



Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice

Brenda Salter McNeil, Eugene Cho (Foreword), J. Derek McNeil (Contributor)

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We can see the injustice and inequality in our lives and in the world. We are ready to rise up. But how, exactly, do we do this? How does one reconcile? What we need is a clear sense of direction. Based on her extensive consulting experience with churches, colleges and organizations, Rev. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil has created a roadmap to show us the way. She guides us through the common topics of discussion and past the bumpy social terrain and political boundaries that will arise. In these pages she voices her call to all believers: "It's time for the followers of Jesus to embark on the prophetic journey that leads to reconciliation and transformation around the world. Many of us may already be aware of the need for reconciliation in our own backyards. . . . We cannot ignore the plight of the people around us and as globalization continues its relentless march onward, we cannot turn a blind eye to the world at large either. We have to face the realities here at home and we must also embrace the stories of people all around the world." Each chapter lays out the next step in the journey. With reflection questions and exercises at the end of each chapter, it's ideal to read together with your church or organization. If you are ready to take the next step into unity, wholeness and justice, then this is the book for you.

Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice Details

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From Reader Review Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities Into Unity, Wholeness and Justice for online ebook

Jeff Lochhead says

Tangible, practical steps to seek justice and equality in a world in such disarray. There is such need for it to be seen that there is strength in diversity!

Tyler says

This book had some awesome moments. It was much more of a sociology work than a theological work. She largely assumes the biblical premise for the work and that diverse communities are already present and desiring reconciliation before starting down the roadmap. It's a helpful flowchart but very narrow in its focus and wouldn't apply to many situations.

Mike Jorgensen says

The greatest accomplishment of this book is incorporating our present struggle into the entirety of the biblical narrative (and metanarrative). The use of scripture was outstanding and the exegesis of our culture, history, and institutions was equally impressive.

The practical "how-to" section is generally helpful but seems a bit vague and ethereal. The reflection questions were as helpful as they could be, but the "roadmap" itself can only be implemented by the leaders of an institution or organization and might make an individual within an organization frustrated or given over to despair. The book tries to, in 117 pages, give an overview, history, and diagnosis of the problem with a prognosis for individuals, churches, colleges, and organizations. To say that it is ambitious is an understatement!

I really enjoyed the majority of this book although, despite its best efforts, the overall tone felt despondent. There are times it drifts too far into cynicism and other times it dwells in sentimentality. There is not a clear vision of hope presented consistently throughout the book.

Charlene says

This book is one of the first things I have read on racial reconciliation that actually offers some concrete steps of how a concerned citizen can work to change their own prejudices and be a part of helping their community make positive change. McNeil offers hope in a world that seems lost in a darkness of racial tension. It is designed to be read through with a group, and I hope at some point I get to reread it that way.

Erin says

Last spring, I heard Brenda Salter McNeil speak on racial conflict in America, particularly American churches. Her voice is powerful and moving, and I looked forward to reading something from her. I finally got around to it.

This probably wasn't the best choice as it is a curriculum designed to be done as a group. I read the parts I could read, which were good, but I skimmed over the group activities. After all, I am not a group, and I only have my perspective, so there was nothing to be gained there. Maybe if I did this with a group, I would have given it five stars.

The thing is, we have a problem with race in America. And we do have a problem with race in our churches. Even when things seem okay, which they can for white people, there are issues simmering below the surface. We do need to deal with them, and no matter how much I read, I can't deal with them if I stay in a primarily white environment.

We have lots of diversity at school, and while I do try to encourage acceptance of multiple perspectives, the fact that I'm handing out grades means in large part I set the culture.

One thing that Salter McNeil says is that in order to develop reconciliation communities, we will need to bring subconscious racial bias to the surface, which can be very uncomfortable and can elevate conflict, which allows true reconciliation. We have to deal with the conflict, conscious or subconscious. I think this may be true.

Overall, good book. Worth the read. I would love to be a part of a group that worked through the curriculum, but I don't think I could lead it.

Joel Wentz says

Don't let your possible fatigue regarding terms like "racial justice" and "reconciliation" prevent you from picking up this book. If anything, the practicality and clarity offered here, will inject some energy and hope to restore you!

