

**“ONE PEOPLE” Address by the Rev Dr Harold Good, OBE
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Conference Video: <http://worldmethodistconference.com/wp-content/uploads/wmc2016-videos/Wmc16-friconfplen-good-v2-1.m4v>

INTRODUCTION

When I was invited to address this session of the conference on the theme of “ONE PEOPLE” my mind went back to many, many years ago. Fifty-two years ago, my wife and I had just been married and I had a desire to go and explore a wider world. To broaden my experience, to learn some new things that might be helpful when I returned to my ministry in Ireland. And indeed, that did prove to be the case. The mid-60’s, preparing me in a way that I did not know, for what I was to return to in Ireland.

Anyhow, we went out on the good ship *S.S. America*. And being a young married couple, we had just scraped together enough to pay our fare. Thankfully, my father-in-law paid for my wife’s fare.

Anyhow, we booked our passage second class, used to call it “steerage.” We couldn’t afford to fly, because that was an expensive way of traveling. So we had 5 or 6 lovely days at sea instead. They gave us a very basic cabin below the water line to which air was supplied through a tube, a bit like the one you have on your tumble dryer! I remember going to it and breathing. It really was the back end of nowhere on the ship.

So when we heard that on Sunday morning there was to be Divine Worship in the First Class Lounge, we saw this as our opportunity to see how the other half lived. And we queued up and the little man at the gate, threw open the gates and said, “The gates of heaven are open!” The service was conducted by an Episcopalian from New York and it was a very nice service. And we sang as our last hymn, which I thought was a rather strange choice for the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, “*Onward Christian Soldiers.*”

And we sang loudly and lustily.

*“We are not divided, all one body we:
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity...”*

Then the preacher, paused and he said, “*I have been asked to remind second class passengers that following the benediction they must return to their end of the ship.*”

Well, so much for “*All ONE body we ...*”

Not even a time of fellowship with a cup of Methodist tea and cookies.

I’ve thought about that sometimes, and I think it’s a bit of a caricature, of what passes as ecumenism, a token gesture that doesn’t really take us anywhere. And we return at the end to our quarters, may we think of ourselves at first class or second class. More often thinking of the other as lesser than ourselves.

Those of us who have travelled here from other countries will have changed our money to US dollars. In case you have not noticed, on the coins is a Latin inscription, “*E Pluribus Unum.*” Which being translated means, “*Out of many, ONE.*” While it has been on American coins for over 200 years, it owes its origin to St. Augustine in the 4th Century. I don’t think he gets any

royalties from it! What a good title, what a good headline for this conference! “*Out of Many, ONE.*”

We have come together from North, South, East and West; women and men, younger and older of every 'make, shape and colour'. Look around you. We representative 80 million members of over 80 Wesleyan organisations in 130 countries from around the globe. We have come together to celebrate our “ONENESS”.

First and foremost, our 'ONENESS' in Christ, which together with our shared identity within the Wesleyan tradition defines who we are; an identity which we cherish and which we come together to celebrate.

Could Mr. Wesley have ever envisaged such a party, when he boasted that the world was his parish”? The world was a very small place in his day, compared to what it is now.

So let's celebrate, let's 'party' - strictly within the spirit of the Methodist Book of Discipline, of course!

But what does it actually mean to be “ONE PEOPLE”? Where does our ONENESS begin and where does it end? Does it refer only to our relationships within the Wesleyan family? Or does it extend to our relationships with our brothers and sisters of other traditions? And, is our understanding of ONENESS large enough to include people of other faiths - or indeed none?

Don't expect all the answers in the remainder of my 45 minutes! But hopefully we will begin a conversation which we can continue as we walk and talk and eat together and in our extended conversation tomorrow afternoon.

Let's ask ourselves, what are the theological and biblical principles of oneness?

Our oneness can be expressed in many ways. I came across a word which I was unfamiliar with, “*peoplehood.*” This is a word familiar to our Jewish friends for whom it defines their common identity as well their responsibility to others, within and outside their own community.

