



Connect Share Explore

Traditional Worship • August 12

- Prayer Concerns: Joe Webb
- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by Phil & Helen Fisher to the glory of God in honor of their 58th wedding anniversary.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Gospel Choir under the direction of Ben Fields. Organist: Barbara Waite.
- Ushers (12): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Nelson & Joyce Rivers
- Ushers (19): Eric Eades, captain), Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (12): Marty Van Stone, Wanda Erwin, Carla Bolin, Janet Kissel
- Greeters (19): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Mary Lockett

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand" arr. by E. Childs

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Praise God!
People: Praise God for all of Creation!
 Leader: For people with different gifts and graces,
People: For lives that struggle toward wholeness,
 Leader: For God's vision of a flourishing human family,
People: Where all people are seen as children of God.

CHORAL INTROIT

"Where the Spirit of the Lord Is" by Stephen Adams; arr. by Tom Fetteke

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*FIRST HYMN #154

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.
People: And also with you.
 Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

SPECIAL MUSIC

"Midnight Cry" by Greg and Chuck Day; arr. by Tom Fetteke

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: And also with you.
 Leader: Let us listen for God in the silence.

PASTORAL PRAYER

All: God of Truth, we have been told these lies: we are not good enough, we don't belong, we are unworthy to be loved. But You say: we are enough, we are welcome, we are loved. Forgive us for forgetting the truth. Remind us that we are Yours. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

GIVING OFFERING

"There Is A Happy Land" arr. D. Wood

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

#94 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"Good Old Gospel Singing" arr. by Tom Fetteke

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 12:1-5

The New Life in Christ
 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ²Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

³For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE **TFWS #2120**

"Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness (refrain)"

MESSAGE *by Pastor Andy Payton*

"Connect, Learn Their Name"

Well good morning Methodist Temple. It certainly is a blessing to be with you here today- to be with you here in this place and to be in the presence of God. I've learned a few things this morning since I've been here. I don't know about you but I've learned a few things. One of the things I've learned is that I'm no longer a young adult. Thirty-five is the cutoff apparently. I don't get my lunch bought today. I don't know about you, but Jillian has put a hard stop on that. Yes. I'm also excited that my mom is here with us today. I knew that coming into this, but you probably didn't know that. My mom is here with us today. Hi Mom. Like five or six rows back. So you need to be on your good behavior today. Tell me what a great sermon I preach today. My mom is here. My mom is here.

I do trust that you've had a great week, I really do. It's been a big week. If you have kids or grandkids, you know that school started again this week. Paige, our 4 year old, started back to preschool. Last year she went three days a week, and this year she goes five days a week. I have a back to school picture- that's us. If you like close, she's got her backpack on. Not just any backpack. Princess Sophia backpack. Actually, it's an Elsa backpack. Yeah, but that was us going back to school. I never get used to it, you know. I don't know, but you never get used to it- especially as the kids get older. I don't know. I still look at my 17 year old daughter Jaden like she's 7 or 8 years old and my heart. I look at her like she's 7 or 8 years old, but I realize that she's on the cusp of going to college. Today we're talking about connection whether it's connection with our kids or grandkids, whether it's connection with one another. We're here to celebrate connection, and before we jump into that though, let's begin with prayer. Would you pray with me? Oh God I do ask that you would help us this day to be present to you even as you're here present with us. I pray today that we would we would know your love and know your grace and we would know that you do bring a sense of connection between each of us. Your love and embraces and connects us all. Help us this day to know and to experience that love. I ask this through Christ. Amen.

So I'm going to begin with a little bit of a history lesson. I hope I don't bore you to death with it, but it will begin with a little bit of a history lesson about Methodist Temple. Some of you might know this part of the story of us; some of you might not know this part of our story, but the truth of the matter is Methodist Temple is the story of really two communities that decided to connect with one another. There was an English Methodist Church with more of like an English background and there was a Methodist Church with more of a German background. Back in the 40s, they decided that they were going to merge together and become one. They decided to build Methodist Temple here on the corner of Lincoln and Kelsey which if you think about it it's kind of an extraordinary thing in the 1940s and 50s. If a German group of people and an English group of people decided to get together, that was kind of a miraculous thing if you think about like the history of what was going on in the world at that particular time. But these two groups of people decided to lay aside their buildings, to lay aside their favorite seats. They decided to lay aside their cultural differences. They decided to build a church here because they believed that God was calling them to be here in order to proclaim the good news of God's love to our community. What a marvelous story. In fact, I learned that after we finally built this church here in 1950s that the elders, or the leaders that were kind of in charge of the building process, decided to relinquish the leadership and stepped down. They relinquished leadership and they stepped down after it was built in order to give way to new leadership so that this church could continue to grow new leaders and have a new vision for a new day. That's an extraordinary story if you think about it.

