

RECONCILE™

Mending Broken Relationships

Volume 14 / Number 2

—More than a Decade of Help and Hope —

Summer 2012

Churches Interact on the Air

Interdenominationalism is alive and well in Kentucky.

This spring Office of Reconciliation and Mediation (ORM) Director Curtis May spoke at a combined meeting of two churches in Mt. Sterling, KY, and afterwards interviewed the two pastors for a broadcast on KCLE Big Country Radio in the Fort Worth, Texas, area. For the past year Mr. May has contributed programs for the weekly Sunday morning half-hour broadcast, along with Tom Pickett and David Pickett. The name of the weekly program is *"A Time to Reconcile."*

For the interview Pastor James Humphries of Queen Street Christian Fellowship and Pastor Vincent Farris of the KEAS (area) Christian Methodist Episcopal Church discussed with ORM the cooperation and interaction between races and church denominations in their part of Kentucky. One combined activity was a Gospel Singing event. Other activities have provided opportunities for much-needed fellowship.

The hymn sing was hosted by Evergreen Baptist Church, and a number of area churches participated. On the following day KEAS hosted a special event that included fellowship and refreshments at Queen Street Christian Fellowship. People from as far away as Lexington, KY, attended.

Pastor Humphries summarized that this two-day event "has been a highlight of our year and has opened doors in our community." Opening doors is a big part of the mission of ORM and *Reconcile*. Years ago, ORM learned that interdenominationalism is a vital part of lasting reconciliation in any community, dating

back to the heroic days of the churches that led the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. That vision continues. Churches are a pivotal part of this forward strategy, as are all of you, our faithful supporters.



Interviewing for radio; Curtis May (center) with Pastor Farris (L) and Pastor Humphries (R).



Tim Maguire

On the Ground Basics

Mission Developer Tim Maguire makes regular visits into Southern African nations helping to establish and strengthen church groups that ask for direction and guidance. Whether it's dedicating new fresh-water wells in Mozambique or conducting doctrinal meetings with Bushmen in Namibia, Tim learned to practice the biblical principle of being "all things to all men."

Slaughtering a goat could substitute for a ring and a formal service in some of the weddings in Southern Africa, he learned. The missionary has to be flexible. Programs with a Western mindset often need adjusting to the occasion – a textbook application of reconciliation principles.



The Office of Reconciliation & Mediation (ORM) is a 501 (C) 3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible.

Our Readers Respond



Curtis,
Thank you for the exceptional April 2012 letter. The (part) in reference to the death of James C. Anderson was first rate. His sister stated, "Our loss will not be lessened by the state taking another man's life..." We need all the strength and courage God gives us!

*Leon Rabouine Sr.
Bronx, NY*

Dear Mr. May,
I am so thankful to have the money to help this great work you are doing. Thank you and your wife. I wish I could do more. Praise God.

*Adelaide Whelchel
Tucson, AZ*

Dear ORM,
Thanks for a wonderful work. Love to all.

*Blanche and Larry Marshall
Mesa, AZ*

Greetings,
May our God be glorified as we reflect His light to a broken world.

*Robert Stringer
Lompoc, CA*

Dear ORM,
Keep up the good work, and God continue to bless you.

*James Clover
Winnetka, CA*

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FROM Curtis May...

Around the Horn Again!



Curtis May, publisher

On Tuesday, January 10, and Wednesday, January 11, I had the opportunity to speak at the U.S. Department of Justice on the topic of Reconciliation and Police Legitimacy. This two-day summit addressed the serious divide between the police and the community across much of the country.

On Tuesday I spoke on "Jesus' Dream" and conducted a two-hour session with predominately African-Americans who work in the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). We also talked about legacies of the past that can and do influence us today, and what we can do about them. The message was well received and the follow-up discussion was quite lively!

On Wednesday we had an eight-hour conference with leaders in law enforcement (a number of police chiefs), reconciliation leaders, community development leaders and ranking officials in the COPS Department. Other prominent leaders included Chicago superintendent of Police and National Safe Cities Network Director Garry McCarthy, and Director of Criminal Law at John Jay College, David Kennedy.

COPS Director Bernard Melekian took my son Brad and me out to dinner Wednesday night, along with New Haven, CT Police Chief Dean Esserman.