Then there is the other wonderful word, “*Ubuntu.*” Our South African friends, we have learned this word from and through you. What a special word! Loosely translated it means, “*I am not complete without you. You are not complete without me. Neither of us is complete without the other.*” I think that is a wonderful definition of oneness.

But as people of faith we turn to our ancient scriptures. In whatever way we choose to read the story of creation in the early chapters of Genesis, we may read them in different ways, but there is one clear central message that is common to all of us, however we choose to read those chapters. It is that there is one God. This one God created us to be one people. That together, we might share His good earth, at one with Him. At one with one another and one with creation. But sadly, over time, God's glorious vision of “oneness” for his human family got horribly lost. And throughout the pages of scripture we read horrifying stories, horrifying stories of bloody battles over race and religion, with generations of religious and political leaders invoking the name of God to legitimise their causes. Poor God.

In our cynicism we ask, “*What has changed?*”

For we too live in a world beset by wars and rumours of wars inspired by religious fervour. A world in which we talk of building yet more walls instead of bridges. We have in Belfast,

something called a Peace Wall. To me, peace and walls are contradictions in terms. And in what is a not-so-United Kingdom, we voted to isolate ourselves from our nearest neighbours. Why? So that we might protect our imaginary “oneness” by keeping others out.

In his most excellent book *“Exclusion and Embrace”*, which I enthusiastically commend, the Croatian Christian theologian Miroslav Volf attributes this loss of “oneness” in our world to what he names as *“the sin of exclusion”*.

Many of us here have come from places of historic conflict in different parts of the world. We will all have our own tragic stories to tell. And we may have an opportunity to tell those stories. I watched the banners in procession on the opening night of our event and I watched with some deep compassion, the banner from Rwanda. We will have stories to tell. And we will know what Miroslav means when he talks of the sin of exclusion. For that is where every conflict begins.

I’ve had opportunity, privilege not only in Ireland but in places like the Basque Country and more recently with the peasant farmers of Colombia. And when you talk to people about their conflicts and about what brought them into whatever it is they are doing, it is that feeling of having been excluded.

But within the story of God's struggle with his people and their struggles with him, we hear the persistent voices of the prophets; prophets such as Isaiah who sustained the vision of a world in which ONENESS would one day be restored. Isaiah, the classic prophet of hope. He speaks in hugely exaggerated but symbolic language of a new day when:

*“The wolf shall live with the lamb,
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
the calf and the lion and the fatling together;
and a little child shall lead them.”*

He didn’t know what that meant. But we do.

For us, Isaiah was speaking of the time when One would come to live amongst us, to bring us into a new relationship with God and with one another. St. Paul explains it in a sentence:

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.”

He became one of us, so that we might become one with him and be at one with each other.

Here is the God 'embracing' his world. The God who longs to bring his world together in 'oneness'. So that in the saving work of Christ, we often refer to as atonement, we really should refer to as at-one-ment. That is what atonement has made possible. At-one-ment.

Some of us will remember this picture, particularly those of us from the west, may remember this picture in our Sunday School room, under which we would sing of the unifying Jesus who loves ALL the children of the world:

*“... red and yellow, black and white,
all are precious in his sight.”*

Remember it? It is indeed a happy and innocent image which we have cherished for ourselves and our children, but for Jesus the reality was very different. He came into a deeply divided and hostile world that did not want to hear about oneness. A world that did not want to hear what he had to say and about what he came to bring. Listen to him as he confronts the hypocrisy of the

scribes and Pharisees who so openly preached and practiced the sin of exclusion.

And listen to his simple but profound stories of “*inclusion*” and “*embrace*” and “*oneness*”: The shepherd bringing home the last sheep without which his flock would not be complete without that one; a wayward son, ‘*embraced*’ by the Dad who longed for the restoration of oneness within his family.

