

LENT 2019

March 10 • Traditional Worship

Our Pastors:

- Lead Pastor Andy Payton leadpastor@methodisttemple.church
- Associate Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg associatepastor@methodisttemple.church

Sunday Morning Volunteers:

- Ushers (3/10): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Ushers (3/17): Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (3/10): Marty Van Stone, Wanda Erwin, Carla Bolin
- Greeters (3/17): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Carla Bolin

**An usher remains in the Narthex during worship. Please reach out to them with any questions or special needs you may have. They are happy to assist!*

Additional Information

- Prayer Concerns: Praises for the birth of Theodore James Moore, parents Austin & Lauren; Nancy Henry, Bud Farmer.
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by Lila Allen to the glory of God in memory of Mike T. Allen.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite.

Order of Worship

- *Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices.
- *The cross (†) designates when the congregation will please stand.
- *Worshippers who find standing difficult are invited to remain seated.

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"My Faith Looks Up to Thee" by K. Osterland

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In ancient times, God gave us the Law.
People: It was the gift of community and righteousness.
 Leader: There is wisdom in the teachings of our fathers and mothers.
People: Praise God for the Law of Love!

*CHORAL INTROIT

"Surely the Presence of the Lord" by Lanny Wolf

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*FIRST HYMN UMH #156

"I Love to Tell the Story"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: I see Christ in you.
All: And also in you.
 Leader: Please turn to those around you and celebrate the presence of Christ.

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
 Leader: Let us pray as one.

PASTORAL PRAYER/ LORD'S PRAYER

All: Holy Spirit, think through us, until Your ideas are our ideas. See through us, until Your eyes are our eyes. Listen through us, until Your ears are our ears. Feel through us, until Your love is our love. And now, O God, hear us as we pray in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING

"Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service" by W. L. Wold

***DOXOLOGY** *the congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.*

#94 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"If You Love Me" by Joel Raney

KIDZ MOMENT

*SCRIPTURE READING

Leader: Praise God for the hearing of these sacred words.
 All: Thanks be to God.

Luke 4:1-13

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2214

"Lead Me, Guide Me" by Doris Akers

MESSAGE by Pastor Andy Payton

What's Next

Well good morning friends. I trust and I hope that you've had a good week. I trust and I hope at some point this last week you have found the love of God, the light of God's presence shining through unto you. I hope and I trust at some point this last week you've experienced the peace which surpasses our understanding. Good to see you this morning. I have to say it is good to see you this morning. This is that the closest thing we come that Methodist Temple to what I call a sunrise service; it's the Spring Forward Sunday. This is the closest thing we get to a sunrise or at least in my book. And as we get started this morning the, first thing I just want to say to everyone is thank you. Really, seriously thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your comments. Thank you for your notes. It's all just been- this last week- it's just been overwhelming for me. It's just been overwhelming. More than anything else, thank you for having the space and the grace to allow me to be me this last week and for letting me share with you what was really on my heart. I believe that we as the church should include people and not exclude people. What was on my heart is that we the church need to think about ways to welcome and include our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and to the body of Christ. Thank you for having the capacity to hear me out. Today what I want to do is just share with you what I believe are some of the next steps I hope we can take as a congregation.

As we get started, let us begin with a moment of prayer. Would you pray with me? Oh god today help us to be present to you even as you are both present with and within each of us. Help us to see and to celebrate your presence both within ourselves and in our neighbors. Help us to hear your voice. We ask this through Christ, Amen.