Melekian said he heard a lot of positive feedback on my sessions. I did too. Then he surprised me by saying, "You started this!" referring to our work with the Pasadena Police Department over the past decade, which included fellow GCI members like the Sniffens, Raul Ramos and others. I was surprised how well my references to biblical principles were taken.

My son Bradley (Pasadena Police Officer) and I were taken on a private White House tour by a relative who is a Secret Service agent. He was inside the World Trade Center when it was attacked on 9/11. We then took a tour of the Museum of American History.

I reported on all this at Black History Month celebrations in the Beaumont and Glendora, CA congregations in February. It's people like them and you readers who make ORM possible.



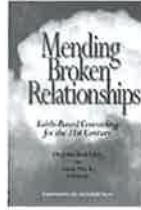
Prof. David Kennedy



Joshua Ederheimer, Principal Deputy Director of COPS, with Curtis May

Beyond the Culture of Suspicion

John Dawson is an internationally recognized leader in reconciliation. This interview is from the ORM book Mending Broken Relationships, available from our office.



ORM: You've written and spoken a lot on racism. What is this thing all about?

JD: Well, I see the roots of racism as just simply that difference tempts us to fear. If you take away the Creator God from a relationship then it is just male and female, management or labor, or two ethnic groups or two cultures.

ORM: So you believe that racism is a theological issue?

JD: Absolutely. Creation comes out of the Trinitarian dynamic and so all relationships are supposed to work in threes.

ORM: How does that work exactly?

JD: For instance, if in my marriage to my wife, Julie, if we have violated our relationship with the Holy Spirit, if we are not working together with God, the source of all love, it may well be that the otherness of the other – in this case different genders – tempts us into suspicious and hardened positions when there is conflict.

ORM: And how is it supposed to work?

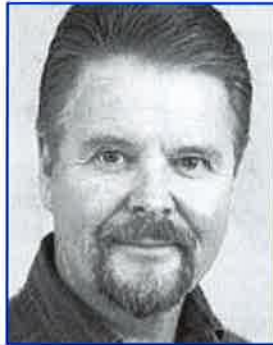
JD: It's like this – in the presence of the heavenly Father, the otherness of the other becomes fascinating and it draws us to what is of the Father in the other. This works because male and female were both made in the image of God, as it says in Genesis 1:27.

ORM: And there is an analogy here to race relations?

JD: Exactly, because race to race just describes another type of relationship. It has very much to do with the presence or absence of the heavenly Father.

ORM: That begins to open up possibilities – can you explain further?

JD: Well, if you're in the presence of perfect Love – because God is love – then you're in the presence also of all Wisdom and you're going to have generosity of spirit and you're going to be drawn toward differences rather than be repelled by them.



John Dawson

ORM: Is this the biblical formula?

JD: It really means not just to come to a place of passivity – saying, "Go your way, you don't bother me any more" – but it means moving out to the Bible standard of pure fervent love.

ORM: Can you explain that term more fully?

JD: Yes. In Isaiah 62 it mentions this statement, "Your land shall be called Beulah, which means Married." And that's really what God wants, is the convergence, hearts of a nation to come together and be married – intimacy, blending together, that's what God is aiming for.

ORM: So what can we do as average people?

JD: Well, there are grand moments where we rise to the occasion. But of course normal life is lived out in the details of each day, and it is there where we are to set in motion actions that come out of affection, respect, empathy and kindness.

ORM: Thank you for your wise words.

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Of course, none of this excuses the sale and use of illegal drugs. But it does remind us how society is a dynamic system. We are all implicated in some way.

And if we are implicated, perhaps we can educate ourselves on the way the prison system has been evolving. Art Linkletter and Carol Burnett spotlighted the human side and showed how all levels of society are affected by drug abuse. In 1998 Slosser stated: "Crimes that in other countries would usually lead to community service, fines or drug treatments – or would not be considered crimes at all – in the U.S. now lead to a prison term.

Professor Fred Frese of Northeastern Ohio University and a former Marine captain says we simply can't afford the status quo. "Imprisonment is by far the most expensive form of punishment." One hundred dollars a day – the price of a nice hotel – is the rough estimate, compared with \$35 in a group home.

