

Ministerial Meandering

Last Saturday, I spent the whole day at St Dunstan's, Aldergrove, doing an obligatory day of training in 'Racism'. This has to be done by any of us in the parish who have a role in dealing with people in any 'official' capacity - i.e. Wardens, etc. And me.

What bothered me, was that neither the format nor the content of the course has changed at all (apart from the video) in the last 10 years. I have to do it every 5 years to keep my license.

You might say, 'Well, if it's a good course, why change it?' And that would be a valid question; but I would reply, 'How do we know if it's a good course, unless we audit it?'

When I was working for the International Red Cross (ICRC), I was sent on mission by the Head Office in Geneva, and not the Canadian Red Cross. Part of my job was to teach initial trauma skills to those who needed them in Egypt and in Palestine (specifically, Gaza, which was still at the time a war zone).

I worked with a wonderful Canadian nurse who was ER trained, and we had a course that had been set up by the ICRC some years previously, and was being pushed out all over the globe - with their criterion for success being the number of countries into which it had been introduced.

Being an academic, I questioned the validity of their premise, as the ubiquity of the course bore no relation to the effectiveness. I argued that the only way to see if the course was of any value at all would be to audit the morbidity and mortality figures of any one ER unit before and after the course had been introduced - and after the host country had learned to provide the course without outside help.

Not surprisingly, my suggestion to Head Office in Geneva went down like a lead balloon, and I was simply asked if I would now like to teach it in the Yemen and Syria.

I responded by saying that until I knew that we had reduced the mortality figures in Cairo and Gaza, I wasn't going to put myself at significant risk of either kidnap or death for an unproven assumption - nor did I think they had the moral right to ask anyone else to do so either. This was 2013 and 2014 - just when Al-Shabab was going crazy in Yemen and kidnapping aid workers, and the Syrian war was just getting going.

It was some years later that I heard again from the ICRC in Geneva; they told me that they had had this amazing idea that they should audit the effectiveness of their ER course, and wondered if I was interested in going back to Geneva to collate the results. I declined.

The story is really a direct parallel to the business of the Racism course run by the diocese. What effect has it had on anyone? How could we find out? What is the point of churning out the same stuff, year after year, if there is no audit as to its effectiveness?

I shall be sending a copy of this Meandering to the diocese, and hope not to be asked to resign, but I do hope that some thought might go into thinking about this issue.

Philip+

The Venerable Allan Carson's Reply:

Hi Philip, thanks for taking the time for writing this letter. I have forwarded it to the dismantling racism team of facilitators. As someone who has been involved in the workshops since their inception in the diocese, which I think we have just completed out 8th year of

workshops, I have personally observed considerable change in the interaction of participants over the years especially as we move through a second round of workshops. There is a greater openness to the need for dismantling racism and to personally engage in the work from participants. We have a long long way to go. It is a continuous work not something that can be accomplished in a workshop or two but something that we begin to continuously educate ourselves in and participate in. May it become reality in all parishes of the diocese.

Blessings Al

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