Brenda (or Dr. B) is a true gift. Here, she draws on a lifetime of pastoral experience and offers a compelling, clear, and realistic vision for undergoing a healthy communal process that results in transformation and wholeness around justice issues. She doesn't avoid the complexities and difficulties inherent in the racial tensions we face, but also does not lead the reader into a quagmire of nihilism. As a college minister, I finished this book with a greater sense of hope for the future, and a practical sense of the next steps I am being called to take in my community.

I highly, highly recommend this for leaders, pastors, elders, and anyone desiring to take a community deeper into justice.

Bob says

Summary: This veteran of racial reconciliation work shows us not only that reconciliation is necessary but the path individuals and groups must take to pursue that reconciliation.

One cannot embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ without embracing the idea of reconciliation. Central to the gospel is the truth of God reconciling an estranged humanity to himself through Christ, and in the process reconciling people to one another across their deepest divisions. Sometimes in the depths of our woundedness, we struggle to believe this is even possible. Even when we do, living into the reconciliation Christ has accomplished is much harder than holding hands and singing "Kumbayah" around a campfire.

I've had the privilege to watch, if from a distance, the author of this book live into that calling of reconciliation. She is an African-American preacher, former staff with the ministry I work with, and professor. In this book, she brings together the gospel vision, experiences, and research of several decades to not only cast a reconciliation vision, but to give us a "roadmap" for pursuing that vision. It's not an easy road, and she helps us count the cost, shows us how it is possible, and the transformation we can hope for as we follow that roadmap.

After an introduction that shares something of her own journey, Salter McNeil makes a theological case for reconciliation as a way of life, giving this definition:

"Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish." (Italics in original)

She then proposes that the idea of a journey with landmarks and phases may be the best way to think about a transformative reconciliation process. She offers a roadmap rooted in Contact Theory involving these specific steps:

Catalytic events, which break us out of our efforts to preserve the status quo. They seem chaotic and threatening, but when they force one to empty out one's preconceptions, ask new questions, and recognize the new thing God wants to do, they can put people on the road to reconciliation.

Realization involves understanding a new reality, reorienting our perspective, requiring a readiness to change followed by taking the first steps to restoration.

Identification is when "your people become my people" which comes through empathic listening and deeply entering into the story of the other to the point where we are willing to share in that story, with all its pain.

Preparation is doing the hard work to get ready for lasting change. It is often here that reconciliation efforts falter, as groups lose a sense of urgency. Preparation involves the hard work of structural, systemic change, that is often costly in terms of power and privilege, but moves from transactional changes to transformational ones.

Activation or actively working for reconciliation involves CARE: Communication, Advocacy, Relating and Educating.

Salter McNeil concludes the book with some coaching about how one stays the course, and paints a vision of hope for experiencing at least a foretaste of the heavenly vision of peoples from every race, tribe, people, and nation before the throne.

Each chapter is designed with practical material to help groups move forward with each phase of the reconciliation journey (which is why reading this summary is no shortcut for reading the book!). The author lays biblical foundations, gives specific steps, illustrates with stories to enhance understanding, and invites individuals and groups into the next stage of the journey.

I would observe that the book seems to presume that the readers have experienced a catalytic event or will. I suspect these things can't be planned but will happen to any who go very far in pursuing reconciliation efforts. Things blow up, chaos occurs, and what happens next seems key in determining whether we will return to preserving our world, or enter a new journey. What Brenda Salter McNeil does here, and at each stage, is help us understand what is happening, the dynamics of the phase we are in, the posture that will help us move forward, and how God can meet us as we summon the courage to take the next step. The rest is up to us.

David Campton says

A relatively brief but excellent handbook on how to motivate individuals, churches and communities to become active in addressing division and injustice. Written from the context of racial inequality in the US in the wake of the post-Ferguson tensions, but before the advent of Trump, McNeil's closing reference to MLK's vision of A Beloved Community, 50 years after his death demonstrates that the process of realising this is not a quick fix and requires sustainable strategies such as outlined here. Its applicability is wider than US race relations however and could easily be applied to other situations and issues including our own enduring divisions in NI.

