

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the Global Legislative Session of the Wesleyan Covenant Association in Montgomery, Alabama. This was the first time I attended a WCA event outside of my annual conference. To be honest, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but it didn't take long for me to know that I was in the right place. The opening devotion was led by Rev. Dr. Jeff Greenway. While his devotion was the first presentation of the two-day event, it was also the most impactful for me personally.

Rev. Greenway's devotion contained three main points: 1-Live into the new future now, 2-Be forgiving, and 3-Be peace-makers. In this article, I will attempt to unpack these important themes in my own words.

### Live Into the New Future Now

As we continue to wait for General Conference to meet and decide for or against the Protocol, many churches, pastors, and even annual conferences have slowed down or even stopped ministry from moving forward. It is important that we get refocused on making disciples for the transformation of the world, rather than waiting to see what the denomination will decide. If we continue to slow or even halt ministries, we are missing opportunities to reach a broken world in desperate need of the life altering love of God.

There is nothing that says that we cannot implement systems and processes recommended by the WCA into our current ministries, so long as they don't violate the United Methodist Book of Discipline. We don't need to stop doing ministry. We can live into the new future now. The vision for the Global Methodist Church and the WCA coincides with Wesleyan values and are in line with our current discipline. Let us remain faithful to the Word of God and the UM Discipline, which we vowed to uphold, while looking toward a new future and implementing those strategies and ministries now, so that, if and when the Protocol is passed we are already living into that new future.

### Be Forgiving

Over the years, and increasingly recently, the wedge has been driven deeper and deeper in the United Methodist Church. As divisions continue to develop among us, hurtful things have been said and done by Christians on all places of our political and social spectrum. The disagreements within our denomination have caused many broken and dysfunctional relationships among clergy and laity alike. This is not the vision of God. God calls us to look past our differences and focus on that which unites us. I often share a saying at my church, "we keep the main thing the main thing", reminding my folks that our love for God and each other is what unites us. While it seems a church split is inevitable, it doesn't mean that disciples can't be made in both denominations.

It is incumbent upon us to be forgiving of one another as we move forward. Rev. Greenway used the phrase in his devotion, "what's in the well will eventually come up in the bucket". Wise words! He encouraged us to purify our hearts and seek forgiveness for others. That we might live in the unity of the Spirit and not be held back by anger or hurt in our hearts. If those things, which are not of God, are in our hearts, they are going to eventually be vocalized and lived out in our lives. What's in the well of hearts will come up in the bucket of our mouth or our actions. That is not who we are called to be or the representation we are to have to the world. Let us fix our hearts on God, so that our words and actions are reflective of our love for Him.

## Be Peace-Makers

The time for fighting amongst each other is coming to an end. As we look into a new future, it is important for us to be a people who are seeking peace. Rev. Greenway used another illustration to explain this thought. He told us that we have spent so much time pounding our plowshares into swords, that if we aren't careful we will find ourselves turning our swords upon each other. He suggested that now is the time for us to begin pounding our swords into plowshares. We have been trained to fight, but now is the time for us to get back to the sowing and harvesting. The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. As we live into the new future, we must be ready to plant the seeds of the Word of God and be prepared to make disciples of Jesus Christ as the harvest comes in. It's time for us to refocus. It is time for us to live into the Great Commission and be the Ambassadors of Christ we have been called and created to be.

Rev. Greenway's words have been very impactful, hopeful, and inspiring to me. I hope you have found the same. I believe that this message is good not only for the WCA, but also for Christians from any theological perspective. We should always be looking to the future with hopefulness, sharing forgiveness with one another, and making peace. These are all things God has called us toward. As I look to the future, I know that God has great plan. He is simply calling us to be faithful and follow where He leads until we see that day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord! Until then...we still have work to do!

God Bless,

Rev. John R. Virgin