measurable. Because they are so easily identified, issues set the agenda. Obviously, these issues must be addressed directly. In the South Sudan context an issue might be cattle theft or representation in the new government. Positions are also definable perspectives on the issues involved. These positions are the starting points for the parties. Again, the Murle position might be more representation in the government. Interests, however, are vital to a satisfactory outcome. They are the often-abstract needs of the parties. Interests involve feelings and resentments, and if ignored, are often volatile. Interests are less tangible and not easily measurable. However, these interests are very real to the parties. Interests have to be addressed before resolution of a conflict can take hold.

A classic story illustrates this. Imagine two sisters fighting over the only orange in the kitchen. Each sister insists that she must have the entire orange for herself. A wise parent asks each of the girls (in private) why she wants the orange. One explains that she wants to squeeze the juice to drink; the other wants to use the rind to bake a cake. What each sister wants is her position, *why* she wants it is her interest. In this case, the simple solution is to give the second sister the rind after the juice has been squeezed for the first sister.

There are four types of interests:

- Process interests (is it fair?)
- Substantive interests (real outcomes)
- Relationship interests (does resolution heal or destroy relationships?)
- Principle interests

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through

the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Questions

1) What meaning of "reconciliation" emerged most clearly to you from this text?

2) What vision do you have of what the Boma community could look like in the future if the church fully embraces its mission as agents of reconciliation?

3) What interests, if any, would have to addressed when teaching Sudanese pastors in Boma?

Session 2: Biblical Definitions of Forgiveness, Peace, and Reconciliation

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22
As you read the text ask yourself how the concept of forgiveness is implemented in terms of how Christians live in community?

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Lesson

- Genesis 3 records how in one fell swoop Adam and Eve lost everything—paradise, innocence, intimacy with God, trust for each other—and there was no going back because not only had they acquired the knowledge of good and evil, they knew that they had chosen evil – and from that moment life was painful. From generation to generation this story echoes in our lives. And because this story is so ingrained in our lives, we define sin as an individual's choice to disobey God. But the Bible does not support such a simplistic understanding of what sin is.

- In the Hebrew Bible a number of behaviors are called "sin." There is the sin of an entire people worshipping the golden calf, there are sins specific to certain places, like the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah, or Nineveh, or Judah. There are individual sins, like David taking Bathsheba, but there are also sins of the rich against the poor, or the sin of putting more faith in military might than in God. Sin not only describes human action, but also the state of spiritual darkness that separates us from God. Individual disobedience is only one facet of sin. It is not simply about

"missing the mark" (a common Hebrew definition of sin); it is about ruined relationships – with God, with other people, and with all of creation.

- Forgiveness doesn't mean Christians ignore or excuse offense; it means they deliberately make the difficult decision to give up the right to be right. Contextualized in Africa, a follower of Jesus would not kill another disciple because of tribe or race. But even there, in the harshest of circumstances, forgiveness means to give grace. Without giving grace, the victim and the perpetrator are locked in a self-defeating, self-destructive way of life. The process of healing differentiates between forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness is an immediate act; reconciliation is a process – to build trust. Christian forgiveness and reconciliation is a reflection of God's attitude toward sinners. The innocent party—God—pays the price and initiates forgiveness. The forgiver offers unconditional grace to undeserving sinners. Whether forgiveness is received or not, the giver has forgiven, because forgiveness is an intentional, unilateral decision. Reconciliation, on the other hand, demands a response.

- Forgiveness grants freedom. Forgiveness means you are not bound by the past, and you are not defined by what has happened to you. Healing does not take place until we forgive. The person who fails to forgive becomes a victim twice—a victim of what has been done to him and a victim of what he does to himself.

- Psychological models of forgiveness tend to focus on individual actions and individual responses, resulting in individual healing. But biblical forgiveness emphasis restoring relationships and reconciliation within the community. This is evident in Jesus' ministry. (See, for example, the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.) The restoration of communion with God and with one another is richer and more comprehensive than merely the absolution of individual guilt.

Questions

1) What comes to mind when you hear the word "forgiveness"?

2) How is forgiveness implemented/lived out in terms of how Christians live in community?

3) How do you extend grace and forgiveness without undercutting the severity of what has taken place? In other words, what is the relationship between justice and forgiveness?

4) What do you think the following expression means: "Forgiveness is an immediate act; reconciliation is a process"? How might this look in Boma?

5) How is forgiveness usually understood as an individual endeavor? How might it be communal—especially in African societies?

6) How did Jesus use terms like "forgiveness" and "peace" in the gospels?

Session 3: Reconciliation in Ephesians 2:11-22

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22
As you read the text, slow down and allow God to speak through this text. Ask yourself what a community fully reconciled to God and to each other might look like?