Look at Jesus at a party, ridiculed because he was so much “*at one*” with people who were considered ‘unworthy.’ See him sitting at the well, in conversation with a woman who was not of his faith or culture. And hear him pray in Gethsemane, praying for oneness. He knew how unpredictable were his followers to whom he was to entrust his mission. And so he prayed with great passion,

“Father, I pray that they may be ONE, just as you and I are ONE.”

But he knew that was not going to be easy for them.

Sadly, how right he was, because as we begin to read the story of the early church, the euphoria of Pentecost soon evaporates. And there they are, at it. At each other. The debate over doctrine and discipline. Who was worthy and who was not. Who was in and who was out. Does that sound familiar?

But at the heart of these divisions was what Miroslav Volf so rightly identifies as the “*sin of exclusion*”; the ‘morally superior’ Jewish Christians and their exclusion of Gentile Christians. Racism and sectarianism rolled into one! The church driven by cultural values instead of the values of the Kingdom of God.

So what were they to do? Well, they called a committee! Someone suggested a ‘residential.’ They didn’t go to Houston, they went to Jerusalem. Read all about it in Acts Chapter 15. How they struggled with this issue. How they were going to overcome these barriers of race and tradition and culture so that they could be one. We can imagine the struggles they had, because we’ve been in similar struggles where ever we came from, haven’t we? Maybe over something else. Maybe over the color of a carpet. We don’t know.

They decided to write a letter. A letter to the Gentile believers and they said, “you are now one of us! We are now one.” And if we read the chapter, the section says that when the people read this letter, they were filled with joy! Oneness.

It was no coincidence that a key figure in that meeting was Peter. Remember how he came to understand how wrong he had been? Take time to read that story in Acts Chapter 11. His dream of a large sheet full of every kind of animal and bird – which God commanded he must eat! For Peter, this was his worst nightmare! When he protested, he heard God say, “*call not anything – nor anybody – that God has made ‘unclean’.*” Don’t call anything God has made unworthy. And that was a turning point for Peter. I think we could do well to take that passage and preach on it more often.

Peter’s prejudices were very obvious. But some of ours less visible.

The Apostle Paul agonised over these splits in the fellowship of the early church. To the ever squabbling churches he wrote . . .

“Come on ... there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free, men (and women!) - for you are all ONE in union with

Christ Jesus.”

There it is again, that word “ONE”! I don’t know who had the inspiration to take one word and use it for this event. But what a word it is! Where ever we read in the scriptures the story of God’s engagement with his people, this word keeps re-occurring. One.

But across the centuries the history of the church is riddled with stories of schism and division: the 11th Century fall-out between the Eastern Church and the Western Church; the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century and, to complicate things further, along comes Mr. Wesley in the middle of the 18th Century!

As those of you who are steeped in the history of Methodism will know Methodism was born and nurtured in controversy and has had its full share of dissent and division across the years. I was saddened to hear what Ted Campbell had to say yesterday and I hope we listened and that we will pray for this united church. It has had it’s stresses and strains ever since Wesley’s heart was strangely warmed on 24th May, 1738.

Yet, however difficult and tense the arguments during his lifetime, Wesley was as deeply committed to holding Methodists together as one people - as he was to unity within the body of Christ.

In a pamphlet entitled “*Reasons against separation from the Church of England*”, Wesley makes clear that his vision was for renewal rather than separation. Above all, he was deeply conscious of the damage which disunity would do to the proclamation of the Gospel. In one of his letters he writes:

“Let us count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord”

How right he was. Is there anything more damaging to the witness of the Church than the scandal of dispute and disunity? I am reminded of C.S. Lewis and his classic “*Screwtape Letters*”, in which he recounts a conversation between a senior devil and a zealous junior devil who wanted to know how he could destroy these Christians. “*Leave them to it*”, advised the elder devil, “*and watch them destroy each other!*”

This is why unity and mission must go hand in hand. And this is why we must continually return to the prayer of Jesus who prayed that we be ONE. Why? So that the world would believe. You cannot separate unity from mission.

So for us, gathered as we are in this place and at this moment of time, what is this “oneness” of which we speak and for which we yearn?

