



# Learning to

# TRUST

November 11 • Traditional Worship

## Our Pastors:

- Lead Pastor Andy Payton [leadpastor@methodisttemple.church](mailto:leadpastor@methodisttemple.church)
- Associate Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg [associatepastor@methodisttemple.church](mailto:associatepastor@methodisttemple.church)

## Sunday Morning Volunteers:

- Ushers (11): Greg & Linda Stilwell, captains; Chuck Taylor, Jacque Hardin, Nelson & Joyse Rivers
- Ushers (18): Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
- Greeters (11): Marty Van Stone, Wanda Erwin, Carla Bolin
- Greeters (18): Warren & Rosemary Heinsohn, Pat Haynie

*\*Ushers & Greeters remain 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:

- Today's Sanctuary flowers given by Ben Field in honor of Margaret & Ben's 64th wedding anniversary.
- Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Don Travis. Organist: Barbara Waite.

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

### PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

### WELCOME

### VETERAN'S DAY VIDEO

### PRELUDE

"Come, Thou Almighty King" by R. Rowland-Raybold

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We are the Body of Christ on earth!

**People: The hymn-singing, bread-baking, risk-taking, love-sharing Body of Christ.**

Leader: No one can say to another, "I have no need of you."

**People: We are connected like muscle and bone.**

Leader: Thanks be to Christ who makes us one.

**People: Let us give our thanks in worship**

### CHORAL INTROIT

"This Is the Day the Lord Hath Made"

### \*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

### \*FIRST HYMN UMH #581

"Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service"

### \*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.

### 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: Gracious God, teach us to love each other as You love us. Teach us to love the Creation as You love it. Teach us to love ourselves as You love us. For Your love is enough. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

### GIVING OFFERING

"Children of the Heavenly Father" by J. W. Kerr

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

#94 in Hymnal

### ANTHEM

"Many Gifts, One Spirit" by Allen Pote

### KIDZ MOMENT

### SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 12:14-21

### SCRIPTURE RESPONSE TFWS #2176

"Make Me a Servant "

### MESSAGE *by Pastor JillAnn Knonenborg*

Need for Affection

Good morning church. What is the Christian response to the world in which we live? How can we be the very presence of Christ when everything feels broken? Fair warning my friends, this is not going to be a light sermon. I felt just as lost as everybody else the past few weeks, so I read the Bible and I pray and I worship looking for a justification to be bitter and jaded- justification to throw up my hands and repay in kind. And the answer that God offers me is always, always the same, love- self- sacrificing, empathetic, unconditional love.

Let us pray. Gracious God as I strive to deliver your message this morning, may you increase and we decrease. For it is written that only in giving up our lives will we find them.

Dorothy Day once said, I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least, which makes sense because each person is an image, a reflection of God. No matter what we do or say to smudge the image, it's still there which means I'm in trouble because there are a lot of people I don't love at all right now. One of them is a 40 year old man who I've never met named Scott Beiere. In late October, he walked into a yoga studio in Tallahassee and started shooting. He killed two women. He injured five others. He also has a history of hitting and stalking women. Scott Beiere was part of a movement of mostly white men who call themselves incels- short for involuntary celibates. They hate women because they feel entitled to have sex with any woman they want, but they've been rejected. I'm a survivor of assault and harassment. Scott Beiere is everything I fear and despise. I'll admit to you friends, I was mad when the news reported that he had shot himself because I thought he got off too easy.

Paul of Tarsus knew something about what it was like to live in fear. As one of the first Jewish Christians, people both within and outside of his community wanted him dead. Many people hated him. When Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome, he didn't tell them to return wrong for wrong. He urged the church do not seek vengeance. Do not let the poison of hate fill up your heart too. Respond to acts of evil with good. Undoubtedly, Paul took his cue from Jesus himself who taught his followers to love their enemies and bless those who persecuted them. So I tried to love Scott Beiere. I really did. At one point I even sat down at my dinner table, closed my eyes, and willed myself to love him with the love of Christ. I couldn't. It was not there. You see we can't make ourselves feel love. That's just not how love works.

Interestingly though, neither the letter to the Romans nor Jesus tell us to feel love. Romantic comedies have convinced us that love is an emotion like anger or happiness- something that exists internally within us. But Romans define love in actions. Speak blessing. Weep when others weep. Feed your enemies. Live peaceably. Mr. Rogers- the Mr. Rogers- once said, 'Love is an active verb like struggle.' To put it another way, love is not a feeling, it's what you do. Love is a way of life.

