
DANIEL COMMUNITY SCHOLARS PROGRAM



2019 Blackburn Institute Civic Pitch Competition Proposal
(Daniel Community Scholars Proposal)

Faith-Based Path to Racial Reconciliation

Fellow submitting proposal: Danielle Blevins

Collaborating Fellows: N/A

Issue or Community Need and Historical Context

In America, as of 2017 based on 2012 data, there were an estimated 384,000 churches in America. Of that, only 20% of Americans attend a racially integrated church. A racially-integrated/multicultural church is defined as one “where no one racial group is more than 80% of the congregation.” That means, 80% of Americans attend a church where, if it is integrated, it’s predominately a one-race/single-race church. From a religious perspective, that’s untenable. From a community-based perspective, where, according to the 2017 Census of Governments, there’s approximately 90,000 local government units in the United States, that’s extremely problematic. That means for every local governing body represented, there are more than four (4) churches to also represent that one municipality. In April 1960, Dr. King, at the beginning of the height of the Civil Rights Movement, gave an interview to “Meet the Press” calling “eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hour, in Christian America. America culturally adheres to Judeo-Christian tenets of faith, and churches, as pillars in the communities they serve, they qualify for not-for-profit status. What we’ve found in this area is that these not-for-profits, that do good in their communities, are not working together, not for lack of interest, but for lack of engagement. As the data shows, churches in communities across the country, and Alabama is no different, that churches are not integrated, but segregated, and as a result, are not working together effectively in their communities. Mission Reconcile (MR) is a faith-based racial reconciliation nonprofit created to bring together predominately one race/culture churches to talk about race, racism and create organic relationships through facilitated events called "Path to Reconciliation" and "Conversations ON." MR’s core project “Path to Reconciliation” and Conversations ON seeks racial reconciliation and seeks to address the racial division in the church and ultimately around the world. The problem is that the church is not unified and if the church, who has Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, is not unified then we cannot expect unity from the world. “Racism is America’s first sin” and the answer to sin is Jesus and the church - the people-answering yes to God's call to be reconcilers, not dividers. MR seeks to bring churches together to empower and equip them to live out the ministry of reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5:11-21 in this divided world. We believe that this work “starts with a conversation” where hearts can change and lead to the action of creating reconcilers where the church will be the example for America and America will be an example to the world. According to Pew, 86% of Alabamians identify as Christian. According to the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, in 2010, there were 7,029 churches in Alabama’s 67 counties, including over 700 in Jefferson County alone. In winter and spring 2019, Mission Reconcile held it’s first Path to Reconciliation in New Orleans, Louisiana. Based on feedback in the community, we acquired data and feedback from pastors to give us deeper insight into that deeply religious community. If national church data holds true, and we think it does, homogeneous churches cannot effectively and authentically have a conversation on race and racism in their environments. Path to Reconciliation seeks to be a resource for one race churches to come together, partner, and have meaningful and healthy conversation on the topic of race and racism. We know the need exists after receiving an overwhelming response for our services and programming after hosting two Unity Prayer Action Breakfast inviting clergy in New Orleans. In addition, the racial division climate of our nation elicits the need with racial disparities and racial injustices continuing around the state and the country. Additionally, we also found while many clergy were committed to racial reconciliation, they did not have close, personal relationships already with other clergy who were of a different race. They had no, or few, opportunities to get together, or get their churches together, to discuss these important, vital issues. With the overabundance of churches, MR seeks to plant seeds to help the Church address its history of

enabling racism in America. Path to Reconciliation seeks to address the racial division among churches, people of faith and provides a vehicle for churches to have needed and healthy conversations surrounding race and racism. This work will inspire people of faith to address issues surrounding poverty, violence and inequality by discussing and learning the root issue of these intersections, racism. Through MR's work people of faith will be social and racial justice conscience and focused to make contributions to their community to address issues that intersect poverty, violence, and inequality.

Relationship with Community Partner

[Predominantly white Church (PWC)] in Homewood, Alabama has reached out a multiple times to Mission Reconcile over the past year and a half. In 2019, after the completion of our first Path to Reconciliation we met with the current head pastor and a deacon regarding the state of race relations in the Birmingham community and its suburbs and the intersectionality of faith and race. As part of our work, partnering with the local churches is vital to doing what we've been called to do. The deacon, mentioned above, and I attended law school together at the University of Alabama School of Law. Upon graduation, he settled in Birmingham with a firm and later married his wife. They have lived in the Birmingham area since 2015. At his predominately white church, Reverend [of PWC] has been actively preparing his congregation for these hard conversations at the communal level. We're still discussing the next steps between our organization and his church congregation. We are still searching and in talks with and for a predominately black congregation. As a result, there is still groundwork to be laid. With Reverend [of PWC], we discussed the need for preparing the congregation to engage enthusiastically in this event. We've also discussed how the covenants are not between us, but important for the wellbeing of the community long after we've left. We are there to empower and provide resources to change communities for the better together. The program will consistently be measured by feedback through surveys of participants and clergy. This is the continuation of previous work in other communities on this issue. The project will be completed at the end of the Path to Reconciliation, but we will remain in community with these churches as a resource.

