

Justin Welby re reconciliation, from his biography.

Coventry International Centre for Reconciliation developed a systematic method for their work in conflict situations, summarized by six Rs – Researching, Relating, Relieving, Risking, Reconciling and Resourcing. ...

First came Researching, the need to understand the deepest roots of a conflict by listening very carefully to all sides without jumping to conclusions:

It is essential to begin by putting aside judgment. Apparent causes and rights and wrongs may very often, with further examination, prove to be too simple. It is essential to include both sides in the research, even if the initial impression is that one side is more to blame. In order to be able to hear what people are saying truly, the researcher must empathize with the suffering of the people to whom he is talking, and try to see what they are seeing through their eyes. Research must be repeated again and again: the principle of iteration is essential. Above all, anyone involved in reconciliation who is an outsider, must assume persistent ignorance and inability fully to comprehend what they are seeing and hearing.

... Welby drew parallels with the story of the prodigal son (Luke 15) where the father was 'looking, searching, listening, waiting. There was no rush to judgment, but rather a willingness to receive, to be vulnerable.' The researcher must also identify 'spoilors', those with 'a vested interest in the continuation of the conflict, rather than its resolution' (such as arms traders or criminal gangs), and establish a plan to deal with them.<sup>1</sup>

The second R was relating:

All effective reconciliation depends on facing the truth. Both sides have to face the truth about themselves, to look in the mirror and see who they are and what they have done. They have to re-imagine a new face, not arising from victory, but from transformation of conflict. ... Relating should be indiscriminate (almost), that is to say one does not relate to people because they are good but because they are there. In the same way God reaches out to human beings not for their merit but out of his love.

The reconciler must be willing to be personally vulnerable in forging genuine relationships:

They have to relate to a person, not an office. One cannot 'see a militia leader'. One has to see a named individuals with feelings, emotions in whom the blood flows and who has worries and loves like everyone else. Relationships must be affective. They need to show signs of personal engagement, to affirm, to encourage and to be warm in their expression. Such relationships will necessarily be emotional. Conflicts are emotional places to be in. ... The foundation of relating is that the very existence of a relationship is more important than the process of reconciliation.

Welby saw his ministry of reaching out across barriers, even to those who had done major wrong, as an extension of the gospel. In the parable, the elder brother wanted due process before he would engage, refusing to come in until his father had promised to exert family discipline by admonishing or punishing the prodigal. But the father drew his younger son back into the family through relationship, seeking his fullness of life. Welby concluded that relationships must come before justice and the righting of wrongs, not vice versa: 'Justice cannot be established in depth and with confidence in the absence of profound relationships, in which trust has begun to emerge.'

The third part of the process was Relieving, the alleviation of the socio-economic roots of conflict. This commitment to a community's material wellbeing was a validation of genuine relationships and concern for the whole person.

The fourth was Risking. Welby had first appropriated the language of risk in his writings on finance in the 1990s, but it evolved into an especially significant part of his discourse when applied to other contexts. For example, in 2000 he told his Southam parishioners, "We cannot eliminate risk. It is part of life, and the risk of life always ends at some point in death. Disease or accident will one day catch all of us.' The wrong response to risk was to take fright and refuse to dare to do anything. The right response was to trust in the sovereignty of God, 'a safety net stronger than any risk', because 'even when the risk goes wrong, even when life throws the worst at us, God is still there.' Likewise, in reconciliation ministry there were serious risks, which Welby elucidated. In areas of armed conflict there was the obvious danger of being injured, kidnapped, or even murdered. But beyond such 'heroics' was the risk of misunderstanding because the reconciler must endure 'the "scandal" of talking to evil people'. When asked 'why do you meet bad people, Welby replied 'it's the bad people who are causing the trouble'. There was also the risk of failure which might accelerate the conflict and deepen hatreds. Nevertheless, he insisted that 'without risk there will be no reconciliation'. Turning again to the parable of the prodigal son, he commented that 'the older brother takes no risks. He will not even risk meeting his younger brother but stays outside, further demonstrating his independence and self-will. By contrast, the father risks everything.'

The fifth R was Reconciling, the point at which the issues of justice, restitution and forgiveness first emerge. Welby emphasized that rapid reconciliation was illusory. It was a long-term process, never an event. Summits between leaders, and the signing of peace accords, were helpful in creating momentum but never sufficient. He warned against *declarationitis*, 'the disease of making declarations and concluding that by doing so we have changed the world. It is as though, by some strange semiotic mechanism, talking enough about reconciliation can lead to its happening.

The sixth and final component was Resourcing, enabling communities to address their local conflicts without assistance from outside agencies.

These six parts of the reconciliation process are not linear but a 'complex matrix'.

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<sup>1</sup> Welby, 'Reconciliation in Nigeria', pp72–3