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Lesson
In the text, consider the kinds of Temple imagery Paul uses to make his point about reconciliation:

1. **Circumcision** (vs 11) – although not necessarily related to the Temple, only the circumcised could enter beyond the Court of Women and this ritual served as a distinguishing mark that separated Jews from all others.
2. **Brought near** (vs 13) – This phrase referred to the offering of a sacrifice to God.
3. **By the blood** (vs 13) – This phrase also refers to Old Testament sacrifice, indicating forgiveness and/or purification.
4. **Barrier of the dividing wall** (vs 14) – This signifies the barricade that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women which contained warnings of death to Gentile trespassers.
5. **The Law** (vs 15) – This does not pertain directly to the Temple but still served to separate Jew from Gentile. The Law of Moses was given specifically to the Jews. Christ removes the Law as an obstacle to universal salvation.
6. **Access** (vs 18) – This word served as a technical term for the entrance of the High Priest once a year into the Holy of Holies. What one priest could do solely on the Day of Atonement, Christians do all the time.

7. **Holy temple** (vs 21) – The Greek has two words for Temple. One indicates the general precincts of the Temple. The other, the one used here, specifies the area where deity resides. For the Jewish Temple, this would be the Holy of Holies. Thus, Jewish and Greek Christians have constant access to the Father because the church itself is the Holy of Holies.

Why does Paul use this Temple imagery?

- The temple, in both Judaism and pagan religions, represented the place where humans and deity could interact and communicate. (Remember that the Temple to Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus.) Paul writes to emphasize the importance of the church as the true place where God dwells. The Jerusalem Temple would have been well known by the Ephesians. It stood as a constant reminder of the supposed exclusion of Gentiles from God. They were "without hope and without God" (2:12). But through Christ all believers have been built into the true Temple where divisions no longer exist.

- A result of the work of Christ is the union of Jewish and Gentile Christians into a single church. This singular identity is not accomplished by ignoring or destroying cultural, ethnic, or social distinctions, but by celebrating something they share that surpasses their differences. Ephesians 2:11-22 addresses this tension. Since God has reconciled both Jew and Gentile, there are significant implications for the church regarding how Christians approach racial and ethnic differences and tensions. What Christ accomplished was not simply the making of one man where two had existed, but the making of one *new* man. Christ's death, and the destruction of the barrier of hostility and the creation of a new man, creates not only a new identity for the church, but a new purpose and a new witness to a bitterly divided world. The church was founded on the proposition that Christ's death has destroyed all dividing walls. Though they continue to exist in the world, they have no place among the fellowship of believers.

- Sin is also the exclusion of others from our world. Sin against a person is also sin against God. Sin is a desire to purge the "other." The exclusion of others is an exclusion of God." Those who abandon their neighbors can remain untouched by the plight of those outside their immediate circle. Like the priests and the Levites in the story of the good Samaritan, we simply cross to the other side and pass by, minding our own business. Embracing the enemy, while still acknowledging their evil deeds finds its anchor in the cross of Christ.

- The cross defines the identity of the Church, as well as its relationship to society. Following the example of Christ, and having God at the center of all relationships, Christians maintain identity by embracing others, not by safeguarding from contamination. Having received forgiveness, Christians offer it to others.

Questions

1) In what ways do we practice exclusion of the "other"? (Those of a different background, culture, language, or ethnicity)

2) Forgiveness redeems us *from* God's wrath, but what does forgiveness redeem us *for* in terms of how we relate to and treat others?

3) How does the situation in Ephesus describe the Boma community, and how might it inform a vision of peace for that community?

4) What practical things would Christians in the Boma community have to *do* in order to live out the message of Ephesians?

5) Does unity erase differences? Why/why not?

Session 4: Transitional Justice in South Africa and Rwanda

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Lesson

This session looks at two prominent examples of reconciliation from the African continent. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission happened in 1995 in a time of transitional justice by dampening the need for vengeance while promoting healing. While the TRC was a political and legal process in terms of structure and format, it had a theological foundation in terms of purpose and vision. After all, it was largely the brainchild of Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Likewise, the story of Rwanda in the years since the 1994 genocide in which almost one million people were slaughtered has been an inspiring example of healing and reconciliation. The church in Rwanda has been an instrument of hope and restoration in the midst of hatred and animosity. At first, the message of repentance was not popular, but it has served as a challenge to both Hutus and Tutsis to seek relief in something other than the endless cycle of vengeance and retributive violence, and to place their loyalty and faith in Christ first.

Though South Africa and Rwanda employed different approaches, both countries have experienced remarkable progress and healing.

I have included three articles to read:

"Pledging Allegiance: Reflections on Discipleship and the Church After Rwanda" by Michael Budde

"Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation in Africa: Issues and Cases" by Lyn Graybill and Kimberly Lanegran

"Comparing Approaches to Reconciliation in South Africa and Rwanda" by Cori Wielenga

Also, the official Truth and Reconciliation web site is a useful resource: http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/index.html

Questions

1) Can forgiveness be made "too cheap"?

2) What differences are there in the South African approach and the Rwandan approach to reconciliation?

3) How can communities overcome the tensions between justice, vengeance, and healing?

4) Is the cliché "forgive and forget" helpful or not – if the goal is reconciliation?

Session 5: Social Reconciliation and Communal Forgiveness

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22
As you read the text ask yourself if the message of reconciliation is addressed to individuals or communities/groups?

