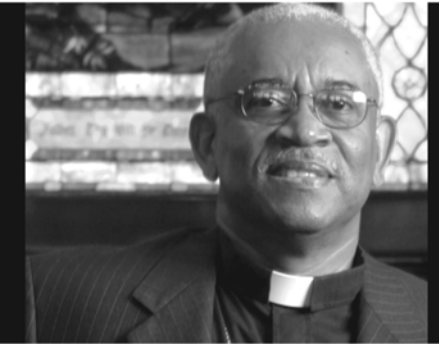


GOOD PREACHING TRANSFORMS LIVES



“I’m excited about the program at Luther Seminary. I have received a reservoir of practical knowledge in biblical preaching. The feedback from professors, classmates and my parish is a catalyst for my enthusiasm.”

*Earnest Tate,
D. Min. ('07), Associate
Pastor of Messiah Evangelical
Lutheran Church, Minneapolis*

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Mike McCurry

So here is a heartfelt plea: let's not spend our precious time in conference fighting to one more 50-50 split on issues of life and sexuality where we probably cannot agree. Let's discover a theology of the common good, working to do those things that can bring us closer to the Kingdom irrespective of our political and theological differences.

My career has been built around campaigns, politics, and presidents. My passion these past several years, however, has been getting my political friends awakened to the possibility of moving mountains when the church helps us deepen our faith. We need better spiritual preparation for the public task of walking with God humbly to love kindness and do justice.

Humility, justice, and kindness. Not words we normally associate with politics in Washington, nor, unfortunately, the workings of the United Methodist General Conference. We find it easy to polarize but far more difficult to find that place where we can work, in love, to bridge differences and seek real compromise.

Let's not spend our precious time in conference fighting to one more 50-50 split on issues of life and sexuality where we probably cannot agree. Let's discover a theology of the common good, working to do those things that can bring us closer to the Kingdom irrespective of our political and theological differences. I believe we can do that by setting big goals that require a mission devotion that grows bigger than our many differences.

I have been fortunate to play a small role in getting the connection focused on the exciting possibilities of launching a church-wide global health initiative, concentrating on an effort to eradicate malaria.

Malaria is a disease we barely know in the United States but it claims millions of victims per year, too many of them children in our central conferences and elsewhere. We know what it takes to treat and

prevent malaria and we know that lives can be saved if we try. We even have a pretty good idea of how to end the disease for good. That is exciting.

What if every Methodist committed to saving someone from malaria? We have started doing this through the “Nothing But Nets” campaign, but I am thinking bigger. Yes, we work on AIDS. Yes, we have missions to build schools and fight extreme poverty and do many other things important and noble. Yes, our *Book of Resolutions* grows like an encyclopedia every four years.

That's the trouble with The United Methodist Church. At my first General Conference in 2004, I was overwhelmed by the enormous list of programs that the denomination undertakes in a given quadrennium. I also felt like there were many agendas at work and many causes itching to be scratched.

When everything is someone's priority, everyone has no priority. We need to come together and set other agendas aside, no matter how laudable, noble, or just, in the name of finding the one thing we know we can do together, well. I want it to be making the people of The United Methodist Church the ones who end malaria on earth.

Maybe faith will call us to some higher aspiration or to a different, worthy goal. But let's listen to where God calls us to make a real difference. Then let's set aside our own differences and pet peeves and causes to unite and do something really big and glorious in the name of our Christ.

Mike McCurry is a lay leader at St. Paul's United Methodist Church in Kensington, Maryland.