Proposed Action and Sustainability

The project "Path to Reconciliation" (PTR) is 3 part event over the course of 2-3 weeks that brings together and partners 2 predominantly one race/culture churches called "Courageous Churches." The programming is detailed below: Part 1 — Participants will continue relationship building and come together with Courageous Church "A" hosting Courageous Church "B" during their respective worship time. In order for congregants to connect and build relationships, it is essential that members of each church engage in each other's spaces and see how the other church worships. Church A will be responsible for hosting a Fellowship after the service with members of churches, providing food, music, and conversation during the Fellowship. During the Fellowship, Mission Reconcile will facilitate icebreakers and opportunities for participants from each church to intentionally talk and get to know one another, which will ideally lay the foundation for long-term relationship and civic action lasting beyond the Path to Reconciliation program. Part 2— The same program outline; Courageous Church "B" will host Courageous Church "A." Part 3- Path to Reconciliation program will open typically on a Saturday morning at an impartial community venue. Participants (members of Courageous Church "A" and Courageous Church "B") will be able to mingle and talk with one another prior to the start of the program. The event will open with a facilitated a cultural awareness activity, i.e. privilege walk, implicit bias activity, identity activity. A privilege walk is an activity where statistical statements are read by the facilitator and the participants are asked to take a step forward or backward based on their responses.

Implicit bias activities help to make people aware of their own bias regardless of their race or gender. Identity activities help people to discuss their chosen identities with one another which create opportunities for storytelling. The remainder of the program includes a “TedTalk-style” presentation on “The Call to Be a Reconciler” explaining that because of faith they are called to social/racial justice consciousness and faith in action. Pastors of the participating Courageous Churches participate in a moderated panel discussion pertaining to racial reconciliation and their participation in the Path to Reconciliation program. The panel discussion will be interactive between the pastors and participants/congregants. The event ends with participants engaging with one another over “food and fellowship” in group discussion on topics about race, personal stories, their community, civic engagement, justice issues, etc.. i.e. What do you desire for Birmingham? Alabama? Multicultural food will be served to emphasize the importance of interacting with cultures outside of one’s own and trying something new. Participants will be asked if they tried something new to eat, and if they enjoyed a new dish, to get them thinking about remaining open minded about other cultures. Participants will leave with a Next Step Card that includes ways they can continue to work towards racial reconciliation beyond their participation in Path to Reconciliation. With this information, reconcilers can spread the message of reconciliation to their family members, neighbors, coworkers, and more, bringing their city, state, and the United States one step closer to racial justice and equity. After the 3 part program is complete the partnering churches are asked to engage in a racial reconciliation small group using the Be the Bridge curriculum to continue to build relationships. MR also hosts “Conversations On” a particular topic which serves as an opportunity for individual churches to prepare for “Path to Reconciliation” before partnering with another church. Conversation on allows churches to do individual work based on the needs of their congregation and the surrounding community. MR seeks to host a Conversation On the topic of the importance of voting and the role of elected officials while hosting a voter’s registration drive. We ask that churches host the event at their respective churches to engage their congregation and the community and we facilitate the conversation. Additionally, prayer breakfasts bring together pastors to have these conversations among each other contemporaneously, but to also prepare them and their congregation for a Path to Reconciliation. PTR has/will engage predominately white churches and predominately black churches with at least 25 congregants/participants from each church. PTR bringing together two predominately single race churches has been able to impact over 100 people in the course of the three part program. With opportunities for growth, PTR and the prayer breakfasts will be hosted in various cities in the Deep South.

[Budget Narrative](#)

The funding granted for this programming event and other programs will fully cover the project’s needs. We have received a few grants in the past year and have used those as supplementing the program costs. We use funding from external sales of created merchandise to fund the actual operation of Mission Reconcile logistics. At the end of the event, we make it possible for congregants to financially contribute to Mission Reconcile directly, however, those payments are not consistent for sustainability purposes. We have reviewed the funding restrictions and agree with the stipulations required.

Budget

EXPENSE BUDGET FOR PRAYER BREAKFAST

9/12/2019

Mission Reconcile

| Expense | Category | Budget | Actual | Difference (\$) | Difference (%) |
|---|-----------|--------|----------|-----------------|----------------|
| Venue | Operating | \$ | | \$ | 100% |
| Catering/Food (Breakfast and Lunch) | Operating | \$ | Redacted | \$ | 100% |
| Photography | Operating | \$ | | \$ | 100% |
| Branded Printed items | Operating | \$ | | \$ | 100% |
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| Other | Personal | | | \$ - | |
| Total Expenses | | | Redacted | | 100.00% |