

SERMON - GLOBAL YOUNG PEOPLES CONVOCATION SUNDAY JULY
22, 2018 4:30 PM

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

THEME: From Everywhere to Everywhere, "Together We Go"

TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-13; Micah 6:6-8.

Thanks and appreciation

Greetings

The Global Young People's Convocation is a quadrennial event that brings together the largest number of young people from across our denomination every four years. The first one was held in December 2006 in Johannesburg, South Africa; the second in July 2010 in Berlin, Germany; and the third in July 2014 in Tagaytay City, Philippines. And this is the fourth. It is indeed a blessing that two out of the four of these events have been held in Africa and for that matter here in South Africa.

By the special grace of God, I was privileged to participate in one of these events- in Johannesburg in 2006 when I served as Women's Division Regional Missionary. I give God the glory that He has given me the opportunity to celebrate this 2018 event with you here again in Johannesburg.

So I am deeply grateful to the General Board of Discipleship and the organizing committee for inviting me to preach at this closing worship service...

I am also deeply thankful to the General Board of Global Ministries for flying me to this place and

for the privilege to once again be with our Global Mission fellows who are here for training and orientation.

Let Us pray (Jesus, we are here)

I just flew in yesterday and from all I have witnessed so far, I can safely say that I am in the right place and at the right time. I am extravagantly blessed to be here. I will return home with testimonies upon testimonies of the rich and diverse cultural experiences that is being expressed here at the convocation. I have witnessed the abundant spiritual power of God's Holy Spirit among you as you worship God in a variety of languages and expressions. I have been overwhelmed by joy to see you embrace and celebrate each other as members of the family of God. I have experienced this huge rainbow of God's young people, from everywhere across the globe defy definitions of colour, race, creed, socio-economic and sexual orientations. I cannot fathom how rich a treasure the United Methodist Church has been endowed with by God. Young people, you are our treasure. You are the most important gift to the church. You matter.

You remind me of the hope and dream that I have for the United Methodist Church, a dream that all Bishops share; a dream of God keeping our denomination together and creating a new United Methodist Church, where God's rein takes precedence over every other consideration.

You remind me of the days when I was like you, youthful, vibrant, forward looking, uncompromising and full of energy. I was

everywhere at the same time. I would jump, clap and dance like nobody. I would yell on top of my voice and at youth camps, would roll on the floor until I am drenched with sweat like I have just been plunged into a pool.

See how gorgeously you look. You remind me of the days when I was like you - handsome and good looking with jet black hair and full of life. When girls will look at me from the corners of their eyes as I pass by thinking of nothing but to have me in their embrace. But you know, over the years, age has taken hold of me and I am no longer the youth I used to be. Too bad isn't it?

You remind me of Ecclesiastes chapter 12 "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth before you the days of trouble come and you grow old and you will say, I have no more pleasure in them.

I am indeed blessed to be part of this historic moment and in the words of Peter, It is good for me to be here.

The theme for this convocation is "Together we go". As Vice President of the Board of Global Ministries, I would kindly ask you to permit me to add our Motto "From everywhere to everywhere" to the theme. So for this message, I will be preaching on the theme" From everywhere to everywhere, together we go"...

In Ecclesiastes4:9-10, King Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived wrote, "Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one falls, the other can reach out and

help. But woe to the one who falls alone and has no one to help him" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Friends, we are not sure the circumstance in which King Solomon was when he made this prophetic statement but the fact is that old as the saying may be, it is as relevant today as it was in the times in which King Solomon lived.

Life is about togetherness. The two creation stories in Genesis place emphasis on the importance and inevitability of togetherness. Adam was created and given authority by God to rule over God's creation. But Adam was never happy because he was alone. But the moment God gave him a partner, the story changed. If I may ask you young adults present here, how many of you are married? How do you feel? GOOD of course..

Over and over again, I have often wondered what my life would be without my wife, or how my ministry would have been without the many colleagues at the UMC house in Freetown who daily help to share the burden of leadership.

We all, no matter your colour or culture or sexual orientation- we all need each other. But just in case you don't need me, I need you. The United Methodist Church needs you.

Everyone including myself here has a time in his or her life when we suddenly feel low. Situations happen and times come when we think things are not going the way we want them to go; when our dreams

and aspirations seem far from being achieved; when our trust is betrayed; when our hopes are dashed and when circumstances defraud us of what we hold so dear to us.

These are the times when more than ever, we need someone by us. These are the times when we need someone to motivate, inspire and strengthen us.

In the United Methodist Church, we are confronted with perhaps one of the most divisive issues that is posing the greatest threat to our unity as a church. Human sexuality. More than ever before, this is the time that we need each other. This is the time when United Methodists need to be together.

