

RECONCILE™

Mending Broken Relationships

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—More than a Decade of Help and Hope —

Winter 2012



Shirley Brooks-Jones

Friendly Skies

Since 2001 Ohio State University fundraiser Shirley Brooks-Jones (above) has made 20 trips to the small hamlet of Lewisporte in Newfoundland, where she was billeted when her plane was diverted to Canada on September 11, 2001. Brooks-Jones has been instrumental in raising well over \$1,000,000 in scholarship money for Lewisporte high school students to attend college. Initial donations came from fellow passengers on Delta Airlines Flight 15, an example of how the kindness of strangers and the response of generous Americans has brought some good out of a grim tragedy.



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

Milestone Meeting in Columbus

Columbus, Ohio: The Office of Reconciliation and Mediation (ORM) held its Bi-Annual Chapter Leaders Conference on October 7-9. Pastor Jeff Broadnax's CentrePoint Church was the venue.

Many sensed "something special" was happening, as if ORM was about to enter a new phase.

John Connors, an experienced CEO, captured this feeling of new beginnings. He challenged the leaders to take ORM into its next phase. He pointed out that what began as a rather haphazard idea from "fighting fires of broken relationships" has developed into a full-fledged organization with the vision and talent "to make a significant contribution in a hurting world."

John reminded attendees that even though ORM was very much "of God," it was still subject to the rules of good business practice. That means a continued commitment to sound management.

Guest-observer Kimberly Brummett, Director's Office Program Specialist from the U.S. Justice Department, thanked ORM Director Curtis May for the invitation. She works with Community Oriented Policing Director Bernard Melekian, an old ORM ally. Their office is planning a Summit on Racial Reconciliation and Police Legitimacy in Washington, DC, and they are including ORM as a valuable participant.

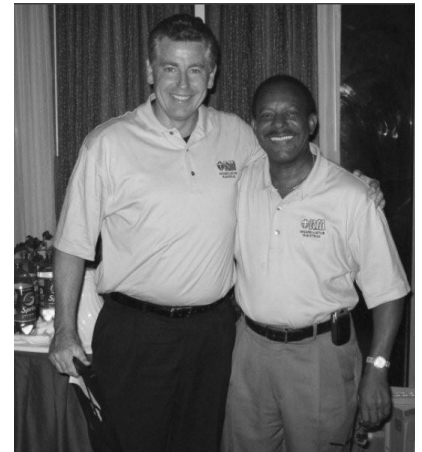
Pastors Tony Pierce and Cliff Parks updated us on the progress in their fascinating cross-cultural outreach in Peoria, Illinois. Their inspiration is Matthew 25 where Jesus focused on the needs of the poor, hungry, imprisoned, etc. The scope of their effort has been described as "mind-bending."

Other speakers included Jeff Broadnax, Evelyne O'Callaghan Burkhard, Willard High, Tom Pickett, Ron Washington, John Halford and George Hart. Pastor Larry Hinkle was commissioned as a new chapter leader in Florida.

This year ORM incorporated as a non-profit organization in its own right, focusing on reaching an even larger community. The vision remains to implement the call to reconciliation by building bridges between people of different beliefs and points of view.

2012 looks optimistic for ORM. *John Connors and Curtis May*
Learn more at www.ATimeToReconcile.org.

— John Halford



Our Readers Respond



Hi Mr. May,
 I watched your message on *Dimensions in Ministry* from the GCI website. I really like the message and I posted the link on Facebook. I really appreciate the work that you have done to help people reconcile. This month in my congregation at New Life Fellowship our theme is Reconciliation. On October 9, I gave a sermon about reconciliation that can be found on NewLife3.org website. Thank you for making this message known. It can heal relationships and bring people to a closer relationship with one another and Jesus.

Brian Spurgeon

Hello,
 Just wanted to say that I liked the interview that Mike Fezell did with you (on GCI.org). I especially liked the history of how the Pasadena Police Chief began working with you.

Doug Johannsen

Hi Curtis,
 I was able to catch your latest interview with Mike Fezell and it was "right on." It showed the tremendous and continuous need for your reconciliation ministry. So keep up this God-inspired gracious work. Our prayers are with you and this work.

Jewel Love

Dear Curtis,
 I would like to encourage you and the rest of the ORM team to hang in there and continue in your outreach of Reconciliation Ministries. I pray that God will help me to walk humbly before him and before all people, and that he will help me to be a reconciler, and I pray for you all.