Now that was a long time ago- 1950s- and a lot has changed since then, but the truth of the matter is a lot hasn't changed since then. A lot has changed since then, but a lot hasn't changed since then. We also find ourselves in a time in which there are a lot of changes happening within the world and within our communities. JillAnn did a marvelous job last week talking about the fact that the religious life of America today is shifting; it's changing; it's evolving. You know this. I know this. But things are changing and things are shifting. We're starting to wonder: what does it mean to be a church in the midst of a world that is just changing day after day? So we also live in a time of change, but not only that, we are a congregation today that's made up of two communities just like they were a long time ago. It's the truth. We like to talk about how we're one church; and in a sense we are one church, but the truth of the matter is we're kind of two churches at the same time. There's the 8:30 a.m. group. There's the 11:00 a.m. group. We are a little bit different. We're a little bit the same, but we're a little bit different. And in the midst of that difference I think the question we have to be asking ourselves is, in the midst of this time of change, in the midst of this reality that we have kind of two communities, what does it mean for us to come together and hear the voice of God calling us? What does it mean for us to kind of lay our differences aside and to come together and hear the voice of God calling us?

That was the question I started asking myself really about a year ago. I had just been the Lead Pastor here for, oh I don't know, a year and a half. I just catching my breath at that point, and then I started to realize, hey how are we going to bring this group of people together? What's God calling us to do, right? I started asking myself that question and so I thought, well I can't really figure that out by myself so I'm going to ask a group of people to help me. And I got some members of our church council together and a couple of other leaders within the church together- there's about 12 of us- and really the question was: What is God calling us to do as a church? We called it a visioning team, but really it would be probably a better way to say it is more like a discernment team. I don't like vision. Vision sounds like a business. Vision sounds like we're trying to turn our church into a market place, and Jesus had troubles with turning churches into marketplaces as far as I know. He turned some tables over, the story goes. I was more into discernment, and I wanted us to be a house of prayer. And so together this group of people from our church council and a couple of the leaders began to ask the questions, so what's God calling us to do as a church?

And we began with our mission statement. The mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. That's the mission of the United Methodist Church, but more to the point the question that we started asking is: So what does that look like for us? What does that look like for us? And so from there, we began to ask people in the congregation, what do you love about Methodist Temple? That seemed like a great place to start. What do you love about the church? What gives you energy about our church? And what we found was there was a variety of different answers to that question.

There's a lot of things that people love about our church. Some people love the music. Some people love the people. Some people celebrated the generosity. You know what, some people even said they like the sermons, and I like that. That's good. That's good. Yeah! But there was a lot of different things from a lot of different people. They talked about a lot of different stuff that they celebrated. And from all that stuff that we collected- we started to kind of sift through it- and what we found was some common threads that, here it is, flowed through both groups. What we discovered was we are a whole lot more alike than we are different, and as we sift through all the stuff that we all loved about our church what we discovered is that we we all wanted to connect. We all enjoyed sharing. We were all interested in exploring the faith. And so, if I was just going to kind of put it all together, what we discovered was that we as Methodist Temple even though we do have some other differences, we as Methodist Temple really want to strive to become a safe place, a non- judgmental place for people to connect together and to share their gifts and explore what it means to have faith and in Christ. That's the kind of place we want to become, and quite frankly that's the kind of church that I want to be a pastor of. I want to be a pastor of a church that's not sentimental, a place that's safe for people to get to know one another and to share their passions with one another. A place to ask questions about the faith and not be told, but to be able to explore and to discern and to look for what God is calling us to be and to become.

So the question is how do we become that? How did we become that? And I think that our scripture lesson this morning kind of gives us some first steps to becoming the first half of what I just said- a safe place, a non- judgmental place where we can connect together. In our scriptural lesson today, we find Paul talking to the church in Rome. He's he's talked to the Christ communities in Rome, and of all the things that Paul wrote, it could be argued that the book of Romans is the most impactful work that he ever made, the most impactful book that he ever wrote or work that he ever he ever created. Romans is really his largest work. It's kind of a competition between Romans and 1 Corinthians, but Roman seems to be one of his longest works. And the point of the Book of Romans is Paul is getting a community ready for his hopeful upcoming visit. And so really what Paul's doing in the book of Romans is he's telling them 'this is when I am about. This is what I believe, and this is what I think you should be about. And this is what I think you should believe.'

