



Emmanuel Katongole (left) and Chris Rice are the founding codirectors of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School. This piece is excerpted with permission from their book, *Reconciling All Things*.

Everyday leaders in reconciliation

Wherever we find hope in a broken world, we see the significance of everyday leaders. Unlike experts, Christian leaders are both inspired by a vision of God's future and grounded in the thick stubbornness of the now. They have made the conflict their struggle. They are on a journey whose end they envision but whose realization is beyond them. They know the journey will be costly but that the victory belongs to God.

Leadership in the ministry of reconciliation is more about heart and soul than strategy.... The story of the ministry of reconciliation always begins in the humility of everyday life, with someone responding to a gap. This is also where leadership begins.

It is easy to miss both how big and how small a thing it is to respond to a gap. The gap cries out for people to respond. Yet few have ears to hear or eyes to see. Surrounded, numbed and seduced by the pressing noise of getting ahead and the seeming normality of the way things are, few see that the gap exists. Fewer are bothered. Still fewer respond. Leaders are ones who begin to see, to be disturbed, to go out of their way to respond to the gap. They are immediately out front in doing so.

Yet being out front is not spectacular. Responding to gaps is casual, small, unnoticed. The person may not even be saying or thinking 'I am leading.' He or she

was simply interrupted or disturbed—and responded. This is why learning to tell the story over and over again is crucial.

Chris Heuertz went to volunteer for two months with Mother Teresa in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) when he was a college student. He had no plans beyond that. He had heard of Mother Teresa and wanted to see what her ministry was about. But Chris could not forget the men and women he saw dying on the streets of Kolkata. He was captivated by the same gap to which Mother Teresa had initially responded.

Over the next few years and more visits to Kolkata and meetings with Mother Teresa, Chris helped re-image Word Made Flesh, an incarnational missional community that serves Jesus among the most vulnerable of the world's poor.

Responding to a gap is not about starting everywhere but about starting somewhere. Wherever we find ourselves, there are gaps. The gap can be as small and near as people in our own family, town or congregation. The challenge is for each of us to be faithful to discern and respond to the gap God puts before us.

Leaders see a gap. They become disturbed. They go out of their way to respond to the gap. This is the beginning of leadership in reconciliation.