We are all from so many different backgrounds and cultures with our own particular histories, good, bad and indifferent.

I spent considerable time in South Africa, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the Congo in 1964/65. I was a Sergeant in the mercenary 5 Commando Group who were hired to fight the Communist-backed Simba rebels who butchered and killed so many of their own people. I was also involved in several hostage rescue missions, the most famous being the Mungbere rescue, where 120 hostages were freed.

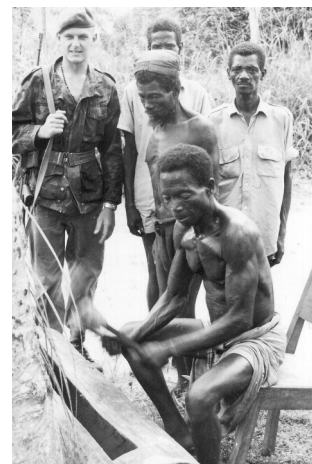
The hostages were praying for deliverance during their horrendous trials of rape and torture. Men, women and children alike were beaten and abused. I now realize that the Mungbere rescue was a miracle and an answer to prayer, which was carried out by members of 5 Commando (English-speaking volunteers) and 6 Commando (French-speaking volunteers). Our convoy was fired on many times and we hit a large enemy column in the early hours. They were heavily armed but so were we, and we had the advantage of surprise.

Curtis, I would have liked you to have seen white mercenaries on their knees, letting rescued captives, black and white, step on their backs onto the rescue vehicles.

Two members of 5 Commando, who were involved in so much of the bloody fighting and hostage rescues, later became devoted church members. God heard the cries and prayers of the oppressed captives and the prayers of the rescuers.

May God help us all to walk humbly before him, before each other and before all people, and may he help us to become reconcilers. We can all make a difference.

With sincere love and encouragement,
 Stuart Rising



Stuart Rising with Congolese village drummer.

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They knew what had to be done and they knew their moment in history was rare. This took going back to work in the spirit of, "I see that you are trying, I am grateful for your efforts." As President Reagan said later, "Political leadership requires humility." Eventually significant agreement was reached.

6. HOLD OUT HOPE: The longest journey begins with a single step. Reconciliation demands the best effort each party can give, no matter how exhausting. Summarize how far you have both come. Sincere expressions of optimism can mean the world at crisis moments. "So speak that you will not contribute to the calamity," says Dr. Diane Landsberg. In the end, a thousand-mile journey amounts to millions of such tiny steps.

This is the path we are on at ORM.

— Neil Earle



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Six Steps to Reconciliation

According to Everett Worthington of the Psychology Department at Virginia Commonwealth University, forgiveness and reconciliation are linked even though there are slight differences.

"Forgiveness superimposes empathy and love on top of emotional contaminants so that they can be resolved," he asserts. "Reconciliation is the restoration of trust in a relationship where trust has been damaged." For Worthington, a counselor to counselors, forgiveness depends upon "me" forgiving "you" while reconciliation involves more than one party. You can't build a bridge in mid-air, he adds.

Dr. Worthington's practical insights revolve around Six Planks in his Bridge to Reconciliation:

1. TIMING: Are both sides even ready to sit down and talk? The biblical account of Joseph and his brothers shows that the hurts inflicted upon young Joseph took years to work through (Genesis 42:21). Joseph knew that. This is why he delayed revealing his identity to them (42:7). Seven times it says that Joseph wept, showing that he had forgiven his brothers, but the timing had to be right before he stepped forward and said, "I am Joseph" (45:4).

In the challenging matter of reconciling, timing is everything.

2. BEGIN SOFTLY: Allow your reconciliation partner to save face. Don't begin with a laundry list of accusations. "It didn't seem like you to say that," is easier, rather than demanding our pound of flesh. A bristling attitude blinds us to the true humanity of the other and often provokes a counter-reaction.

Even in the harsh world of power politics this applies. On September 2, 1945, as the defeated Japanese delegates stood on the deck of the *USS Missouri* to surrender, they felt like whipped schoolboys expecting humiliation. But General Douglas MacArthur chose to open negotiations with the thought that it would be wrong "to meet in a spirit of distrust, malice or hatred." That changed things. America and Japan have been at peace for 56 years.

3. THE REACH METHOD: This is Worthington's acronym for five important steps to take once

dialogue is under way. These are:

Recall the hurt, but tactfully. Joseph said to his brothers, "You meant ill but God meant well" (Genesis 50:20). This gave them a chance to see the bigger picture.

