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They're Just Words – Or Are They?

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It seems that almost every United Methodist meeting I attend these days includes the following words and phrases: liminal, asynchronous, actionable, emotional intelligence, nimble, new normal, transparent, and adaptive. In fact, I even use them myself. And while

they can be helpful in describing the world in which the church finds itself, I am increasingly convinced we also need to employ the language of faith. The reason is simple. How we talk about something goes a long way in determining what we actually do about it.

I believe it is time for those who love Jesus as Savior and Lord, those of us who seek to live as his disciples, and those of us who long for God's will to be just as real on earth as it already is in heaven to inject the language of faith into our lives far more intentionally. I also understand this is a challenge for many of us because we tend to shy away from using faith language, often for very appropriate reasons.

But if we don't use the language of faith, we will soon discover our lives being shaped primarily by things other than faith. That's because faith impacts every single part of our lives all day long. How often we talk about Jesus as Lord and Savior, mention the Kingdom of God, speak about the fullness of grace, or share our commitment to growing deeper in discipleship and living out that discipleship speaks volumes. Quite simply, if these things are an important part of our lives, they should be expressed in the words we use.

There's one place, in particular, I am convinced using the language of faith will make a significant difference: our quest for racial justice.

Last year, we introduced the phrase, "Dismantling Racism – Building Reconciliation" to describe our work in addressing racism. I was convinced it was clear, to the point, and indicated the work ahead of us. What is more, it focused on more than merely eradicating something horrible. It also talked about replacing it with something good.

But along the way, I realized some people aren't interested in addressing racism because they don't think it's an issue, at least their issue, or they simply don't know what to do. As I struggled to deal with this reality, I realized something was missing that is absolutely essential if we are truly serious about addressing racial justice: our Christian faith. So in recent months, I have started talking about our work in a new way, "Dismantling the Sin of Racism – Building God's Reconciliation." These additional words that talk about sin and God's reconciliation dramatically change how we understand what we are facing and give a clearer direction about our ultimate goal. Racism is a sin and the Christian faith offers a way to address that sin. True reconciliation is rooted in Jesus' ultimate reconciliation through the cross. It is my hope and prayer that being intentional about using our faith vocabulary will help us address racism far more quickly and powerfully than we otherwise would.

We always walk a fine line as Jesus' disciples when it comes to employing the language of faith. We never want to be arrogant and we certainly don't want to act disrespectfully towards others. But we need to include the language of faith in the totality of our lives because we live most fully into our true identity when we acknowledge Whose we are and who we are. That's why the words we choose every day are so important. Perhaps now

more than ever. May we choose words that remind us and others of what we believe about life – both now and for eternity to come.

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