

MOG085 - Bishop Carter Life in Thirds

Transcript

SPEAKERS

Aimee Yeager, Bishop Ken Carter

00:05

Welcome to Means Of Grace, a podcast produced by the Western North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Aimee Yeager 00:19

Welcome to the Means Of Grace Podcast. I'm Aimee Yeager, Conference Director of Communications. In this short episode, we hear from Bishop Ken Carter, Resident Bishop of the Western North Carolina and Florida Conferences. Bishop Carter reminds us that in this season with so many trials and so much division, we cannot neglect to care for or nurture any portion of this abundant life that God has gifted to us. Or else, we run the risk of burning out before the work is done. Bishop Carter.

Ken Carter 01:03

I want to invite you to think of your life in thirds. If you're in leadership, at the moment in the United Methodist Church, and/or if you care about her future, you may find this helpful at a practical level. And of course, you can develop your own version of it. Think of dividing the way you allocate your time into thirds. You can begin in the area that's most helpful or necessary for you, and then go to the others. The three areas of life are: First, your spiritual life, family and friends, and sense of personal well being. Second, your call to develop disciples and leaders for God's mission. And third, your interest in the future of the denomination that is the United Methodist Church, the continuing United Methodist Church. I want to begin with a third one: Denominational future. This is important. I'm a leader in this conversation. I have invested my life in this work the last few years. And I have the sense that there is movement toward change. I also know this can become all consuming and at times chaotic. As it plays itself out in social media, people are caricatured, and become casualties in our own version of the culture wars. And so I engage and I tell myself that I'm doing this for others. Lately, the three groups I have most in mind are younger generations of clergy and leaders, ordinary local churches that are not heavily invested in the culture wars, and Annual Conferences outside the United States that have missional partnerships with us. Now all of this is important, but it cannot occupy all of my attention or energy, nor should it. This would not be healthy. And it's not an accurate picture of what God is actually doing in the world. Another area of focus: A second third is my call to develop disciples and leaders and leadership systems for God's mission. This is Jesus' basic call to make disciples in Matthew 28. And as a bishop, it's about appointment of clergy to ministries and invitations to others, mostly laity, to leadership roles. It is about resourcing women and men in leadership. And in Florida and in Western North Carolina. This is about the work of our cabinet and strategic leadership teams, about innovation work, about Fresh Expressions, about Reconciliation Ministries, about initiatives toward anti racism,

and conversations with pastors of churches. It is about connecting discipleship, with concerns that call for the church's voice and advocacy. The separation of families at our borders, refugees fleeing throughout Europe, mass shootings that involve assault weapons and public spaces. The escalating climate of racism and the continuing sin of sexism. Developing disciples and leaders strengthens local churches, and strong local churches transform their communities. In the language of Matthew 5, they become salt and light. These two pieces of work: Discipleship Leadership is one, our Denominational Future is the second, are both necessary. The former is the true purpose of the ladder. And the ladder done well provides opportunities for next generations and communities across the world to follow their callings. Yet, there's more to life than these two areas. There's a third critical piece. And this is the life that provides the energy to do this work. This is the spiritual life, daily reading of Scripture, prayers of gratitude and intercession, weekly worship, Holy Communion. It is feeding the mind with substantive books that open us to ideas that are perhaps beyond our present thinking. It is the intimacy of family relationships, those who know and love us apart from our work, and their well being. It is paying attention to friendships, and not letting them drift. And it is having a life beyond work. And for me, this is sometimes about baseball, about roots music, about hiking, about walking about seeing our daughters, and our grandchildren and their families. So imagine your life in thirds. Again, if you are a leader in the United Methodist Church, it's likely not possible that you can avoid doing work in these three areas. You cannot retreat into your own personal life or your local church. At the same time, if you find yourself over investing, and the denominational space or future or conflict, you may lose a sense of perspective, or even creativity, by not spending time and the other two spaces. This is where innovation comes in. Not to mention the resources you will need for your sanity, and your stamina. And not to mention the still small voice. Our next church will need people who are mature spiritual leaders who are able to sustain relationships across differences, who are able to develop disciples and leadership systems, a part of our presence stuckness is our fragility. We are not deep enough in the third area: Spiritual life, friends, family, well-being, beyond the role. We're not deep enough to be secure and who we are, the energy to do the really necessary work comes from this third space. But the third space at the present moment cannot be an end in itself. If you are a leader in the United Methodist Church, you've been called to a particular role in this season. And that is the well being and flourishing of the continuing United Methodist Church. It is the season of ambiguity and change. And it requires courage, the courage to live in each of these three spaces: Personal well being, discipleship, and leadership denominational future. The courage to live in each of these three spaces, and to see them in relationship to each other.

Aimee Yeager 08:43

Thank you, Bishop Carter for that poignant and timely reminder. Friends, we are called to be fully who God created us to be. To generously share our gifts and talents with the world. And to stay in the game, even when or maybe especially when the going gets tough. We know that we do not ever go alone. And we are grateful that you allow us to go along with you and be a part of your journey. Thank you for listening to the Means Of Grace podcast. Join us again on June 21 When we listen in on a panel discussion taking place at this year's Annual Conference on the continuing United Methodist Church.

09:35

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