

# A Divided Nation Needs a United Church

## Executive Summaries of Presentations:

### Devotion: Rev. David Christy, Catawba Valley District Superintendent

- II Samuel 6 – David dancing before the ark and wife, Michal, looks with disdain “she despised him in her heart”. David says, “It was before the Lord” that he danced. David was clear on who his audience was: God!
- Do we act like Michal (more worried about others’ actions than our God)? We often look down and criticize – but the audience of the Church is God. We exist to glorify and honor Jesus Christ through the strength of the Holy Spirit
- Paul dealt with divisions in early church (who was a better preacher, how followers should act, etc.). His focus was Jesus Christ – always. II Corinthians 4:5
- In this age of division: masks, vaccinations, race, politics, we are called to be the Church: One Faith, One Lord, One Baptism. That doesn’t mean we look past our divisions. They are real... we just don’t start with our divisions. We start with our God.
- Oswald Chambers, My Utmost For His Highest (devotion for December 28): “The hindrance of our spiritual life is that we will not be continually converted, there are wages of obstinacy where our pride spits at the throne of God and says – I won’t. We deify independence and willfulness and call them by the wrong name. What God looks on as obstinate weakness, we call strength. There are whole tracts of our lives which have not yet been brought into subjection, and it can only be done by this continuous conversion. Slowly but surely we can claim the whole territory for the Spirit of God.”
  - Would that it be so... when David stopped worrying about how his actions might look and started focusing on God, things changed. When Paul refused to be goaded into arguments about who was a better preacher and how religious people should act, he could consistently say that it is all about Jesus!
- Our work is on-going. God’s grace is ever before us... it doesn’t mean we all think alike. It doesn’t mean we all agree. It does mean, however, that instead of getting caught up in US, we get caught up in God!
  - There has never been a more important time to lift high the Cross of Jesus Christ. People are looking for salvation from ideological and political echo-chambers, and we have the privilege of offering Jesus Christ! May we lose ourselves in that joy just as David lost himself dancing before the Ark.

### Empathy: [Brené Brown on Empathy - YouTube](#)

### Listening: Rev. Kim Ingram, WNC Director of Ministerial Services and Conference Secretary

- One way we can begin to build unity is by simply listening. Without judgment. Perhaps without even a response, except to say “I hear you.” At least at first.
- Before we say anything we need to reflect on what our conversation partner said first. It can be helpful to repeat back to them, “What I hear you saying...” Or, “It seems like you feel...” With this, you are essentially saying...I hear you. You matter.

- Another approach is one of “wonder.” We can bring wonder to our relationships and our conversations. I wonder how they came to think that way. I wonder if there is something else going on in their life right now. I wonder who listened to their ideas or thoughts when they were growing up. I wonder what kind of hurt or harm they might have experienced. These aren’t questions to ask. It is a way to stay open to what someone else is experiencing or feeling.
- We can hope, that when someone feels heard, they become better listeners too.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

*The greatest single antidote to violence is conversation, speaking our fears, listening to the fears of others, and in sharing the vulnerabilities, discovering a genesis of hope.*

**Humility:** Rev. Dr. Vincent Howell, Centenary United Methodist of Clemmons, [vhowell@wnccumc.net](mailto:vhowell@wnccumc.net)  
*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)*

- Godly humility is being comfortable with who you are in the Lord and therefore putting others first. The picture of humility in the Bible is one of a strong person who loves others,
- It is being comfortable with who you are in Christ and seeking to build others up, not yourself. It is gratefully walking in God’s grace, love, and forgiveness.
- In *Matthew 11:29*, Jesus gives us a good example of humility in action. Although he was the son of God, he was gentle and humble – and yet He was committed what the Father called Him to do; He was strong. That verse says, - *I am gentle and humble in heart.*
- If we think about the life of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King or John Lewis, we can see life lesson in being humble:
  - You can handle unfair treatment peacefully when you are humble - *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:31-32)*
  - You can ask for forgiveness when you are humble - *Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. (Matthew 5:23-24)*

