

Creating an environment without the hatred and animosity...

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Our work with churches and a variety of workplaces in recent months has been much more than just about solving conflict. In fact, there have been times when we were not able to resolve all the issues due to the intractable nature of the conflicts involved. However, we managed to turn those almost impossible situations into constructive environments and highly improved relationships.

A courageous leader in one of these conflict-ridden institutions described our work as follows, “You have helped us create an environment without the hatred and animosity from before...we have for the first time in years learned how to communicate our different views and beliefs without the ongoing fights.” And another, “... your message, tools, and manner were all gifts to us.” It is enormously gratifying to hear such feedback when, for the most part, we as reconciliation practitioners hope to resolve every issue and bring about the reconciliation needed so a community can move forward. Instead, we have helped many develop a stronger and clearer sense of themselves and the work they are charged to do. We have also left them with the “tools and gifts” of becoming the transformed leaders who would model new behaviors and become problem solvers in their new environment.

Creating an environment for peace and reconciliation is about deepening the level of interaction among parties in conflict; it is about “cutting deep into the issues and helping us see things we have not been able to see,” in the recent words of one church member. Leading and guiding parties in conflict to that deeper level of understanding requires special skills, enduring patience and centeredness when the storm is at its height, when there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

This is what we do in our reconciliation work...with churches from all faith traditions, workplaces, institutions and diverse groups. We give individuals the opportunity to experience one another on a deeper level than the oppositional mindset they had become used to – to see their institution, their staff and their volunteer leaders in new ways – where differences in backgrounds and persuasions become opportunities to learn from one another, and to work toward a common vision, purpose and end goals.