So the word of the day or rather the word of the week is ekballo. The Greek word is ekballo. Say that word with me. You've probably never heard that word but say it with me. Ekballo. It's the Greek word for throw. It's from this word that we get the English word ball- ekballo. Typically in the Gospels it's used to describe what Jesus does with demons and evil spirits. He cast them out. He ekballos the demons, the evil spirits. Jesus cast them out; He throws them out. But in our text today we find the Greek word ekballo being used in a different way. Rather than then describing something that Jesus does, ekballo describes something that happened to Jesus. In our text today, we find that Jesus is ekballo-ed by the spirit into the wilderness. The image that comes to my mind is like learning to swim. Jesus got thrown into the deep end if you will. The spirit says here you go Jesus. It's time to learn what it means to live as the beloved son of God. Jesus is ekballo-ed into a wilderness place. Well, I think that image and that metaphor applies to us as a congregation. These last couple of weeks as United Methodist and these last couple of weeks as Methodist Temple, we have been ekballo-ed into a place of wilderness, into a place of discernment where we're trying to figure out how it is that we're going to be faithful to the voice of God even in the midst of a time such as this. We have been ekballo-ed.

Today what I really want to talk about first is what is our wilderness as I understand it. Second, what's my hope for us as a people? What's my hope for us for a future? What's that future look like? And finally I want to talk just a little bit about some concrete next steps that we can take.

So first, what is our wilderness as United Methodist and what is our wilderness as Methodist Temple? I think our wilderness is that we don't all agree. I think our wilderness is we as a denomination don't necessarily all see it the same way. We are a denomination, the second largest Protestant denomination, in the United States. We're a large denomination made up of 12 million people. We're made up of people from Russia. We're made up with people from Africa. We're made up of people from California, from the East Coast, the Midwest, the south, etc. We are a large domination. We have a big umbrella which means that we don't necessarily always see it the same way. And especially that's true for us when it comes to the treatment of gay and lesbian kin- brothers and sisters in Christ- in the life of the church. We don't always see it the same way. Going into this past General Conference two weeks ago, my hope was that we would honor this. We would see this. We would accept this as a denomination. We would say hey, we're a large group of people. We're a large domination. We don't all see the issue of human sexuality in the same way, so let's create a space for basically the Conservatives to be conservatives and the Liberals and the progressives to be liberals and progressives and let's just move on. Everyone can be themselves. That was my hope going into General Conference.

It was called the One Church Plan. Every local church got to decide what they wanted to do with their church property in terms of hosting same sex weddings. Every local church was going to get a choice. Every pastor was going to get a choice about who they were able to marry or not marry. Every Annual Conference was going to get a choice as to who they would ordain and not ordain. That was the One Church Plan, and that was my hope for us as a denomination, that we could honor and admit that we don't see this the same way. We could operate in a contextual way and say hey we realize that over here it's a little bit different than then over there. But what we got instead was more of the same division that's plagued us for the last 50 years. We didn't get compromise. Instead what we maintain our long standing prohibition against same sex weddings being performed by our clergy and on our church property. We maintained our long standing prohibition against the ordination of openly gay people. But not only that, we the legislation- that is the legislation I'll say- made it more rigid. It kind of dialed down on some of the language in our Book of Discipline.

For example the statement that has been argued about for the last 50 years is that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. That's been in there since 1972. This General Conference spelled it out a little more and said that that same sex weddings that have happened outside the life of our church are also incompatible with Christian teaching. Basically what it says is, if you're a same sex family and you've been married outside of life the church and you have kids, the only way to live faithfully is to get a divorce. You split up families and I guess you just trade the kids. One week the kids are with this parent; one week the kids with that parent. That's how we live faithfully. That's hard for a lot of people. For a lot of people with family, a lot of churches with folks that are in same sex marriages, that's hard.

The discipline- the legislation- made more rigid mandatory sentences. If it's fully enacted, there'll be mandatory sentences for clergy who participate in and perform same sex weddings. If I for example would participate in the same sex wedding, the sentence would be that I am suspended without pay for one year, And if I did it a second time, it's called being defrocked. I would lose my credentials as a minister. Just to be honest with you and candid, it would be easier for me to be in adultery or be divorced four times or struggle with addiction and continue my relationship with the United Methodist Church as a minister than to perform a same sex wedding. That just seems out of balance with some of us.