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

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Lesson
Where enmity exists between entire peoples or societies, forgiveness is a communal responsibility rather than an individualistic action. If the modern world is facing revived tribalism in the context of larger clashes of civilizations, then forgiveness has a political facet to it. In that sense, forgiveness functions not simply within theological categories, but also from a political perspective. In that context, how should Christians engage each other and the world in deliberate acts of forgiveness, embrace, and reconciliation.

There has always been a divergence of opinion within the church whether Christians should be involved in social causes and political action. Can there be such a thing as a specifically Christian approach to social reconciliation? In a fractured world, the church must develop appropriate and effective approaches to social reconciliation, which will help believers play a role as peacemakers. The answer lies in seeing forgiveness not as individual action, but as something mediated through community, because the Christian community does not live in social isolation. The result is that communities of forgiveness have the collective power to inspire social transformation. God's community is called out, it is sent, it is reconciled, it spreads, and in so doing it inspires social transformation.

In ethnically divided communities, theology and the church are not socially or politically innocent. The church needs to reflect on the sociopolitical implications of forgiveness. Traditionally, forgiveness tends to be relegated to the realm of personal piety and confined to religious life – a transaction between individuals. The notion of collective sin and political forgiveness strikes an odd chord with Christians. But how can the gospel be good news in a violent world if it doesn't offer hope for social transformation? Political forgiveness is "a public response to a collective crime which depends on certain preconditions, including truth, public acknowledgement of collective offenses, avoidance of revenge, mutual empathy and compassion, and the reduction or cancellation of a debt or deserved punishment."

In addition to last week's readings on reconciliation in South Africa and Rwanda, I have attached an interview conducted with South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu a few years after the TRC. Note how he weaves the theology of forgiveness into the social and political fabric of his fractured society.

Questions

1) How would you describe a "community of forgiveness"?

2) What is political forgiveness? How might the church be called to practice this type of forgiveness?

3) How does the church offer an alternative to the ethnic divisions of the world without attempting to erase those distinctions?

4) Specifically, how might this collective understanding of forgiveness impact how Christians in the Boma community *act*?

Session 6: Development of the Curriculum Outline

Scripture Reading: Eph. 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

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Curriculum Development

- Please review the last five sessions, including the questions and the answers you provided:

1. Understanding conflict and conflict resolution
2. Biblical definitions of forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation
3. Reconciliation in Eph. 2:11-22
4. Transitional justice in South Africa and Rwanda
5. Social reconciliation and communal forgiveness

- In light of those materials and Eph. 2:11-22, what would you like to see included in the pastor-training curriculum? Try to be as specific as possible.

- Consider the following:
  - Is it consistent with the reconciliation theology of Eph. 2:11-22?
  - Can the curriculum be utilized in a way that is practical and has real implications in the Boma community?

- Incorporate ideas into the following outline:

Communal Reconciliation in South Sudan
A Pastor-Training Manual Outline

Module I: Understanding Conflict and Conflict Resolution
- **Session 1:** Understanding Peace
- **Session 2:** Understanding Conflict
- **Session 3:** Understanding Conflict Resolution

Module II: The Challenges of Ethnicity and Conflict
- **Session 4:** Ethnic Conflict and Peacebuilding
- **Session 5:** A Biblical Response to the Challenges of Ethnicity

Module III: Forgiveness and Reconciliation
- **Session 6:** Ephesians 2:11-22
- **Session 7:** Forgiveness
- **Session 8:** Reconciliation

Module IV: Communal Forgiveness and Social Reconciliation
- **Session 9:** Peacebuilding in the Church and the Community
- **Session 10:** Conclusion

APPENDIX H

OPEN-ENDED PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Is the theology of reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum?

2. Of the resources utilized and the lessons presented, which materials did you find most useful? Least useful?

3. If or when you travel to South Sudan, would you feel comfortable teaching this material to pastors in that community?

4. What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool for your use?

APPENDIX I

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR USE BY INDEPENDENT EXPERT

1. Is the theology of ethnic reconciliation found in Eph. 2:11-22 accurately and effectively presented and integrated into the curriculum?

2. What would a community in South Sudan look like if this material is implemented? What impact could it have on the church's witness?

3. Would you feel comfortable teaching this material to other pastors in that community?

4. What Christ-like virtues does this curriculum promote?

5. What needs to change for this curriculum to be a more effective tool?

BRIEF VITA

Charles S. North was born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa on March 20, 1974, where he graduated from Westering High School in 1991. He graduated from the Center for Christian Education in Dallas, Texas in 1996, and received a Bachelor of Arts in Bible and Ministry from Dallas Christian College in 1998. He graduated from Baylor University in 2000 with a Master of Arts in Church-State Studies and Religious Human Rights. In 2005 he received the Master of Divinity from Abilene Christian University.

He has served churches in Waco, Abilene, and Kaufman, Texas and currently serves as the Executive Director of Christian Relief Partners. He has trained pastors in Zambia and South Sudan, and is a fellow of the Acton Institute's Free and Virtuous Society. He is currently pursuing the Juris Doctor at SMU Dedman School of Law, where he has been appointed a Garner Law Scholar. Charles currently resides in Grapevine, Texas with his son, William.