Slosser's and Alexander's indictment of the "fear, greed and political cowardice" that has accentuated this national predicament reminds us of the societal cost when short-term solutions triumph over true justice.

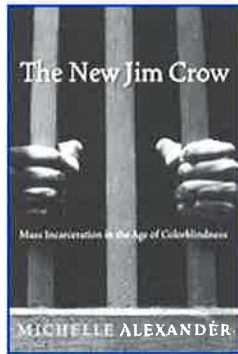
- Neil Earle

The Challenge of Incarceration

Even a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is speaking out. Justice Anthony Kennedy told the American Bar Association: "Our (prison) resources are misspent, our punishments too severe, our sentences too loaded." A San Francisco Federal District Judge wept openly in court after having to sentence an Oakland longshoreman to ten years without parole. The man had unwittingly given a ride to a drug dealer about to meet with an undercover agent.

As far back as December 1998, *Atlantic* magazine's Eric Slosser wrote of "The Prison-Industrial Complex," warning that America's prisons were becoming "factories for crime." Slosser warned of the privatization of the prison system. He excoriated politicians of all stripes for posturing as "tough on crime." Slosser linked the drug problem to sometimes draconian sentences.

The 1980s and 1990s revealed a "bizarro world" of criminal justice where violent crime kept dropping but the nation's prison population kept rising. When Slosser wrote, it was headed for 2 million. Now, according to civil rights advocate Michelle Alexander's 2010 book, *The New Jim Crow*, the number of inmates exceeds 2.3 million. Alexander, an African-American attorney, reports that the number of blacks now attached to the prison/probation/parole network exceeds the number held in slavery in 1850. This is a larger percentage, she claims, than were held in jail under apartheid in South Africa.



Treatment or Sentencing?



Michelle Alexander

Alexander confirms the grim fulfillment of Slosser's analysis. When Slosser wrote, Californians in prison exceeded the number of inmates held in France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Singapore and the Netherlands combined. Today, claims Alexander, America's prison population exceeds those in Russia and China combined and seven times that of Germany's. "A human rights nightmare."

Both Slosser and Alexander see harsh penalties and mandatory minimums for non-violent offenders as the core problem. Sentencing is now heavily stressed over treatment and rehabilitation. Millions of Americans know that once a family member receives a sentence for drug dealing, their chances at receiving government assistance, school scholarships, etc. is slim or nil.

In his riveting narrative, *Don't Shoot*, criminal justice authority David Kennedy traces the change back to the "law and order" backlash against the 1960s. In 1970, paradoxically, the U.S. Congress had voted to eliminate almost all mandatory minimums. The reign-

ing consensus held that drug addiction was a public health issue more than a criminal justice affair.

In the 1970s, society stressed prevention and treatment as the preferred strategy. In 1977 famed entertainer Art Linkletter told an audience of counselors in Pasadena, California, the blindingly simple truth that "people take drugs because they feel bad." Linkletter's own daughter was the victim of a suicide linked



Art Linkletter

to drug abuse. However, the respected humorist stressed effective help through early detection and follow-up counseling. Popular culture stalwart Carol Burnett traveled a similar route in the next decade. But then came the crack epidemic of the 1980s and the resulting great fear that swept middle class America.

"The Great Fear"

By the 1990s, reported Slosser, some small towns had more inmates than regular folk. Economics, as always, plays its part. Alexander lists the number of jobs tied to the staffing and support of the U.S. prison population today as roughly two million.

From 1984 to 1994 California built eight new maximum security prisons while public housing projects languished. The drugs-prison-employment dynamic meant that more and more jobs were tied to incarceration.

(Continued on page 3)

Start with the Children

To fight crime, start with children.

Hiring more police is usually the first suggestion out of the box. "But that's not enough," says Leigh Sniffen, ORM Chapter Leader in Memphis, TN.

Leigh was a former mediator with the Dispute Resolution Center in Los Angeles. There she and her husband Paul helped guide 9000 children and parents into the simple principle of "knowing the consequences of our actions."

Small seeds sown early can pay big dividends. "When you facilitate dialogue between children in workshops you get a jump-start on the situation," says Leigh.



Leigh Sniffen