



e - Votion

e-Votion for Wednesday, March 4, 2015

Dear Friends,

Today's e-Votion is written by Steve Reis, a member of our church and a leader of our 11:30 worship service, "The Branch". It is written as a response to comments about Sunday's service: Definitely worth reading!

I've heard from several people that it would be great to combine the contemporary worship with the traditional service. By no means do I have any authority to comment officially on that subject, but I did want to share my personal opinion. I actually prefer a more traditional style of worship. I grew up in a Methodist church with a service much like our 10:30 one. My little brother sang in the chancel choir. Two of my favorite worship albums are a recording of Handel's Messiah, and a collection of 22 Favorite Hymns Sung by Tennessee Ernie Ford. Just ask Lisa; she hates it! When I went away to college, the church I attended most often was First

Presbyterian Church in Evanston, IL. Does that look familiar? The beauty and sacredness of the worship space is important to me. The lyrical content of many of the hymns are unmatched, in my opinion, and they stimulate the mind as well as the emotions. To me, the pipe organ is symbolic of the very breath, or spirit of God filling the sanctuary. I enjoy many of the contemporary songs as well, so a blended worship service would be right up my alley. But that's just me. If we are only trying to reach people like me who grew up in the church, then what are we really doing to make more and better disciples of Jesus Christ? The difference between the Branch and the 10:30 service is not a matter of contemporary vs. traditional. In fact, the Branch is very "traditional" in many ways. First of all, we often sing hymns, though they may not always be in the same style because we are limited in our instrumentation, just like contemporary songs are often sung at the traditional service in a different style. We have a call to worship, an invocation, hymns (songs) of praise, a prayer of confession, hymns of reflection, sharing of joys and concerns, pastoral prayer, scripture readings, a sermon, a hymn of reflection and a benediction. It just doesn't look or sound the same as the 10:30 service. So why is that important, and what really IS the difference between the two? I don't think worship is a very difficult concept to understand. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength and love your neighbor as yourself. Actually doing that is more difficult. We all fail.

one body, many parts



one Spirit, one love

It's human nature. The purpose of a worship service is to exhort people to live that way, and the two services do that differently. At The Branch, we have people attending who would feel threatened in the traditional service. The awe inspiring beauty of the sanctuary, the breath of God from the organ, and the feeling of sacredness that I described earlier clearly draws some people closer to God. Others don't feel awe or sacredness; they feel anxiety. I know someone who comes to The Branch who was not just apathetic toward the church, but who vociferously opposed it as an institution. This was partly due to this person's experiences as a child and attending a traditional United Methodist Church. This person has now been attending The Branch for several weeks and enjoys coming because of the desire for relationships. Building community is something The Branch does particularly well. We share breakfast and coffee before the service. The scripture readings and the messages are conversational and interactive. We share our joys and our concerns. The young children are not just welcome at the service; they actively participate and take leadership roles. The focus is more on building relationships with each other, and less on the rites and rituals. I believe that's part of the reason why the service is intentionally held somewhere other than the sanctuary. For some people, there is a stigma attached to the sanctuary and about coming in and seeing the stained glass, the pulpit and lectern, the pipe organ, the chancel, the robes, the paraments and all of it. For a better idea of what I'm talking about, check out this video. We can't simply put a couple of contemporary songs into the traditional service and think we are meeting the needs of the people who attend The Branch, or the people the Branch was designed to reach. And it IS beginning to reach those people. That's not to say the traditional service isn't also reaching people. In fact, several of the new youth who have been coming prefer the traditional service for the same reasons I prefer it as well. But there are the people out there we are not reaching, and why would we not try to reach as many people as possible in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Having contemporary music in our traditional service might make "us" feel really good. It might be entertaining to "us" and fill "us" with the Spirit, but it does nothing for "them." It does nothing for the people who are lost and searching for meaning in their lives, but would never step into the sanctuary of their own accord. It does nothing for the people who are intimidated by traditional church, but are seeking love and community. It does nothing new for the people who are not already in the church. It is not just about singing contemporary songs. That is why I choose to serve at The Branch. My preferences are not important. I see the mission of that service and I see God moving through it and through the people who attend it. The Branch is part of First United Methodist Church. It is important that we all feel like one church because we are all one in the body of Christ. The Branch simply functions as a different part of the body.

~~ Steve Reis

Praises and Prayer Requests:

Praise God for a wonderful Missions weekend with food pantry, work at Rise Up, the cross on the top of the steeple being lit again, the donations of 112 layette kits and much more. Thank you to everyone who organized and made this weekend possible as well as those who participated. Thank you Outreach Pillar, thank you First UMC!

Please pray for:

- Susan Fields' mom, Betty Squires
- Jane Eddy
- Athena Peebles
- Barbara Marrs

- Susan Ready
- Daniel Harbaugh
- Jamie Bouton
- David Peckham
- Harper Grace Rosecrance (Brian and Cathie's grand-daughter, recovering at home from surgery)
- Anna Kapoor and the Mexico mission team
- Mollie Gross Warren and her husband Cooper, and baby Warren (due in June).

CALENDAR and ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Tomorrow March 5 meetings:
 - Finance committee 6:30 pm
 - Communications Pillar 6:30 pm
 - Stewardship committee 7 pm
- Don't forget to mark your calendars for the Emory & Henry choir next Thursday evening, March 12. If you can host 2 students in your home, please let Judy Story or Serena Crowder know. They will have dinner with us at the church and a concert at 7 pm. Let's support these students as they travel and sing!
- The graveside service for Joe Horton will be held Saturday March 14 at 2:30 with dinner at the church. If you are a family friend and wish to attend the dinner, please let me or Pat Faber know so the Care Team can plan accordingly. Please be in prayer for the Horton family in their time of grief.
- An Easter egg hunt is being planned for Saturday April 4. We need donations of pre-filled plastic eggs with candy or treats OR a bag of Easter, kid-friendly candy. Boxes will be provided to put these in at the Narthex and Fellowship Hall. Thank you from the Outreach Pillar.
- UMW Announcement:
 - The Johnson City District UMW Day apart will be held on Saturday March 28 at Cherokee UMC. The Crossroads Medical Mission Van will be on site. Members will be able to tour the van. A time of worship and fellowship will also be held.
- The "Sisters in service" retreat for young women and young at heart women will be held at Sevierville with lodging at Governor's Crossing March 14-15. Kin Mink, Director of Family Ministries at Concord UMC, in Knoxville, will be the weekend speaker. For more information contact Martha Hale, UMW president. Some scholarship funds are available for young women who would like to attend.

"Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

St Francis of Assisi

Blessings,

Jane Taylor
 First United Methodist Church
 Johnson City TN