The other thing I happen is on the level of what we call the Board of Ordained Ministry. This is the credentialing committee within each Annual Conference. I don't want to get into a bunch of policy stuff. That's kind of boring. I don't want to put you to sleep too quickly. I have a lot to say today. The board of an Ordained Ministry is like the credentialing committee for the Annual Conference. If this legislation is enacted, every person that board of ordained ministry is going to have to sign a piece of paper that says that they'll make sure that we live into all this. The question that a lot of us find ourselves asking is, if this is the path we're gonna go down, then where does it stop? Next are we going to have seminary professors sign off on stuff like this? Next are we going to have college professors sign off on stuff like this? At the core of the struggle is the spirit in which this is being done. To a lot of us clergy and a lot of United Methodist people, it feels like we're being pushed out of our United Methodist Church. This legislation seems to say if you don't agree with us, just get out. If this legislation continues, a lot of pastors like myself and a lot of young pastors like Pastor JillAnn and many great leaders within our Annual Conference are going to say 'Hey, I can't go along with this. I can't do this.' We are going to lose a lot of really good and faithful people if this continues. This is our wilderness.

That's my first one. Next question. So where do I hope we go from here? Well the place I hope we can go from here is the same place that I hoped we can go even before all this happened. I hope and I pray that we can be an inclusive community anyway. I hope and I pray that some way we can we can find a way to be an inclusive denomination anyway. A church and the denomination that reflects the spirit of Christ, that's what I hope for. That's what I've always hoped for. What does that mean for me? It means, in terms of our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ, that we simply offer them the same grace and freedoms that we as heterosexuals assume for ourselves. That's what it means. What that means, I believe it's time for us to adopt a Christian ethic that includes gay and lesbian people rather than excludes them. Let's say everything goes, I'm not saying promiscuous behavior is OK. I'm not saying anything like that. I'm just saying that hey it's time for us to adopt a Christian ethic that includes our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. We don't say to them 'Well the only way for you to live a faith life is to be in isolation your entire life' or to say to them 'the only way for you to live a faith life is we're going to force you into a loveless marriage that you don't want to be in.' I just don't see how that reflects the spirit of Christ. I don't see how that is the right thing. I believe that it's time for us to adopt a Christian ethic that includes them. We should offer the same freedom and grace to them that we ourselves. That's what inclusion means to me, but it also means that if you don't necessarily agree with that, there's room for you still in the church.

Hear me. If you don't see it that way, if you don't understand it that way, if you agree with that, you need to understand I still want to be your pastor. We still want to be your pastors. We still want you to understand there's a place for you in the life of this church. Last week was an energized worship service and I'll be honest with you, when I preached that sermon I didn't know what to expect. I thought I could be crucified. Never did in a million years that I think everyone would stand up and clap. I didn't think that. Not everyone necessarily felt comfortable standing up and clapping and so I struggle with the idea that some people felt alienated in that moment. And if you felt alienated and you feel there isn't a place for me in the church now because I don't agree with a lot of other people, I hope you hear me when I say this: there's still a place for you. Even if you think differently. That's because inclusion means. We have to protect ourselves from becoming that which we're resisting. That's always the catch in seasons like this. The basis of all this though is this: Christ. The basis of inclusion is Christ. We are already one in Christ despite our many differences. That's what I've been saying before General Conference and that's what we're gonna continue to say after General Conference. We're already one in Christ. The way that we can live in into this idea of inclusion and community is choose to see Christ in one another. We say yes to Paul's words and Colossians where he says Christ is in all and Christ is all. We say yes to the Gospel writer John who says that Christ is a true light that illuminates each person regardless of what they think and say. Christ is in them.