Wesley had an interesting way of introducing some of his sermons. He was say, first of all what something was not, before he went on to tell you what it was. So in the spirit of Mr. Wesley, “Oneness” is not to be confused with 'connectivity'.

'*Connectivity*' is a new word which is related to what is known as '*social media*' (or as I have been known to call it, 'UN-social' media). Einstein was right when he said, “I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots.”

Did you hear the one about the Garden of Eden? Everything was wonderful and Adam and Eve were getting along so well until Eve got herself an Apple.

Did you know there are now more mobile phones in the world than there are people. Can you believe it? It is true and yet throughout our world there is a greater sense of separation and aloneness than ever before. Oneness is not connectivity.

In Methodism our word is “CONNECTION” - from the Latin for “*binding to*”. I think that through all our branches of the church throughout the world, Methodists use the word connection.

Or, as I prefer to spell it, “*Conne+ion*”; a deeply personal and spiritual relationship - in contrast to the remoteness of 'tweeting' and 'facebooking'.

I respect the right of those who do, but it is not my practice to raise my hands as I sing; but what about all of us extending our arms outward to embrace those around us as a sign of inclusion and conne+ion, as did Christ on the Cross?

Secondly, “Oneness” is NOT to be confused with “sameness”.

In this event, gathered as we are from around the globe, representing 80 different branches and twigs of Methodism, do we feel 'at one' with each other? Put up your hand if you feel at one.

If the answer is “yes” I am glad to hear that. It would be a long way to come to find out that we do not!

But let me also ask, are we all the same?

No! Of course not! Thankfully we are not! Can you think of anything worse than if we were all dull copies of each other? Clones of each other? Gosh, no! No! No! That is not the oneness in which we seek. Diversity is what greatly enriches us.

Paul put it well when he talked about the different parts of the body complimenting each other.

And listen to Mr Wesley, in his sermon on “*The Catholic Spirit*”.

“[When I say]... give me thy hand I do not mean 'Be of my opinion.' You need not: I do not expect or desire it. You need not even endeavour to come over to me, or bring me over to you. Leave all opinions alone on one side and the other, only give me thine hand. Hold you fast that which you believe is most acceptable to God, and I will do the same.”

Of course Wesley did have difficulties with aspects of 'un-reformed' theology, as indeed he had with Calvinism. But this did not conflict with his understanding of our *oneness* in Christ.

I commend to you his “*Letter to a Roman Catholic*”, written from a troubled Ireland in response to the raw sectarianism of the 18th century. It is as timely today as it was in 1749, for in spirit Wesley was an ecumenist well ahead of his time. In his letter he pleads for the supremacy of love over dogma and doctrine:

“I hope to see you in heaven. If we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we may love alike. Herein we cannot possibly do amiss. For of one point one cannot doubt a moment: God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

Words we should read again and again!

Thirdly, “The ONENESS is not to be confused with “EXCLUSIVITY”.

To be one with in Methodism does not mean we cannot be at one with others outside of our tradition. Of course not! I treasure my *oneness* with my wife and my family. It is very precious, but in no way does it exclude me from being *at one* with others!

Wesley would not have tolerated the “individualism” which appears to be a growing characteristic of many churches and fellowships around the world.

Amongst his oft-quoted references are these:

“There is no holiness but social holiness.”

“A solitary Christian is a contradiction in terms!”

Of course it is good to feel we belong, to have an identity. But any definition of “*One People*” that limits us to the boundaries of self or tradition is not only unhealthy but also unscriptural and out of character with our Wesleyan tradition.

As a Methodist people let us make sure that ours is an 'inclusive' sense of identity. In the spirit of Mr Wesley who called us to be “*the friends of all and the enemies of none*”.

Let us ask ourselves in this increasingly complex world, how are we to cope with our feelings of fear of Islamic extremism? How we balance that with our responsibility to and for our Islamic neighbors. What about those whose sexual identity may be different than our own?

