

2022 North Georgia Conference United Methodist Men Presidential Address



The UMM of Alpharetta First, Mount Pisgah, and St. James UMCs at a Bridging the Gap Cookout at St. James UMC in Alpharetta, GA

Gentlemen we have a problem. And this one is not exclusive to the United Methodist Men (UMM). The last two years were marred by a global pandemic, racial protests, a contentious presidential election, and the division within the United Methodist Church.

Men you spend too much time talking about and commenting on politics in your meetings, and not enough time talking about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. God is not going to restore the kingdom back to [Israel](#), or America for that matter. But we will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on us and we will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. So, I brought in David Watson (United Theological Seminary), Daniel Castelo (Duke Divinity School), Jamal-Dominique Hopkins (Allen University), Luke Timothy Johnson

(Candler School of Theology), and Craig Keener (Asbury Theological Seminary) to educate us on the [Trinity](#).

However, many of us are not witnessing. And this shows in the number of professions of faith that are reported at your church's Charge Conferences. Additionally, many of us are not making disciples. Barnabas took Mark, and Paul chose Silas to do [ministry](#). Paul was also a mentor to [Timothy](#). *Gentlemen who are you mentoring?* Young men are not interested in your political commentary, that's not the reason they come to church. They want to know more about God. And the question that many of them ask is, will you teach me?

The summer of 2020 was the source of a racial reconciliation movement in [Alpharetta, Georgia](#), and the establishment of [Radical Mentoring](#) at new churches. These are two very different outcomes than what the world has been offering over the last two years, and the North Georgia Conference United Methodist Men (NGCUMM) were involved in this good work. Black, Latino, and White men have come together for bible study, prayer, food, and fellowship. And young men are being mentored by older men in our churches, just like the scripture says.

Part of the problem of the "culture wars" that Christians are involved in, is that they are deeply political, and very few disciples are being made in the process. So instead of producing disciples of Jesus Christ through mentoring and reconciliation, some UMM are focusing on Critical Race Theory, vaccine mandates, and political arguments. I fail to see how engaging in the secularism of the age will make disciples, so it is time for the UMM to produce fruit that will [last](#).



Radical Mentoring group at Northside UMC in Atlanta, GA

There were UMM who failed to see that the Lord sent a “*plague throughout the land,*” just as He did in various times in the scriptures. And instead of responding with humility, prayer, seeking the face of God, and turning from our wicked ways ([2 Chronicles 7:14](#)); some UMM responded by blaming the United States government, Black Lives Matter, the Bishops, United Methodist pastors, and the Democrats. Your unspiritual responses to the plague are rooted in rights and freedoms, and not in the prayer Lord have mercy on us, we repent of our sins. As a result, this plague has lasted longer than the [Great Plague of London](#).

The response to the racial protests of the summer of 2020 was to create an educational war on [Critical Race Theory](#). So, I brought in Subject Matter Experts to address what you did not learn about Christianity in [Africa](#) before the missionary movement began. Michael Glerup (Yale

University), Joel Elowsky (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), Tibebe Senbetu (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), and Simon Aderibigbe (University of Georgia) all corrected the historical record on how Africans have contributed to the theology that most of us recite in our churches on Sunday mornings. John Wesley read African and Asian theologians of the ancient church including Athanasius, Augustine, and the Cappadocian fathers. To verify this, I brought in Kevin Watson (Candler School of Theology), and Ted Campbell (Perkins School of Theology) to educate us on [Wesley's](#) theology. Thus, dispelling the racist lies of the European Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation.

The [war](#) on Critical Race Theory is a status quo reaction to the questioning of modernity. Men I need you to understand the modern era ended with the [fall of the Berlin Wall](#) in 1989, and the West is now in the [postmodern period](#). And the postmodern period is inclusive of African and Asian philosophies, and not just that of the Europeans. Therefore, your children are being taught to question everything that comes from Europe, including Christianity. Why? Because Jesus and Paul did not teach modern theology, they taught ancient theology, because they understood that Christianity is an [Eastern religion](#). Which is why Paul, who was mistaken to be an [Egyptian](#), argued with the Gentiles so much. I encourage UMM to choose the path of reconciliation that the churches in Alpharetta have chosen, instead of engaging in politics and culture wars.

The United Methodist Church is divided over theological and biblical interpretation, and so is the North Georgia Conference Delegation. And the division is very much rooted in theological education. Those who studied theology at a [black](#) or an [evangelical](#) institution studied a different theological methodology than those who attended a Mainline Protestant Seminary, including a

[United Methodist](#) Seminary. And anyone of these theologians can become the pastor of your church, thus creating a potential theological clash in the pews.

The division in the United Methodist Church materialized on May 1, 2022, when the [Global Methodist Church](#) launched. And the United Methodist Men will have to give an appropriate ministry response to those who remain, as well as to those who will leave. But how do we navigate this uncertainty? Now more than ever, the NGCUMM will be in communication with the General Commission on United Methodist Men looking for leadership as we continue to minister to men.

In conclusion, the last two years have been an opportunity for [mentoring](#) and [reconciliation](#), however some of us are more concerned about the things of this world rather than the things of God. Going forward, I commend the NGCUMM to invest in the spiritual development of the next generation with the same effort that you spent the last two years investing in politics and culture wars!

Horne served as president of the North Georgia Conference United Methodist Men (2020-2022) and is a Men's Ministry Specialist.