

Prayer for 3.3.19

Intro: I'm going to offer within our pastoral prayer a prayer for an entire denomination, the Methodist Church, and I wanted to as briefly as possible explain why. This past week, the UMC, met in St. Louis at their conference that occurs only every four years. One of the issues up to vote was stances on current issues involving LGBTQ members and clergy. The vote ended up being to tighten the disciplinary action taken against clergy who perform weddings of LGBTQ church members. They also tightened discipline of any clergy who identified as LGBTQ and confirmed that they are not eligible for ordination. It was a painful and divisive vote for a vibrant and loving denomination. I graduated from a Methodist seminary, in fact I went to school with the senior minister at FUMC two blocks down, Nancy. I experience her as a kind, intelligent, and inclusive pastor. I share the information with you in hopes that our response as congregationalists who are, with our autonomy not subject to such national decisions, that we respond in love and compassion. It is not the time to vilify a denomination, it is not even the time to tell them, you could join us instead. For many that church is their home and they've just been told they're not wanted at home. I think now is the time to support those who are hurting and feeling rejected, and a time to live fully into the kind of open and inclusive church that we have the freedom of being.

So in the spirit of unity with all churches, across all denominational lines, let us pray:

God we pray today for those who have felt unwanted or unworthy by the events of this past week on the national level of one of your beloved churches. We know you are bigger than any denomination or any name we place outside of a building created to serve and worship you. Welcome those who feel outcast. Heal wounded spirits and hearts. Use us to be agents of compassion, with open minds, open hearts, and open hands.

God we pray today for the voices whom have been muted throughout the centuries. Voices of men and women whom the world deemed to have no merit. We are grateful that you look at us with the same merit as our neighbor, the same potential, the same sacred worth. Open our eyes to help us see others as you do. Open our ears to hear their voices. Open our lives so that our story can be changed by their courage.

Sometimes God that voice that is neglected is our own. We doubt our abilities. We know there is someone more qualified out there. We cast our eyes to the floor and minimize who we are and who we could become. Lift our eyes. Amplify our voice. Surround us with friends and family who encourage us.

In a world divided along so many lines O God, be the unifying presence. Remind us that the unity of your love is stronger than our polity, bigger than our denominations, and resilient through the centuries. We pray in the name of your Son, sent to teach how to live and how to love. May we never stop learning from Him. Amen.