Hannah Notess says

Well, everything about this book is timely, practical, and relevant. Much like the New Testament (ha!) this book is deceptively short, and yet if you were to follow its advice, it would most likely require you to change everything. The parable of the rich young ruler, which she quotes, is particularly relevant.

If you are an evangelical Christian interested in breaking down racial barriers, seeking justice, and shaking up your predominantly white organization, this is THE book for you. Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil's deep knowledge and years of experience working among Christian organizations and churches around issues of race and ethnicity are the bedrock on which this book stands. Very powerful.

Side note about the title: if you don't run in evangelical circles you might not know that the term "reconciliation" typically refers to issues of racial justice and ethnic diversity. Nowhere on the front or back cover is race or ethnicity referenced. However I think/hope the lessons related to race and ethnicity could be used to address other kinds of divisions and forms of marginalization.

Chad Benkert says

This is well written as a practical guide to starting the journey. The ending was Very strong and left me feeling encouraged and convicted at the same time: "and may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor. Amen"

Catherine Lowe says

The format of this book requires that a group of diverse people read and discuss it together. That the power to succeed in reconciling with others can only spring from Christ's work to reconcile people to God is somehow lost in the author's exhausting call to self-effort and change makes the road to reconciliation a weary road indeed.

Eric George says

Review on roadmap to reconciliation by Brenda Salter McNeil

Looking for a book that can show the art of how to settle with your foes, or the people one has had a hostile dispute with in the past is a useful task. Roadmap to reconciliation target on moving communities into Unity, wholeness and justice. The book says it promise to make the reader take a step into unity, wholeness and justice.

About the author

Rev . Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil is an American woman who works as an pastor, public speaker and author. The leading role she has in reconciliation work gives her some base to write a book about reconciliation. McNeil is a associate professor in the School of Theology at Seattle Pacific University.

The reconciliation

A roadmap to reconciliation between different groups of people with differences is a huge project. In a wider scale, this would mean if there was a recipe for reconciliation there people would find unity, wholeness and justice with each other.

The book is briefly, and just 133 pages and therefore is more like something to consider rather than a total solution and direct useful tool. The author has spent a lot of time defining the term and she explain how she tried to seek out other words like, inter cultural credibility, inter-cultural competence and inter-cultural integrity to better describe the work she hopes the book can do. The author expressed worries that the term reconciliation might be overused or misunderstood.

As a pastor she use the biblical extensively and there are also references to chapters the reader needs to check up themselves, in addition to the paraphrasing. The more direct the topic becomes when the chapter defining the landmarks is read through and the more cyclic approach is explained.

The reconciliation roadmap is the method the for reconciliation, with the understanding of a new reality, identification, where your people become my people, getting ready for lasting change and the actively working for reconciliation. This process is entered through catalytic events. Brenda explain the different

phases with real examples, but the reader would maybe benefit from a more in depth narrative about the examples.

The book has a lovely tone, a warm charm, but it becomes a bit condense and shallow, not leaving the reader with too much new information about reconciliation. But good to know reconciliation, once achieved is a ongoing process.

Shannon says

It took me almost a year and a half to finish this book - but only because I read it as I lived it. Dr. McNeil is spot-on accurate with describing the pattern of the reconciliation journey. It was a comfort to know that everything I have experienced or felt was not new and was understood. She has made me feel equipped, encouraged, and hopeful to continue on and never stop pursuing racial reconciliation in The Church. Every Christian should read this. It lacks absolutely nothing. I have never underlined so much of any other book I've ever read.

Stephanie Nannen says

This book is essential for majority-culture Christian leaders seeking to move their homogeneous organizations toward ethnic diversity. Dr. Salter Mcneil brings a wealth of research and personal experience to this topic. I loved her diagram (referred to throughout the book) that explains how transformation happens in any group (or person), and why it sometimes doesn't happen (and the consequences of that.) It is a sober warning of the incredible commitment and maturity required of leadership to walk their congregations through transformation toward unity and justice.

Bob Wolniak says

In an age of contention over what loaded terms like racism and reconciliation actually convey, the author works hard to establish a spiritual and dynamic definition, "an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish." The book lays out a path toward wholeness and justice without getting bogged down and lost in debates. Truly a short and very much to the point workbook with excellent reflection and application exercises, I can't think of a more timely and needed book given the discussion going on in this country today.
