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Be A Reconciler

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By Gary E. Mueller

Bishop of the Arkansas Annual Conference



Do I behave differently than I otherwise would because I am a Christian who is being transformed from the inside-out by the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? This is an appropriate question. It's also an uncomfortable question because it brings me face-to-face with the reality that I may not be as different as I would like. But even more importantly, it spurs me to dive deeper into how my faith actually shapes how I live.

This is not, however, merely a theological question to ponder. It is rooted in real life in these days of deep divide, increasing polarization and a highly partisan presidential campaign. So let me rephrase my question, not just for me, but for all of us who are part of the Body of Christ. Do we behave any differently in the midst of deep division that is being played out than we otherwise would because of our relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ? I'm glad if that question makes us uncomfortable. I'm grateful if it causes us to take some time for deep reflection. I'm hopeful that, indeed, we will act differently as a result of it being asked than we otherwise would. In fact, all three of these things are my prayer.

To be clear, this is not an attempt to tell you what to believe or how to vote. Rather it is a plea to more intentionally let our identity as Jesus' followers shape how we see ourselves and how we live out who we are in a way that makes it clear how we are different because of Jesus. And this is why I want to move beyond my own feeble words to those of Holy Scripture. Listen to what Paul has to say on the subject,

16 *So then, from this point on we won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. 17* *So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!*

18 *All of these new things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and who gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 19* *In other words, God was reconciling the world to himself through Christ, by not counting people's sins against them. He has trusted us with this message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:16-19 CEB)*

We know God is at work in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself. We have experienced that reconciliation first hand. And now we have the opportunity to help others experience how a relationship with Jesus truly leads to us being reconciled to each other. Quite simply, we need to work diligently to avoid becoming yet another divider and, instead, work to be a reconciler.

Since this is an article filled with questions, it's not surprising that I'm going to ask one more. What do you think might happen if over 130,000 United Methodists in Arkansas so believe what Paul says about reconciliation that we actively pursue it? I sure would love to find out. I hope you do, too.

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