When we choose to see Christ in one another, the natural response to that is always love, kindness. And so this is where I hope we go as a community. So what are some concrete next steps that we can take? First, pray. Pray. Your pastors need your prayers. This church needs your prayers. Our denomination needs prayers. This is a stressful time for a lot of us. One member of the church, Janet Pollak, suggested that we would even start a prayer ministry on Sunday mornings during this season. The prayer ministry would allow folks to sign up and to pray in the chapel during the worship services. There would be someone in the chapel praying for the worship service during the 8:30 a.m. service and someone praying in the chapel during the 11:00 a.m. service. They would pray for the people in the worship service, the songs that we're singing in the worship service, the preachers, everything. We would just pray that that people would be blessed and people would find a space in here, especially in this time in which they felt the love of God. If you're interested to sign up for that prayer ministry, you can sign up at Connection Central. I think that's a great idea. It's a great step. When we pray, it keeps our hearts open. Prayer helps God and allows God to transform our hearts with love. When we pray, we're reminding ourselves to see Christ. So the first concrete step we need is to pray.

Second it's time that we just have some real conversation. It's time that we take a look at what the scriptures say about this and we have honest conversation with one another about human sexuality and the treatment of gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ. It's time that we wrestled with this and we're honest. I feel like some times in the last 10 years, 20 years, whatever, we've been sweeping this thing under the rug in so many ways. We're at a place now it's time to talk. Starting April 3, Matt Knonenborg (Jillian's husband), myself, and JillAnn are going to be host a book study called Unclobber. It's a pastor who tells his story about how his understanding of human sexuality changed over the course of some years. The book talks about the scriptures in the Bible that actually deal with same sex relationships. There's actually just about six of them. In the whole Bible, there's about six of them. If you'd like to join that book study starting April 3rd, I invite you to again sign up at Connection Central. Let's have a conversation with one another where we actually talk about this stuff.

Finally, a concrete step. I want to invite you to come to a church visioning meeting Dream Session on March the 20th at 6PM in the Fellowship Hall. You don't have to be a member. All I'm asking is you care about the future of the church. You care about the spirit of the church. If you want to care about the spirit of the church, the future of the church, where we're going as a church, I invite you to come this Dream Session on March the 20th. There will also be a meal before at 5:30 PM. We're going to feed you too because we don't know what to do, we don't even know how to do anything around here, unless we eat before we do it. The question we're gonna ask is simple: How do we continue to strive to become a safe and nonjudgmental community anyway in light of all that's happened? How do we heal our relationships with the gay and lesbian community? How do we do that? How do we heal that in light of all that's happened? How do we allow the conference to know hey this is not who we are? This is not who we are. How do we put pressure on them so they can? How do how do we allow?

That's another concrete step. Now I realize this is a heavy subject. And to be honest with you I never thought in a million years I'd be in this place. But here we are. We've been ekballo-ed into the wilderness. Here we are. This is what we're doing. But I need you to know that there's so many signs of hope. Even in the midst of this season of trial, I need you to know that there's so much hope coming out of this. God's working. I mean if nothing else, here's a sign of hope for me. It got me off my butt and I actually spoke up, but not only me. A lot of other pastors spoke too. I met with a group of pastors this past week from Evansville and we, together, wrote a letter to the newspaper. We said this is who we are. We're speaking up. I see that as a sign of hope. Pastors are finding the light and the courage to listen to that prayer ministry. I believe the spirit of Christ is calling them to do and to speak up and to speak out about the inclusion of LGBTQ people within the life of our church. I see that as hope. I also see hope in the sense that that there are conversations happening and churches uniting when before we were not having them and we were not united in this way. As I said, I met we met with pastors this last week from many of the churches in Evansville, but that's only what has happened here in Evansville. There is unity happening all across our denomination. I see it as positive that we're coming together.

I see it as positive we're coming together and I think if we can continue to stay together, that's in the end what God would want for us. If I was going to leave you with a few words: they would be this. The truth of the matter is we have been ekballo-ed into the wilderness. There's no going back. We're in it. Hear me when I say this, if we choose to see Christ in one another and we have the courage to do the next right thing, God will get us through this. If we can choose to see Christ in each other and do what we've always said we were gonna do before this and do the next right thing, God will get us through this. In the end we'll have a church that we can be proud of. Amen.

*LAST HYMN UMH #157

"We Meet You, O Christ"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"Hispanic Praise" by D. Janzer