Empathize with the offender. Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in the place of another person. Empathy is so rare today, especially on our often toxic "talk" shows. Remember the Indian saying: "Help me not to speak evil of my brother till I have walked a day in his moccasins." This approach softens hearts, and a soft heart is essential for true reconciliation.

Altruistic forgiveness. Extending forgiveness shows we have come to the point where we have absorbed the hurt from the offense, neutralized its effects, and replaced it with pity. Jesus exemplified this. He said about those who were driving nails through his hands, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do" (Matthew 23:34). We must try to keep that example in

front of us in our bitter disputes.

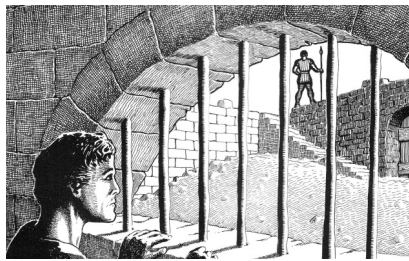
Commit to forgive. Commit, because it will be tempting to slip back into negative attitudes especially when the hurt has been long-standing. Joseph's brothers expected the worst when their father died, so Joseph reassured them that revenge was OUT (Genesis 50:21).

Hold fast during times of strain. We often backslide, even on our most fervent declarations. The effects of a wound to our inner selves can be debilitating for life. That is why forgiveness must be held up as the star that shines through the clouds of negativism.

4. REVERSE THE NEGATIVE CASCADE: This means "negative effects" such as criticism, verbal abuse, stonewalling, and contempt. "Harsh words stir up anger" says Proverbs 15:1. Christian counselors often spend time in praying for the parties and praying with them as well.

5. BE GRACIOUS IN SETBACKS: Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev met serious failure at the fateful Reykjavik Conference in 1986. But both men's commitment to nuclear arms reduction was stronger than a temporary setback.

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*Joseph in Egyptian prison.
(artwork by Basil Wolverton)*

Building a Culture of Peace

Sri Lankan author Chani Warnasuriya's latest book is directly aimed at teaching children everywhere about the ways and means for peaceful relations to come about. *Peace Tales from Asia: Building a Culture of Peace* grew out of the troubles that had bedeviled her own small island nation. "War and terrorism was prevalent in my country of Sri Lanka for over 30 years; ethnic and religious conflict made everybody, including myself, long for peace," she testifies.

After writing three books of tales from her native island she knew where to start to make a difference. "I realized that children were the grassroots level with which to begin to work for peace in the world."

"The Children's Corner" of the *Monsoon Journal* agrees with Chani. Reviewer Danesh Thirukumaran likes the fact that Chani provides proverbs from people around the world who are or were peace advocates. "When elephants battle, ants perish" is a Cambodian saying that explains how violence doesn't just hurt one person, it hurts many.

In the Japanese story "The Magic Listening Cap" the mayor advised some people to cut down trees to make a teahouse. This was a hostile act against the animals, and when one boy was given a magic cap at the shrine, he could hear the plants and animals lamenting. The story ends happily, and the environmental point gets made at a level children understand.

Many of the tales revolve around the important lesson that one person can still make a difference.

"(Chani's) books are a nice collection" said Suzanne Biazoo, children's librarian in Baldwin Park, California.

"There aren't many books on folk tales for children and they fill a unique gap."

Peace Tales from Asia by Chani Warnasuriya is available at www.amazon.com and other bookstores.



Chani Warnasuriya

King, Shuttlesworth Remembered

A vital part of the civil rights fraternity, Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth has been called "one of the most courageous civil rights leaders in history."

Born near Montgomery, Alabama, he grew up in Birmingham, almost Ground Zero for the civil rights clashes of the early 1960s. When he died on October 5, 2011, Andrew Young, a Martin Luther King lieutenant, said, "Fred didn't invite us to come to Birmingham, he told us we *had* to come!"

His death at age 89 came only eleven days before the official unveiling of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. on October 16, 2011. Linked in life, as well as death, Shuttlesworth and King helped launch the Southern Christian Leadership Conference that taught non-violence. Shuttlesworth himself was personally fearless and forgiving. He proclaimed he would "either kill segregation or be killed by it." His legacy lives on.



Icons: Rev. Shuttlesworth, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Ralph Abernathy and Andrew Young.
Inset: Rev. Shuttlesworth with Curtis May.

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