YOUR FAITH

Reconciliation means offering an olive branch

Rev. Paul Melrose

I travel in circles where I hear people, both in mental health and in religious work, say that there needs to be reconciliation. Reconciliation may mean to these people to bring a sense of peace to a situation or relationship, or to restore a balance previously held. In a religious sense, reconciliation, as it derives its meaning from the Christian tradition, means an act or overture to bring back together those who have become estranged.

Mending relationships

Reconciliation then becomes applied to one's relationship to God, to one's congregation, to one's spouse, partner, child, or parent. Some have said that it is the function of pastoral care, of which pastoral psychotherapy is a part, to work to re-establish broken relationships.

To re-establish relationships which are broken one must use some combination of forgiveness and discipline. Forgiveness plays the role of no longer holding one or the other responsible for the conditions under which estrangement occurred. Discipline is required to both think beyond the hurt which might have caused the rift and to practice behaviors which will promote and continue the reconciliation which one wants to achieve and then to maintain.

One definition of sin is that it is a break between a person and God. Those who wish to reconcile, and this is the divine invitation from God for the Christian community, seek to re-establish trust by overcoming some kind of injury or insult that has devalued one party or the other.

When reconciliation has happened somehow the discord is over. Reconciliation is both a gift and a choice. For the Christian reconciliation is a gift from God; it is a choice for one to accept this gift. But this invitation is also an example of how reconciliation can be achieved, when one person decides it is right to offer reconciliation and makes that wish known.

Finding ways

Here are some things one can do to offer reconciliation:

■ Find ways to promote reconciliation with the estranged one. God offers us that gift; confession, prayer, and a renewed commitment to your religious community may be some ways to accept that gift. Between persons the same kind of process needs to happen so that while there may continue to be difference of opinion there can still be a restoration of the relationship.

■ Sometimes reconciliation is misunderstood; it comes out as if the other pays and then reconciliation is possible. The parties to a possible reconciliation must take seriously their own responsibility, both in the creation of the break and in what it would take on their part to restore the relationship. Looking at one self to determine one's own responsibility opens the door to reconciliation.

■ Forgive the other, even as for the religious individual the gift of forgiveness has happened. Recall the hurt.

Empathize with others

Empathize with the other. Remember when you were forgiven and what it meant to you. Make a verbal commitment to forgive.

Hold onto forgiveness; don't let embittered memories tear it away. The relationship became estranged over something or things, which were perceived as negative; the negative perception must be reversed. To do that the partners must try to re-engage emotionally, recall positive things that have occurred. At the same time focus on positive qualities of the other party.

■ Trust does not return overnight. As you work on reconciliation let there be room for mistakes, which may look like untrustworthiness. Work on relapse prevention so that if you fall down you can pick yourself up again.

Along with rebuilding trust one must have a positive view about rebuilding love. One can and must choose to increase positive and loving behaviors, from words of love and affection to behaviors, as simple as a hug and kiss, to special gifts, and re-engagement together.

To become reconciled to God, to another, can and will be a transforming process. It will reshape one's personality and faith in one's self and in one's faith.

Dr. Paul Melrose is a staff therapist at the Samaritan Counseling Center of Southeastern Michigan. He can be reached at (248) 474-4701 and at www.metanoia.org/paulmelrose.

BELIEFS Values

MOMS IN TOUCH INTERNATIONAL

Would you like to make a difference in the lives of your children as well as the school they attend? Moms In Touch International is an interdenominational, non-profit organization where two or more moms meet together for one hour each week to pray for their children and their schools. If you would like to know more about this life-changing organization, come to the Moms In Touch Informational on Thursday, January 18, 2001, from 7 to 9 p.m., at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, 23815 Power Road, Farmington, in the Church Hall North. For more information, call Mary at (248) 473-0499 or Kathie at (248) 737-0062. If you are not praying for your children, who is?

ADAT SHALOM

Adat Shalom Synagogue is at 29901 Middlebelt Road in Farmington Hills. Phone 851-5100.

Clergy includes Daniel Nevins, rabbi; Herbert Yoskowitz, rabbi; Jay Strear, rabbi; Efry Spectre, rabbi emeritus; Howard Glantz, cantor; and Larry Vieder, cantor emeritus.

Services Friday at 5 p.m. Saturday at 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Weekdays at 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. and Sundays at 8:30 a.m.

Bat Mitzvah of Jennifer Kahn, daughter of Cindy and Marc Kahn; and the Bar Mitzvah of Jason Rudy, son of Rae Rudy and William Rudy.

NARDIN PARK UNITED METHODIST

An evening of line dancing, with all proceeds going to Safe Haven, will be held at Nardin Park in Farmington Hills on Saturday, Jan. 13 from 7-9 p.m. Come with or without a partner. No experience needed. Easy line dances will be taught and led by dance instructors Elaine Kallion and Bill Schuster. No reservations, just stop by. Cost is $10 per person with all proceeds to Safe Haven, a facility for homeless adults with mental illness.

Nardin Park United Methodist Church is on W. 11 Mile Road, just west of Middlebelt in Farmington Hills. Child care and nursery are provided. For more information, call 476-8860.

FARMINGTON UNITARIAN CHURCH

People of Livonia Addressing Issues of Diversity will be at services on Sunday, Jan. 14, at Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington. Guest speaker is Ronnele Bowman, chairperson of P.L..A.I.D. who will present the organizations' goals and achievements in increasing the awareness and acceptance of racial and ethnic diversity in our area. This group has been the driving force to institute the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in suburban communities. Guest Speaker Rev. Gary Gibbs will also present a speech of Dr. King's. Services, Sunday School, and nursery at 9 and 11am. 25301 Halsted Rd. (north of Grand River) Info: 248-478-7272 or www.uufarmington.org

NOVI UNITED METHODIST

A women's health seminar sponsored by Providence Hospital and Medical Centers will be held on Sunday, Jan. 28 from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Novi United Methodist Church, 41671 W. 10 Mile, just west of Middlebelt.

It will include information on osteoporosis, perimenopause, menopause, women and heart disease, breast cancer prevention and detection. There is no cherge. Call 349-2652 for more information.

FARMINGTON LIGHTHOUSE AGLOW

Farmington Lighthouse welcomes Aglow's southeast area president Phyllis Bargo on Monday, Feb. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Best Western Hotel, 31525 W. 12 Mile in Farmington Hills, corner of Orchard Lake.

Dinner will be served promptly at 7 p.m. Dinner reservations ($10.50) are necessary; or just come to the free meeting. Aglow International's mission statement is: To lead women to Jesus Christ and to provide opportunity for Christian women to grow in their faith and minister to others.

Call Linda Boone at 476-1053 for more information.

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