At our recent Irish Conference one of our best young ministers, got up at the end of a debate on homosexuality. He had already made it known his orientation. But he got to his feet at the end of this report and here is what he said,

“Let not another paper pass through this Conference without us being clear about our responsibility to outrageously love a community of people who, despite their public appearance, feel hurt, rejected and fearful within our churches. Let our church families be places where LGBT people are actively affirmed in who they are.”

We are a 'broad church' and I know that for many of us these are difficult issues and difficult questions. Please bring your questions to our conversation tomorrow afternoon where we will have time to discuss, explore, and share in a more responsible and sensitive way.

Central to Methodist theology is a very tiny but critical three-letter word. It's the word “ALL.”

For me the most moving moment in my sacramental ministry is when I invite people to come to the Lord's table and I can say as a Methodist proclaim, “*This is His table, to which ALL are welcome!*” What a wonderful privilege to say that!

And we sing: *“Come sinners to the Gospel feast,
Let every soul be Jesus's guest . . . for God has bidden all
mankind.”*

The words of Charles Wesley. Let us as Methodists, cherish this gift and let us share it in our search for oneness.

I have dear friends here from another tradition within the Christian faith. I know that we share pain that we are unable to share the same bread and wine. Sadly, until that day comes, our experience of what it means to be “*one people*” can be only partial. Let us pray and work with sensitivity and respect for that day when we can really say, “Though we are many, we are one body because we all share in the one loaf.”

What might we as one people have to offer to a broken world?

As 21st century Methodists, followers of Jesus and "trustees" of the rich legacy of the Wesleys, what is the relevance of our theme “ONE PEOPLE” to the world beyond this Conference? A world in which there are 50 million displaced homeless people? And we heard about the hungry people before I began.

As 21st century Methodists, what do we have to offer? Let me suggest that first of all we need to begin by listening. Listening to a cynical world which will tell us that religion is one of the main causes of confusion and division in our world. I quote an Irish historian who has recently written, “*Christians have built more fences, barricades, frontiers and restrictions than any other culture.*”

I want to shout out, “No, no, no! I protest!” But coming from where I do, I cannot deny what is written. So whatever we wish to say to a broken world, we must offer in deep and sincere humility. For we too are a fragmented people.

In Ireland our relationships with our ecumenical partners has been crucial. And may I, in her presence, pay tribute to the tremendous contribution of our World Methodist Council, Vice President Gillian Kingston, who has played a major role in the nurturing of those ecumenical relationships.

And why do we do it in the face of opposition and aggressive opposition? We do it because we know that unless we are able to speak as one people, we have not right to ask others to be reconciled.

From my long journeys with people seeking peace in Ireland and elsewhere, let me share with you what I believe we as followers of Christ have to offer in our search for healing and the restoration of “*oneness*” in our broken world. I was faced with that question recently when I sat with the leadership of FARC and how thrilled we were to read last week of the signing of an agreement with the Colombian government. Amen, indeed! And I was privileged to sit for several days with the leadership of FARC, as they were asking us, some of us from Ireland and some from South Africa to help them in the next part of their journey. I’m sitting there as a Methodist preacher, saying, “What am I doing here? What am I doing here? A wee fellow from Ireland. What have I to bring to this conversation?” And I think we need to ask ourselves that question. That is not to suggest that we have all the answers or that we can tell people all the things that make for peace. Of course not! But I think we have some distinctive words to offer.

In this I am greatly encouraged by the words of fellow-Methodist, Nelson Mandela. Speaking from the pulpit of St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town he said:

“In the building of our new nation ... we look to the Church, with its message of justice, peace, forgiveness and healing, to play a key role in helping our people... to move from the divisions of the past to a future that is united in a commitment to correct wrongs and restore a just order.”

WOW! What a challenge. What a challenge.

Let me suggest three '*restorative*' words from our 'Gospel vocabulary' which must be at the heart of any genuine process of reconciliation, be it within the family, the church, the nation or the world.

The first word is "CONFESSION".

