

Sermon Title: **“The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development”**

Bible: **Psalm 106:19-23, Exodus 32:11-14, Philippians 4:1-7**

When: on Laity Sunday, October 15, 2023

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Laity Sunday

In the United Methodist Church, many local churches celebrate the third Sunday in October as Laity Sunday. That’s because we, the United Methodist Church, celebrate the ministry and witness of laypersons. That’s because we are all called to be God’s children and to become the disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our church has a long history of celebrating and recognizing the laity’s presence and ministries. In the early days of American Methodism, the laity served and maintained congregations between visits of the circuit riders. I am not a circuit rider, but without your presence, prayers, and service, I would not be able to serve two churches. Even today, you are the front line of daily ministry at the workplace, in the home and within the community.

When we have the Annual Conference session, the same number of clergy and the same number of laity gather, worship, and make decisions together. Even at the local church level, the laity preach from the pulpit with the pastor’s invitation or permission. Some churches do not allow the laity to preach from the pulpit. Next time, I hope for us to have a message from

one of our lay people, because we have great preachers in our congregation. But today, I will give the message to celebrate Laity Sunday!

2. The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development

What is the title of today's message? "The Committee on Nominations and Leadership Development." You might be surprised at the title, but I would like to mention this committee as one of the clergy who celebrates Laity Sunday. That's because I value our Methodist ethos to honor and to respect the laity. A United Methodist pastor cannot be the chair of the finance team, cannot be the president of the Trustees, and cannot be the chair of SPRC (Staff Parish Relations Committee). But for this committee on Nominations and Leadership Development, the pastor is the chair. It used to just be called "the Committee on Nominations." And recently, perhaps in 2012 or 2016, the "Leadership Development" part was added. Can you imagine the differences with and without "Leadership Development"?

3. The Mind of Moses

Nominations and leadership development are combined together in one committee. And the chair of this committee is the pastor. And I find the reason for that in today's Old Testament scriptures, from the mind of Moses. When a covenant people forgot God and made a golden calf as an idol, God's anger was triggered. God wanted to destroy them. However, Moses came and prayed for them, and asked God to change God's mind. When they made the idol, Moses was not there. It was not his fault. But Moses had compassion for his people. Moses did not hesitate to advocate for his people. As a leader, Moses felt his responsibility, even

when his people were at their worst. Patiently and compassionately, Moses interceded for his people, facing God's anger, and the Lord changed God's mind.

As a pastor and as a chair of Nominations and Leadership Development, do I have this mind of Moses? For now, if I can measure, I have maybe only a small fraction of Moses' mind. But I hope to have this mind of Moses day by day, Sunday by Sunday, and year by year. So, I confess that this pastor has the ultimate responsibility even when our lay leaders are at their worst. It is all my responsibility as your pastor. To have the mind of Moses, I think that the committee is not only for nominations, but also leadership development, and that the chair of it belongs to the pastor.

4. Some Expectations for Leaders

As I am the chair of Nominations and Leadership Development, I would like to share some of my expectations for leaders and church members, based on Philippians 4. At the beginning of this Chapter 4, Paul shared his specific and general advice to the Philippians church. My first expectation is that when your service is for the church, rejoice!!! Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice! Our lay leaders and church members are volunteers. What made you volunteer? Serving the church as volunteers or lay leaders sometimes makes you tired or stressed. What made you volunteer? I believe that it is because of the joy, the joy of serving the church and serving others. No one pays you, but no one can take away your joy.

My second expectation is teamwork, just like Paul urged us to be of the same mind in the Lord. To work together is not always easy. But we need each of you, because we are all

together the body of Jesus Christ. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. As our Lord Jesus Christ loves us patiently and gently, let us love each other.

My last expectation is to choose the church's interests or benefits rather than your personal interests or desires. It can be difficult. But we are not loyal to ourselves, but loyal to our Lord, right? We are called to the ministry of the church and the work of the Gospel. If there is a conflict between your personal interests and the church's interests, I hope for us to choose the church's interests over our personal interests.

5. Closing

Before following the ordination process, I needed to be a United Methodist member for two years. At that time, a two-year membership was the requirement for the ordination process. I heard that for now it was changed into only a one-year membership. Anyway, since May 2012, it took me about nine years to become an ordained pastor. During that time, I have been loved by the church. Now that I have become a pastor, I cannot be a lay person anymore. But now it is my turn to serve you. I am so thankful and blessed to serve each of you and this church. Without you, I cannot be here. Without you, our church cannot be here.

Closing Prayer

O Lord, thank you so much for sending your people to our church. Thank you so much for our church members and our lay leaders. Protect them! Bless them more and more and pour out your love and grace upon them. And use them for our church and for this community! In Jesus' name. Amen.