

March 14, 2007

Call to Worship and Dialogue

One: In the Wilderness, Moses turned aside to look at the sight of the bush that was burning without being consumed. In the turning aside, he heard the voice of God calling him by name.

All: In our turning aside today and in our looking, we see the realities of fires that did consume; but, even now, we can hear that voice in the stillness of our hearts.

One: In the Wilderness, Moses removed the sandals from his feet to stand on holy ground.

All: In this moment, we are called to take away that which separates us from the presence of the sacred.

One: In the Wilderness, Moses received the word from God that the cries of the people had come to God's own ears.

All: God is attentive to those who call out for deliverance and freedom.

Hymn: "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah" (*See Hymn Sheet*)

Prayer: O God, as we come to these tables breaking the fast of the night time hours, may we receive the gifts of food and friendship provided by your grace. We are thankful. Impart to us a measure of your wisdom and strength as we contend with the brokenness among us and within our community. Give us clarity, forthrightness, and patience. We seek an exodus to a new place of reconciliation and life. We pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(During the meal, please follow the suggested conversation starters listed on separate sheet.)

Introduction

Today it is our intention to reflect on one of the defining moments in the history of this community and the legacy that remains from that event which is the civil disturbance called the Detroit '67 Riot. This disturbance took place forty years ago this coming July.

It is the subject of many intense and careful studies. The literature is informative and useful in understanding the history of urban America and Detroit. However, much remains unresolved since the events of forty years in the past.

We should not ignore or avoid the need to address this difficult and complicated reality with its many facets. As people of faith, we know that Wilderness times are difficult to live through. Nonetheless, hope is a by-word for us and is Good News for the world around us and for our community.

Today, around these tables we will be given opportunity to engage the Wilderness with such hope. Through the Wilderness, eventually, God's people gained a land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.

Jesus fulfilled the dreams of Prophet, King, and Priest as he embraced the Wilderness and life itself to bring about reconciliation, redemption, and renewal by his obedience to his Father. As suffering servant he took up the Cross and was raised to new life in accordance with the Scriptures. He was victorious over sin and death.

At the outset of his ministry, Jesus spent forty days and forty nights in the Wilderness. There he was tempted by the adversary. As we embark on this time of sharing, we may benefit in reflecting on those temptations. In so doing, we may be able to draw closer to the way of deliverance and freedom that is God's dream for all of creation.

Read: Luke 4: 1-13

In three cycles we will have opportunity to consider those temptations and the implications that are presented to us by that discussion.

1. Changing stones into bread.

- Jesus confronts the temptation to meet his physical needs to change stones into bread. Rather than short cut the way of obedience, Jesus claims the wisdom that humanity “does not live by bread alone.”
- Repentance is change that creates new direction for our lives.
- In light of the continued brokenness in our community forty years after the ‘67 Riots, what repentance do you need, personally, to make?
- Do you think that repentance and change have occurred in our community, if not what would that look like?
- Have there been instances of change in the Detroit Metropolitan community that deal with root causes of the needs that we have? What are some examples?

2. The devil said, “If you will worship me, it will all be yours.” – Power and Control

- Jesus is tempted to gain the nations by bowing down before the adversary. He answers with the Scripture: “Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”
- How has the pursuit of power affected the life of our community in the years since the '67 Riots?
- What needs to happen to deal with the turf battles and the contest for control between various entities? (Racial groups, political parties, cities, counties, economic competitors, religious and ethnic divisions)
- Where are there examples of power sharing, empowerment, and “win-win” scenarios evident and to be pursued?

3. Casting down from the pinnacle – Religion and Illusion

- The adversary tempts Jesus, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here.” Jesus answers “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”
- It is tempting to believe that we are made invulnerable by claiming God’s favor and some how thinking that we have a religious or ethical high ground (pinnacle). By being vulnerable, we are able to pursue God’s alternative way to life. We can not live above the fray. Involvement is critical.
- Are there examples of engagement and vulnerability in our community that can build bridges of new relationships?
- Where are there examples of personal and systemic responses that address the circumstances of the marginalized in our community?
- List ways that we are involved in our personal lives, through our congregations, and in our Metro Detroit Association of Churches?
- July 22, 2007 is the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the Detroit '67 Riot. What are some of the ways that we might redemptively and hopefully mark that significant passage of time?
- What are other ways that we might continue to be together for the well being of our common life and for that of the community we serve?

Report your responses.

Benediction and Farewell