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# The Unreconciled

There's a cliché about how people who are being interviewed for a job or to win a contest are asked about what they want from life. They say things like: I want to travel, have my own fashion range, be happy and successful – oh and world peace of course. It's taken for granted that we all want a peaceful life, and that all the troubles in our world such as war, disease and poverty be ironed out.

But how does that happen? Who is responsible for 'world peace'? Who is supposed to feed the hungry, release people unjustly imprisoned, heal people from terrible diseases? Why do bad things happen to good people and why does our world, not to mention our own lives, get into a mess? Answering those questions is a complex matter and one that occupies many Christians and many, many other people, of all faiths and none, working hard for peace and reconciliation. That work, to bring healing, peace and reconciliation to all the broken bits of our communities and nations, is an essential part of mission and one that is now a 'mark' of mission.

In our journey through Lent, we will be looking at issues in Christian reconciliation, but not just the initiatives and works that everyone knows about. We want to get at some of the things which are never talked about, where deep divisions are covered over by smiling faces and 'doing the right thing'. Some of those cracks and divisions never get healed and so families, communities and even nations, never flourish or prosper properly as God wants them to. Even as we're working or praying for peace, there are things around us and among us that never get fixed, never get looked at, and are sometimes never talked about. But



these things need to be out in the open and all of us can get involved to help improve our lives, our communities, our nation and our world.

We have provided resource sessions for groups (most of the resources can be used by individuals too though sometimes they will need adaptation) on a series of topics looking at what we call the 'Unreconciled', people who are left adrift because the usual processes of healing and reconciliation do not touch them. Nor should we think that they are special cases; we will see as we go through the sessions, that all of us are part of the Unreconciled in some way, that's why our journey through Lent is so important. As we travel towards Easter, we prepare ourselves to meet the ultimate reconciling work – what God has done for us in the crucifixion, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ.

We have included resources for Ash Wednesday and all the Sundays in Lent, together with extra resources for use in Holy Week up to Maundy Thursday, where the topics are particularly important for engaging with the Passion story. The resources for the Sundays are designed to complement the BBC Radio 4 and Local Radio's Lent broadcasts and you will be able to hear more about the topic by listening to those programmes on Sunday mornings.

Because in 2011, we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible, each resource will also have a special emphasis on how Scripture helps understand the plight of those particular groups of Unreconciled people we will be studying and helps us understand our hope in Jesus Christ.

The resources are based on a CTBI book from the Mission Theology Advisory Group (MTAG) called *Unreconciled?* There is a wealth of information, stories and illustrations in the book which will enable you to explore each topic in greater depth. A complete set of group resources accompany the book, with many more ideas and resources on each topic, which are available for download and on which these Lent resources are based. There are many other books providing useful resources for Lent which would include:

Brian Castle, *Reconciling One and All: God's Gift to the World* ( SPCK, 2008)

Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (Random House 1999)

More resources will also be added to the CTBI website and to MTAG's own website [www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk](http://www.spiritualjourneys.org.uk).





## RESOURCES

## How they work

Each resource works in the same way:

- **Starting Out:** an introduction to the topic for the day with an activity for groups to engage with.
- **Going deeper:** a development of the topic with another activity.
- **Moving on:** engaging with Scripture and using a Bible activity, celebrating the KJV.
- **Moving into Lent:** engaging with what Jesus did and preparing for Easter with an appropriate activity.
- **Moving out:** thinking about the topic in your local community.
- **Resting on the Way:** gathering up the topic in prayer and reflection.
- **Decision time:** what is going to change? Each resource invites people to look at the following questions:
  - **Where is the seed of new life?** What gifts has God given us to address the day's topic in our situation?
  - **How will we carry it?** What resources will we need to make a difference in our situation?
  - **Where can it be born?** Identify one reconciling action we can commit to which will change things for the better
  - **How can we nurture it?** How can we support that reconciling action and make sure it follows through?
  - **What will we hope to see?** What will be changed at the end of the process and what difference should it have made?

How much of the resource you want to use depends entirely on how much time you have and how many people are involved. If you are leading a group it will be helpful if you read through the entire resource first, but you may want to concentrate on only one or two of the resource sections and activities. If you have more sessions available you may want to use different parts of the resource across the Lent sessions. Some groups may prefer a word-based activity or a Bible study. Younger groups may want to do a project or research-based activity that extends beyond the initial session. Prayer and meditation groups may prefer to concentrate on the reflective part of the resource.

It will help, however, if all groups spend some time on the decision making part of the resource as a commitment to making a small change as a result of using the resource.





## Lent prayer for the Unreconciled

God our Father,  
we thank you for your reconciling work  
patiently, lovingly, restoring all creation.  
We thank you for Jesus Christ, reconciler, saviour,  
midwife of our journey to new birth.  
We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit,  
dancing, delighting in the beauty of the earth.

Help us to know the Unreconciled among us  
waiting for adoption as neighbours and friends.  
Empower us to raise them from their isolation  
into enduring healing, peace, and freedom.  
May we discern their need and welcome those  
who do not know your joy, forgiveness, hope.

We too are waiting, help us see more clearly  
as we travel together in our pathways of faith.  
This Lent, deepen us in prayer and new vocation  
to your task of reconciliation.  
Help us look forward to your Easter mystery;  
our hearts are restless till they rest in you.