

# Could We Try?

MY WIFE LESLIE HAS BEEN PRIVILEGED TO INVEST TIME ASSISTING WITH the “Nothing But Nets” anti-malaria campaign. She comes home with amazing stories of people linking-up to “Send a net and save a life” with resolute energy, moral clarity, a compelling sense of urgency. These people are delighting in the pure joy of following Jesus who unflinchingly leads us to heed God and respond to human need.

To witness how UM congregations, young people and old, in every corner of the Connection are saying “yes” to this campaign is astounding and breathtaking.

But as we approach General Conference, if the question is “Can’t we all just get along?” the answer is apparently, no.

So often we are clustered shoulder to shoulder with our ideological cohorts, looking fretfully at others and questioning the integrity of their motives, freezing our arguments into hyperbolic sound bites, barely listening when contrary voices temporarily get the microphone.

We know how to pick sides, close ranks, draw lines, and rebut flawed counter-arguments. But could we also learn how to listen, learn and discover transcending imperatives that compel us to foster relationships and devote ourselves to shared labor?

**One of my friends says about our tendency to pick combat over collaboration, “We need to expect of ourselves and ask of others that we simply and emphatically stop it. That’s all. Just stop it and choose a better way.” His is a heart plea: unrealistic, idealistic, and simplistic. But could we try?**

As a part of developing the State of the Church Report, the Connectional Table asked a sampling of UMs around the world to weigh-in with a concise essay commenting on the aspirations, hopes, disappointments, and challenges they believe describe noteworthy issues and perspectives in the life of the Church. Some offered analysis. Some articulated prescriptions. Others remind us first and last to kneel in prayer.

In this issue of *CR* we have included several of the essays and excerpts from others (due to space limitations) for your perusal – and just perhaps for your edification and prayerful reflection. We invite you to listen and consider, pray over and talk with others about what our sisters and brothers have to say. Perhaps we will all discover something new; or perhaps we’ll discover something old that helps to make us new. Maybe we’ll even find new ways to pray, talk, learn, and live together.

If you want to read more of the essays or contribute one of your own, visit [www.umc.org/stateofthechurch](http://www.umc.org/stateofthechurch).



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