**Developing an Outward Mindset:** Jennifer P. Davis, HR Consultant, Epworth UMC, Gastonia

*Brene Brown says “It’s hard to hate up close....move in.”* So, how might we do that:

- Always begin with **YOU** – knowing and being confident in who **YOU** are
  - Taking care of self so you may care for others
- **Seek** and **practice** methods of personal development and self-awareness
- Relationships.....relationships.....relationships.....it’s all about **relationships**
  - Think of others in terms of an iceberg – what you see is not always what you get; relationships are not always built on the obvious
- Learn to think before you speak. Words hurt and cannot be taken back. Everything you are thinking does not have to be spoken.
  - It’s so much easier and maybe it’s natural to criticize or complain first. Try to compliment before critiquing.

- Practice **active listening** – everybody wants to be heard – not everyone wants to listen – be a good listener
  - Never assume anything – ask questions for clarity and understanding
- Own your thoughts and feelings – do not project them on others. Talk about **“I”** and not **“You”**
- Manage and control your emotions – there are many who didn’t do that who are no longer here
- Be aware of cultural differences that may affect communication
- Never attack, accuse, belittle or allow that to happen to others
- Don’t avoid the tough conversations – instead, plan for them and engage with grace
- Learn to see yourself through the eyes of others – seek input and feedback
- **Do no harm.....to yourself or others**
- **Do good to everyone...including yourself.**
- **Above all else..... Stay in love with God. Stay in love with God.**

**World Café Model:** Cindy Thompson, Executive Director, Boundless Impact, [Home - Boundless Impact](#)

**Purpose:** World Café is an effective model for holy conversation moving from dialogue to action. People yearn to hear and tell stories, make deep connections with others and build bridges across divisions. World Café can be used in your congregations for strategic planning, visioning, ministry planning, and for hosting holy conversations in your communities around the many –isms and issues that divide us (racism, sexism, ageism, sexual identity, religion, nationalism).

**Resource:** “The World Café: Shaping our Futures Through Conversations that Matter”  
Book by Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, Website: [www.theworldcafe.com](http://www.theworldcafe.com)

**Goal:** Focused use of dialogue to foster productive relationships, collaborative learning, and collective insight around real-life challenges and key strategic questions.

**Values:** Invitation, Diversity, Everybody, Good Questions, Listening, Movement, Energy

**Mantra:** Actionable knowledge - turning *if only’s* to *what if’s* to *why not’s*

**Design Principles:**

1. Set the **Context**
2. Create Hospitable **Space**
3. Explore **Questions** that Matter
4. Encourage Everyone’s **Contributions**
5. Connect Diverse **Perspectives**
6. **Listen** Together for Patterns and Insights
7. Share Collective **Discoveries**

**Roles:**

1. Planning Team: 3-9 people
2. Facilitator: 1-2 people
3. Table Hosts: 1 per table
4. Volunteers: 2-5 people to greet, set up, graphic illustrate, clean up, follow up
5. Participants: 12+ people, age 12+, with 4-6 people per table

## **RACIAL HEALING AND THE GOSPEL OF RECONCILIATION: Dr. Vincent Howell**

Scripture : 2 Corinthians 5:11-20

- Even though each of us has gifts and talents and work in local church ministries, the ministry that Paul is speaking of is one that every Christian is called to. And that is the ministry of reconciliation.
- Jesus said, “If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand” (Mark 3:25). The division caused by racism all across the world is a major hindrance intended to separate and render ineffective the body of Christ (that is the church) and its mission of making disciples of all nations.
- Racism is a sin issue. Therefore, the body of Christ - the church - should lead the way in every reconciliation effort and set the standard for spiritual and social healing.
- A.J. Hagal makes a fitting conclusion - “ We are the image bearers of Christ on the earth. Therefore, reconciliation is not an effort to be made -it is our calling to be lived out. Our calling is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: *everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us .*
- Racial reconciliation is possible since we have been reconciled to Christ.

### **Racial Healing and the Ministry of Reconciliation**

[Link](#) to workshop registration

#### **2 Corinthians 5:16-20 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>16</sup>So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.