

Wes Conn: Good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

Wes Conn: Welcome to morning prayers. We'll begin today's service with a responsive reading from the black Appleton Chapel Psalter book, Psalm selection number 121, found on page 61. Please stand as you are able. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help.

Congregation: My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

Wes Conn: He will not suffer that foot to be moved. He that keep it thee will not slumber.

Congregation: Behold he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber not sleep.

Wes Conn: The Lord is like keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Congregation: The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

Wes Conn: The Lord shall preserve the from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul.

Congregation: The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Wes Conn: You may take your seats.

Choir: [singing].

Tim McCarthy: Good morning.

Congregation: Good morning.

Tim McCarthy: A reading from Howard Zinn, "You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train" (1994). "From the start, my teaching was infused with my own history. I would try to be fair to other points of view, but I wanted more than objectivity. I wanted my students to leave my classes not just better informed, but better prepared to relinquish the safety of silence, more prepared to speak up and to act against injustice whenever they saw it. This of course was a recipe for trouble." There ends the reading.

Tim McCarthy: For as long as I can remember, I've been drawn to troublemakers. Perhaps it had something to do with my childhood love for Winnie the Pooh or Dr. Seuss or Princess Leia. Rebels all. Or perhaps it has something to do with the social justice Catholic upbringing where the life and teachings of Jesus were offered to me not as a vessel for hate and prejudice, I would learn that later on, but as a model for love and for justice.

- Tim McCarthy: Or perhaps it had to do with the people who first introduced me to Jesus, my grandparents and parents, heroic people with huge hearts, humble souls who worked overtime to ensure that their only grandson and son wasn't the only person who could pursue a life of greater dignity and freedom than they ever had the opportunity to enjoy. From a very early age. I understood what it meant to work hard and dream big and be brave, and I also knew that treating other people with respect and demanding respect too was at the root of it all.
- Tim McCarthy: As important as all of these things are, I didn't use to think of them as especially political. It was only later on when I started to study history that I began to understand more fully that hard work is political when you toil on factory floors for low wages or work against your will for no wages or work in public schools with few resources or have to march on picket lines to show your power. The big dreams are political when they are distorted by myths of meritocracy and mobility deferred by red lines and glass ceilings and denied by the abuse of power and the persistence of prejudice. That bravery and respect are political whenever they fly in the face of silence or complicity of violence and dehumanization, and as long as we continue to live in a world marinated in disrespect, manifesting itself at every turn these days, I suppose it's antidotes will always be political.
- Tim McCarthy: Lately, I've been thinking a lot about politics in the classroom. And some of you know for the last decade and a half I've taught on the faculty at the Harvard Kennedy School. This is an interesting place to teach. They're not always an easy one. My students are wonderful, truly, but depending on the day, I feel like Sisyphus pushing that rock up the hill or Don Quixote jousting at windmills. I could fill a much longer sermon with gallons of spilled tea, but that is best left for another occasion, perhaps a therapist's couch. Let me focus today.
- Tim McCarthy: In recent years on campuses like this one, there has been a growing and, to my mind, disturbing trend that I can best describe as perception anxiety disorder, that is the ever-present obsession with the institution's branding that it not become too liberal or God forbid progressive or radical. This manifests itself in myriads of ways, constant calls for civility that sometimes feel more like a cudgel than our commitment to critical engagement. Persistent pleas for balance that feel more like false equivalency than fair and fierce debate. Ahistorical affirmations of free speech that forget the radical roots of that foundational right.
- Tim McCarthy: Sometimes I wonder if all this institutional and ideological tone policing isn't really an attempt, a kinder way to tell some of us to just shut up so that the powers-that-be can raise little riches and sustain the status quo. Perhaps that isn't their intention. I'm willing to be open to that, but rest assured that does have that impact, which is why some of us will never feel like we belong here, even in my instance after so, so many years.

- Tim McCarthy: A few weeks ago, I was at a meeting where we were discussing how the Kennedy school might commemorate the hundredth anniversary next year of the 19th amendment where women got the right to vote, although not all of them by any means. We were discussing potential programs and one of the people in attendance noted that there was an upcoming program featuring two prominent women of color who have devoted their careers to democratic organizing, particularly the safeguarding and expansion of voting rights for historically disenfranchised groups of people.
- Tim McCarthy: Another colleague, a tenured faculty member and an administrator formerly responded by saying this, "I worry about events like these. They are left and lefter. We need to find more balance so we don't silence conservative voice." To me, this moment was as telling as it was troubling. Not only did it say that progressive voices, in this case two distinguished black women with deep expertise and experience on the electoral silencing of people of color, could not stand on their own at the center of things for once, but that they must always and everywhere shared space with conservative voices in the interest of "balance." My colleague's remark also suggested that left and lefter are the real problem here. That conservative voices are under siege in some way even though they are hardly silent or silenced either at the Kennedy school or throughout the land and the globe.
- Tim McCarthy: I often get asked, sometimes quite aggressively, about my own politics in the classroom. After all for 25 years now, I'd been teaching courses with politics, protest, human rights, and social movements in their titles, to say nothing of freedom and slavery and race, gender, and sexuality and queer and African-American, even Tom Pain and Tupac. And part of this, in part because of this, I've sometimes been branded as a troublemaker myself viewed with suspicion by sustainers of the status quo, susceptible to surveillance and sidelining and attempts at silencing. But having been raised the way I was by my folks and having been educated the way I was by my teachers, including some of them here, and having lived the way I have lived and been forced to live among my people, I am unapologetic about my politics and I wish more people were as well. Like my late mentor Howard Zinn, "From the start, my teaching was infused with my own history."
- Tim McCarthy: In the age of Google, there is no student with the smart phone who can't find out my history and politics, the principled if flawed life, sometimes provocative that I've worked very hard to try to model, with a few flicks of a finger, so why deny it? I have always believed that pretending not to have politics is a politics all its own. And to be honest, for me, teaching is political, especially in these treacherous times, especially at a school of government, politics, and public policy. We must never silent voices in our classrooms. That's a given. But nor should we forget that those voices are attached to people who live politicized lives in an increasingly polarized world. We must always welcome dissenting views. That too is fundamental. But we should also acknowledge that there's a

difference between a critical challenge to your point of view and an attempt to silence it.

Tim McCarthy: We can embrace disagreement and debate without being disrespectful and defensive, and we can also embrace empathy and uncover understanding without trading in false equivalencies and imposing civility at the exclusion of contention. And we should be mindful of the fact, always mindful, that some of us, increasingly many of us, do not have the luxury of leaving our politics at the classroom door precisely because we have had to fight so hard on both sides of that threshold.

Tim McCarthy: My prayer this morning is this, that we find a way to just be more honest about our politics, that we begin to embrace it, all of it, so that our classrooms can be safe and brave spaces, places of inspiration and healing for all of us in a world bereft of all of this. Thank you.

Wes Conn: Please join me in praying together the Lord's Prayer, found on the reverse of your order of worship. Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Wes Conn: Let's us sing together the hymn "Lord God of Morning and of Night," number 39 and your crimson Harbor Hymnal. Number 39.

Congregation: [singing].

Wes Conn: Receive now these good words. May the Lord keep you from evil, and may the Lord keep you in your going out and in your coming in from this time on, and for evermore. Amen.

Congregation: Amen.