In a world of denial for any responsibility for getting things wrong, where is the one place where people gather week by week to make confession? It is not in the parliaments of this world. I'll tell you that! Nor do I think that it's in the offices of banks and business. It is the church! I confess to you my brothers and sisters for what I have done and what I have not done. Those are the words in our liturgies. All our liturgies! I think we should just pause sometimes for the rest of the service and reflect on what that means.

When I googled '*public apologies*,' I came across some interesting ones. I came across 73 public apologies! I stopped counting after 73! And they range from Methodists in this country, apologizing to Native Americans to the Prime Minister of Britain apologizing to the people of Londonderry in Northern Ireland for Bloody Sunday and lots of other apologies in between. And the IRA apologizing for their worst atrocities.

The second restorative word is "GRACE".

In any process of reconciliation, TRUTH has its place. But without GRACE truth can be a blunt and sometimes damaging instrument.

Remember John's introduction to Jesus,

"The Word became flesh and full of GRACE and truth, lived among us."

For us as Wesleyans and Armenians this GRACE of which we speak is "prevenient grace". It is the generous, open, unmerited, welcoming, restorative embrace of the father to his returning child!

When we wrote our Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland, there was one part that was very hard for people to accept and it was the early release of prisoners. I saw on television today at lunchtime a young man who has had an early release for something he'd committed and it drew a large crowd. And we can understand it. Victims, people who have been hurt, bereaved, have every reason to be concerned when they hear about people who have been given life sentences who are allowed after two years to leave prison. And that's what we were being asked within our Peace Agreement. And you know the people who had the most difficulty with this, were from within the churches.

So I invited Brian Currin, a South African lawyer, to speak to pastors of his experience in the Truth and Reconciliation process. After he had spoken, the first question was:

"But what about Justice?"

To which he replied:

"This is not about justice... you cannot say to a widow or orphan we are

doing this in the interests of justice! This is about giving all parties to the conflict an opportunity to share in a new beginning, whether you think they deserve it or not.”

In response to which I said that, as a preacher, this was the clearest definition of our word 'GRACE' I had heard. To which Brian, in turn, replied:

“If that is your word keep preaching it, for you are going to need a great deal of it.”

And how right he was! Grace! What an amazing word. Amazing grace!

Here are some images of “GRACE:”

Two men who despised each other and blamed each other for all our ills:

- The Rev. Ian Paisley, fiery fundamentalist preacher who vowed he would “*never, never, never*” do business with Irish Republicanism; and
- Martin McGuinness, former Commander of the Irish Republican Army terrorist group who was equally adamant that he would never set foot in our Parliament Buildings!

As a result of our agreement, they came together. Two men who said, “Never!” Look at the act of grace. The younger man holding back and letting the first minister through the door on the day Parliament was reconstituted. That was a moment of grace. And they worked so well together.

I was invited to sit with the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland as we watched these historic enemies take their oaths of office. You can see in our eyes, we couldn't believe what we were seeing and hearing!

And at that moment, within myself I was singing from one of Charles Wesley's great advent hymns, reminding us why Jesus came into our world:

“Widest extremes to join ... that we the life of God might know.”

That's grace. Another moment of grace!

And another image of this amazing, powerful thing called 'Grace'.

The Queen of England shaking the hand of Martin McGuinness, former Commander of the IRA that murdered her beloved uncle, Lord Mountbatten and his grandchild. And here's her Majesty. That was the first of several meetings they have had since then.

Amazing Grace! How amazing is grace?

Our third restorative word is “FORGIVENESS.”

The Dalai Lama has been to Ireland on more than one occasion. Have you ever heard him speak? Anyone here ever heard the Dalai Lama speak? He has an extraordinary but endearing way of addressing an audience. He sits there and...[*mumble, mumble, mumble.*] And we all listened spell-bound. We didn't understand much of what he said, but we listened.

Someone asked: “*Your holiness, what can you say to us about forgiveness?*”

After he had looked to the right and to the left, to the floor and then to the ceiling, he replied,

“Forgiveness... forgiveness... forgiveness, who knows what forgiveness is?”