There is an African proverb that says "if you want to travel faster, travel alone. But if you want to travel far, travel with someone.

In the song "We are better together", Artist and song writer Jack Johnson pens down these words"

*It's always better when we're together
Yeah, we'll look at the stars when we're
together...*

Yeah, it's always better when we're together

Friends, our world is rapidly changing. Changing at a velocity that makes it almost impossible for it to halt even for a second. Our world today, and I can I say the United Methodist Church has become so hostile and so confused that no one has any idea where we are heading.

- Our church is fast becoming a selfish bunch of people isolated from each other and cocooned in our sexual shells. We have become an inward looking denomination that is completely out of gear with God's redemptive purpose for the human race.
- We have become so institutionalized that we have pushed under the table John Wesley's intention for the United Methodist Church to be a worldwide evangelical and transformative movement.
- We have become too busy and we continue to spend millions of God's precious dollars debating sex, while millions of God's children around the world cannot go to school and continue to die each day for want of food, clean water, and preventable and treatable diseases.
- United Methodists have become so completely out of gear with one each other that we kneel at the communion rails on Sunday and take Holy Communion together but without talking to one another. And of the service, we all go back each his/her own separate ways
- We have ceased to be the salt called by God to bring the healing in a socially wounded spiritually broken world.
- We have ceased to be the light sent by God to usher in hope in a world darkened by despair, hate, racism, tribalism xenophobia, and abuse of power by people in high places

- Yes, we have become too comfortable, oh yes, just too comfortable to be bordered by the injustices and the pains and the anguish and the troubles and tears of our world. We are just too comfortable.

Bishop Joe Pennel, former Bishop of the Virginia Conference USA agrees that "the principal threat to United Methodism at the present time is not rigidity or narrowness, but theological confusion and fragmentation".

Friends, our United Methodist Church is sick and good only for the intensive care unit. We need some power somewhere, we need some kind of revival movement to open the eyes of our hearts so we can regain spiritual consciousness and get down on our knees and ask for God's divine forgiveness for all the pain and trouble we have caused each other all in the name of human sexuality.

I believe that God is still asking you our young people gathered here the question that He asked Isaiah thousands of years ago "Who shall I send and who shall go for us? And I can hear you loud and clear responding to God's call, "here we are Lord, send us. "Together we go"

Young people ... you are the hope of the United Methodist Church. You are God's hope for the world. With everything falling apart in the United Methodist Church, with all the schisms around us, in the midst of all kinds of bogus theologies now been propounded - theologies that only confuse the church more and more, I believe that you are the prophets called by God to save the United

Methodist Church. And I hear you say "From everywhere to everywhere, together we go"

Young People ..., You have come from everywhere, and at the end of your time here today, you will be departing to everywhere around the globe. To Africa, to Asia, to the Americas, to Europe, to the Middle East, to Australia, to everywhere on the surface of this earth where God's people dwell.

With a mighty and united force, together you must go and transform the world. Together, you must stand up and say no to the ills of society.

And I hear you say, "From everywhere to everywhere, together we go"

Yes, together we must go. Together, you must stand up against the powers that be, against the evil practices of corruption and political bigotry and xenophobia and racism and tribalism and nepotism and sexism, and all other cisms that tend to bring down our church and society.

And I hear you say "From everywhere to everywhere, together we go"

Together, you must stand up and with all the power at your disposal, resist all the bogus theologies now being propounded with the expressed aim of dividing the United Methodist Church.

And I hear you say, "From everywhere to everywhere together we go'.

Friends, the solitary life is a life not worth living. We can only reach our highest potential as a church, and we can only be the church that

God wants us to be when we go together. Already, our church is dying in some parts of the world. In one State alone in the US, I am told up to ten churches close down every year. This is not good news. This is something that we all need to lament about. This is the time for you young people to stand up together and save our church. I believe in the power of togetherness. The Israelites were able to crumble down the walls of Jericho without firing a bullet because of the power of togetherness. Queen Esther was able to avert a holocaust and save the Jews from destruction in Babylon because of the power of togetherness.

The independence movement that swept across Africa in the late 1950s and through part of the 1960s that ushered in sovereign statehood to all African nations was achieved because of togetherness.

The minority Christian population that emerged from the upper room that has now become a world - wide religion survived because of togetherness. And I have the firm belief that if we stay together, we can save the world from further degeneration.

And so with one united voice we say "From everywhere to everywhere together we go"

Lets clap for Jesus...

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. AMEN, Amen, Amen, Amen Amen.