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Go Slow, Go Fast

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By Gary E. Mueller

Bishop of the Arkansas Annual Conference



The beautiful opening words of the third chapter of Ecclesiastes offer profound wisdom about the nature of life, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens..."

We have learned that we can't control when the seasons of life take place, especially the painful and challenging ones. We have discovered that they come and go; when one ends, another quickly begins. And we have come to understand that we must adapt to the seasons as they are, and not how we would like them to be.

So what season are we in now? If we are in tune with what is going on around us, we realize we are in two seasons at the same time. The first is the season of COVID-19. The second is the season when the world has finally embraced the absolute necessity of dismantling racism and moving toward a new vision of living as a reconciled people.

It's critically important to remember something as we figure out how we adapt to these two seasons that are so shaping our lives. Our relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior changes how we see, feel, think and act. This means we don't just follow conventional wisdom. Instead, we do all we can to make sure we live the Jesus' way in response to these two significant seasons.

What does this mean in the season of COVID-19? Quite simply, we go slow because the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. Indeed, it has entered a new and dangerous stage. Dozens of churches in Arkansas have been places where people have been exposed to COVID-19, mostly because they have not followed the basic safety protocols outlined by Governor Hutchinson.

Like all of you, I long to gather face-to-face with sisters and brothers in faith as we pray, worship, study and serve. But in this season, Jesus' words about loving our neighbor means we go slow. Let's take small steps – making sure we do it with our masks on. Better to go slow and then speed up, than to go too quickly and have to deal with the illness or death of someone you love.

And what does living the Jesus' way mean for this season of our increasing awareness of racism following the deaths of George Floyd and others at the hands of the police? Quite frankly, addressing racial injustice has been on hold too long – far too long – and we dare not waste this moment. We must go fast as we address our role in it, as painful as that may be. We must go fast in coming to grips with how racism is part and parcel of our culture, government, private sector, and the church. And we must go fast to live out Jesus' call to be a reconciled community in which ethnicity and race are not dividers, but wonderful gifts within the Body of Christ.

We are blessed because we have been embraced by Jesus and the fullness of his unconditional, invitational and transformational love. We are privileged to be called by him to follow him in everything we do. We have important seasonal work to do right now. There is a place for all of us to make a difference. For God's sake, let's show the world how to go slow and how to go fast.