After a pause, he received a tumultuous ovation! And I wished I had that gift, to say nothing and be applauded! And then I thought is this a clever answer, a profound answer, or a cop out? I think it was a profound answer. I wanted to shout out *“Jesus knew what forgiveness was because he lived it and he showed it until his dying moments.”*

But you know what I have come to understand in my journeys with people who have been hurt and have suffered? The only people who have a right to speak to us about forgiveness are those who have been forgiven and those who have forgiven.

Anything else we have to say about forgiveness is academic.

Gordon Wilson knew. As a recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award his picture hangs in the offices of this Council at Lake Junaluska.

Gordon was a loyal Irish Methodist and respected shopkeeper. On the day of Remembrance for soldiers who had died in two World Wars he and his lovely daughter Marie were attending the annual service at their local cenotaph when a massive IRA bomb exploded, instantly killing many innocent civilians.

From under the rubble Gordon reached for Marie's hand and heard her whisper, *“I love you Daddy”*. Those were the last words she was to speak. In those circumstances can you even begin to imagine the impact of Gordon's healing words of grace and reconciliation which were broadcast around the world?

The Queen of England heard them, and quoted Gordon in her Christmas broadcast to the nation. Upon hearing Gordon's words, the senior spokesman for the IRA said that he could no longer defend such atrocities and, in his prison cell, a former terrorist told me that following Gordon's words, he had not only turned his back on terror but had committed his life to Christ!; the irresistible power of Grace and Forgiveness.

Just remember these words, confession, grace, and forgiveness. These are our words. They have been entrusted to us. It's not that other people don't have contributions to make to peace. Of course they do! And I have worked with them and sat with them and loved them! And they respect me and I respect them. But you know we have a vocabulary for which we must not apologize. And which we can bring to the healing of the nations as well as to the healing of families and broken churches and broken communities. And they are confession, grace, and forgiveness.

These are the ultimate words of healing and restoration to bring to every situation of brokenness. Words which will restore unto us the joy of what it means to be “ONE people”.

At the Conference of the Methodist Church in South Africa, the Rev. Trevor Hudson told a moving story of how his white, hugely privileged congregation was very conscious of the enormous gap between them and their neighbouring black township church, with whom they had no relationship whatever. Here were two Christian communities, separated by history, politics, race, injustice and prejudice. Someone suggested that, as a start, they might invite their

neighbours for a meal. So it was, at Eastertide, they sent out a gold edged invitation, like those we proudly display when we are invited to an important event.

The banquet was prepared, the tables were set and they waited, wondering if anyone would come. But come they did, one by one, two by two until all the places were taken. White sat with black; those deprived of proper education sat by professors; the wealthy sat with those who had nothing; younger sat with older and the party began. Towards the end of the meal one young man from the township could contain himself no longer... he jumped to his feet and shouted, "*Wow! Now I know that Jesus really has risen!*"

Oneness and evangelism, you cannot separate them!

I ask, do you have a story like that from where you come? If not, can each of us go from this place to create such a story of our own?

Remember the words of Jesus, "I pray they may be one, so that the world could believe."

Charles Wesley knew this when he taught us to sing,

*All that the world might taste and see the riches of his grace
The arms of love encompass me, that all the world embrace.*

I'll finish with a quote from Pope Francis,

"Speaking of our shared responsibility for the world, and the enormous challenges which face us, let us sing as we go. Let's keep things in perspective. May our struggles never take away the joy of our hope."

And I would only add, the joy of our oneness.

So as the people who were born in song, what shall we sing as we go? And I have chosen, "*All praise to our redeeming Lord, who joins us by his grace.*"

Some of you may recognize Junaluska, the home of the World Methodist Council who have brought us together.

I'm an oldy. I don't raise my hands. Forgive me. When we sing, I don't raise my hands. I'm just too old for that. If I did, people would know I was doing it,...and well, ... But you know what, as we sing this, instead of reaching our hands up, let's reach our hands out to embrace one another and demonstrate our oneness. All praise to our redeeming Lord!