The question then becomes, what do I normally do to show people love in the midst of conflict between us? Well if I truly love them, I give them the benefit of the doubt- that they don't want to be a bad, hurtful person. They may have behaved horribly, but I recognize that there is more to them than that. I listen to their side of the story. Such patience and generosity demand a great deal from us. It requires empathy- the ability to accept another person as an imperfect human who is not so different from me. It requires us to remember that we are all possessed by demons. We tend to think of demons as red cackling devils with claws and horns, but they're are far more insidious than that. Demons according to Paul's letter to the Ephesians are ideas and institutions that might begin with human beings but take on a life and power of their own. The word Satan just means adversary. Demons are the forces in our world that oppose the will and desires of God. They are very real even if they don't carry pitchforks. They creep into the empty spaces of our hearts and set up shop; however, Jesus never condemned a person for having a demon. He cast the demon out.

Scott Beiere was possessed by a demon called toxic masculinity. This particular demon runs deep in our culture. It sounds like 'you throw like a girl' or 'only sissies cry'. It tells men to be ashamed if they feel lonely or vulnerable. 'The only way to be a real man is to have sex with lots of different women, drive an expensive car, and never let anyone see if you're hurting'. 'If you've got a problem, you punch it or shoot it or blow it up.' James Bond. Bruce Willis. Batman. Rambo. If you can't naturally fit into that narrow mold, you're a failure. Noticeably absent, I might point out from that list is Jesus Christ, the man who openly wept at Lazarus's tomb.

I've talked to some of the men in my life about what our society expects of them and they use words like suffocating, crushing, unbearable. This demon convinces them that they are unworthy, that who God made them to be is wrong. Take a man who has been told his whole life that emotion, connection, and compassion are girly, so he has no shot at real friendship or healthy, romantic relationships. Make him feel small and pathetic because he's not Superman. Surround him with a culture that believes women are prizes to be won by the hero at the end of the story. Send him to an angry internet chat room where he finally makes friends with other men because they all share the same demon in common. Show him in movies and video games and foreign policy that violence gives you power. What do you think is going to happen? That man doesn't fill me with hate. I pity that man. I no longer see a monster. I see a little boy who just wanted to be loved as he was and a man who gave up hope that it would ever happen. I can't and won't excuse Scott Beiere of his crimes, but I wonder if those two women Maura and Nancy might still be alive if someone had seen his pain behind the anger and hatred and responded with love. If only someone had seen him as a victim too and decided to overcome evil with good.

In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus gave his followers the power to cast out demons. Sometimes I wish the weapon he gave us to do it was a sword, but it's love- a love greater than anything we could muster on our own; and it works. Some of you might have heard Christian Piccioli speak at the Victory Theatre this spring. As a teenager he was a self proclaimed Neo-Nazi. He played in a band called Final Solution which he later described as a lifeline to being accepted. By 2010 he had founded a nonprofit called Life After Hate which helps kids get out of white supremacist gangs. What changed? On the surface not much. Piccioli got hired at a music store where he met Jewish and African-American customers. They knew who he was, but they didn't dismiss him. They kept going, treating him as more of a human being than he did them. 'It was these folks who showed me empathy when I least deserved it,' he wrote in his memoir. 'These people who I thought I hated took it upon themselves to see something inside me that I didn't even see in myself.' I can't begin to imagine the sacrifice it must take as a Jewish person to show empathy to a Neo- Nazi. I have to believe that that kind of courage comes from a source greater than ourselves because if it does, there is hope. No one, no one is beyond redemption. We must learn to trust that the answer is love. We all need to be seen and embraced for who we are. As much as we need oxygen or bread, love is the medicine that given time can heal even the most broken of hearts.

Everyday I will have to make the choice to Love Scott Beiere and the thousands who cheered him on. I'll have to pray for God to give me the strength to do it. But it's the only possible course of action for someone who believes that Jesus died to prove God's love for me while I was still a sinner possessed by demons of my own. Who is your Scott Beiere? It might be someone you only know through a TV screen. It might be someone you know very, very well. It might be you.

How could you speak blessing into that person's life? How could you weep with them? Feed them? How could you name their demon and cast it out? It's not the fast way. It's not the easy way. But it is the Jesus way. Amen.

### \*LAST HYMN UMH #433

"All Who Love and Serve Your City"

### \*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

### BENEDICTION

### POSTLUDE

"Prelude in g minor" by J. S. Bach