And now the interesting thing about Romans though is that underneath Romans, we get a sense that there was some tension within the community. And the tension within the community that he is writing towards or writing to is that there is a group of Christ followers that had a Jewish background, and there was a group of Christ followers met a Greek and Greco -Roman background. And I'm not going to go into the details of what makes him different, but let me just say this: they are way different. They are way different. Those from a Jewish background were way different than those that were from a Roman background, but yet they both decided to become Christ followers. And it's it's in the midst of this tension, in the midst of this division that Paul writes. And by the time we get to Chapter 12, he makes a very pointed statement. He says, 'Let us not be conformed to the patterns of this world. But let us be renewed by the transforming of our minds.' Translation- Pastor Andy's translation- Translation: Let's not look at each other through those labels that the world has taught us to look at each other through. Let's not look at each other through the lens of our differences. Let's not look at each other as a Jewish or Greek. Let's not look at each other in that way, but instead let's look at each other, Paul suggesting, through the mindset of Christ. That's what's going to unite us. In the mindset of Christ, Paul suggests, is this: that we are all equally sinners embraced by the mercy of God.

He says it so pointedly in Romans 3:23. He says, 'Whether you're a Jewish or Greek, it doesn't matter. We've all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Praise be to Christ Jesus who has brought forth our redemption.' We're all, Paul says, equally sinners. It doesn't matter where we come from. It doesn't matter what label. It doesn't matter what tribe. It doesn't matter. We're all equally sinners, and we all own part of the mess that the world is in. We all do. And we all are equally embraced by the mercy of God. How different the church, how different the world, how different things would be if we chose to see through that lens. But that's not how we see. Today is not Jew or Greek. It's other things: conservative. Liberal. Blue. Red. I like Trump. I don't like Trump. And we don't own the truth. It doesn't matter what label we slap on ourselves. The truth of the matter is deep down within ourselves we're all searching for the same thing. And that thing that we're searching for is the infinite love of God that has been brought forth through the person and work of Jesus Christ. That will unite us. That will change us. That basic idea could even change the way we do business as a church.

As we grind or anchor our lives in the infinite love of God, what begins to happen is we really don't need to judge anymore. That's what begins to happen. When we see ourselves as equally sinners embraced by the mercy of God, there's really no need to judge anymore. We're all the same; we're in the same boat, so we don't need a judge right. And that's really hard to do. I don't know about you, but I spent a lot of time judging. I mean think about it this way, think about how your life would be different if you had no need to judge. Think about how free you would be. Think about how how different it would be. Think about how much energy you would have set free if you no longer had to judge. And when you start to think about that, then you realize how much time you really spend judging. I know that's the way it's been for me. But in the midst of judging, I think the way out of that is that in the midst of judging we can bring our focus to the active presence of God within our lives. And as we bring our focus to the active presence of God within our lives the labels kind of fall away and we start to see our connection with one another.

And as our judgments begin to fade away because we're focusing now on the active presence of God, it's then that we're able to give ourselves fully to one another. Jesus, he said it this way, he said he didn't come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. That's the example we've been given. And so as we bring our focus to the active presence of God, as we let go of our judgments of one another, and as we give ourselves fully to one another, and basically the idea is we become fully alive and we live abundantly, freely. Our life becomes a gift to others.

Another history lesson. I mentioned earlier that Methodist Temple is the result of two congregations that came together- one from a kind of a German background, one from an English background. Let's talk about the Germans for a second. I learned about the German Church, and what I learned was that the German Methodist Church, they weren't all Methodist but they all spoke German. It just happened to be a Methodist Church that spoke German, and they were more German than they were Methodists which meant if you are an immigrant that came to Evansville, you went to this particular church because they spoke your language. Right. And so at this particular Methodist Church that had the German background, they had German Methodist. They had German Lutherans. They had German reformed people. They had German whatever. They were Christian, but they were German and they all spoke the same language. And that kind of diversity was a part of that congregation.

And that kind of diversity became a part of this congregation too because of that. Now here's the thing. I don't think we all need to learn German. I don't think that would be a really good thing for us to try to do. But I do think what would bring us together is we all choose to speak the same language in the midst of our differences. And here's the language I'm trying to suggest we need to speak. We are all equally broken and in need of the mercy of God. There's no need to judge one another. No need to label. We all suffer from the same thing. And as we begin to see that, as we speak that language, it is then that we can truly connect to one another because all the labels of the world really don't matter when we're all in the same, do they? I don't know about you, but that's the kind of church I want to be a part of. That's kind of kind of people I want to serve, and I think that's the kind of people you want to be. And so this week my challenge to you is this: remember the name. First when you find yourself in a kind of a judgment place, remember the name of Jesus. And as you remember the name of Jesus, remember that you are a sinner embraced by the mercy of God. But also remember they are too. They are too. Amen.

*LAST HYMN #645

"God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian"

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"Prelude in F" by J. S. Bach