

From the desk of Pastor Mike

As you know, we recently had our Annual Conference and Laurie Campbell, one of delegates has a great article in this newsletter about most of what happened at Annual Conference this year. I encourage you to check it out. Within her article, Laurie mentions that we had a speaker featured on Saturday. We often have a speaker who teaches about some aspect of the church, theology, etc. For this year, the speaker was Dr. Ashley Boggan who is the General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History for the United Methodist Church.

I just want to share a couple of excerpts from her talk in the hope you might find them interesting enough to watch the whole thing (I have a .pdf of the talk for those who might be interested in reading it).

Related to our status as a Reconciling Congregation, Dr. Boggan shared some history from John Wesley's own ministry. She discussed a man Wesley ministered to named Thomas Blair:

*"Blair was an inmate at the Bocardo and was on death row for what was at the time a capital offense. Mr. Blair was accused of the alleged crime of having a sexual relationship with another man. Wesley and his friend, John Clayton, believed that Mr. Blair was being victimized by his fellow inmates and they sought to ensure his protection and his humanity. Letters written between Clayton and Wesley show that they took a particular interest in his trial; they "marshal'd his evidence" and sought to ensure that the case would "convince any reasonable man of his innocence." The day of his trial, Wesley rose at 4am and rode twelve miles on a horse to be present. Unfortunately, Mr. Blair was found guilty in court, but his life was spared and he was fined 20 marks – by today's standards approx. 5,000 pounds. Unable to raise the fine from within prison, who do you all think raised the money for his release? John Wesley."*

The second excerpt is about the overall theme of Dr. Boggan's talk—"Vile"-tality and our "vile" history as Wesleyans. Dr. Boggan shares one early Methodist's use of this phrase. She quotes Mary Bosanquet about her own preaching (her doing so considered vile by others):

*"I am conscious how ridiculous I must appear in the eyes of many for so doing. Therefore, if some persons consider me an impudent woman, and represent me as such, I cannot blame them...Besides, I do nothing but what Mr. Wesley approves; and as to reproach thrown by some on me, what have I to do with it, but quietly go forward saying, 'I will still be more vile, if my Lord requires it.'"*

I encourage you to watch or read her talk. The link to the video of it can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/959690368>.