

Mediation Training or “How I Spent My Summer Vacation”

by Charles Robinson

I was asked to share a thought or two about my experiences while attending the Lombard (Chicago) Mennonite Peace Center’s week-long mediation training course in early August. Two words come to mind: powerful and exhausting. Exhausting because of the very full schedule each day, horrible flight delays and an highly-driven instructor who I suspect was a reincarnation of an ancient Egyptian taskmaster. :)

Powerful for a whole host of reasons. The week was powerful because of the content of the training which included exercises in active listening, reframing, process structure and flow, family systems and assessment of congregations to name a few. Perhaps the most powerful aspect was the effectiveness of the process and skills practiced in leading people to move from entrenched, self-righteous and hostile positions toward openness, honesty, courage and a willingness to face and own one’s personal contributions to the dysfunctional conflicts that have arisen within the congregation. We concluded the week practicing how to help people ask forgiveness of one another. It felt like standing on holy ground.

Training in the ministry of mediation toward reconciliation quite powerfully gave me a renewed sense of the intrinsic goodness of people that always lives within us in spite of our less than stellar behavior at times and a revitalized sense of hope that all of us can find new life if we are willing to do the spiritual and psychological work that can get us there.

Respectfully,

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