

Reflections on the Shared Journey-

What a joy to have had Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton, resident bishop of the Michigan Area of The United Methodist Church, preach for us this past Sunday (April 20)! His proclamation of the Word was clear, yet pointed. He spoke to real hungers of the human heart – *something is not right; we live in a world that is powerless to turn itself around; a prophetic word is needed along with a change of life*. In addition to proclaiming a timely word, I experienced Bishop Keaton as a gentle, spiritual man. I watched as he interacted with young and old alike – focusing on the individual even as the crowds flowed past. For a brief moment, each person who spoke to him was the focus of his attention. I watched as he gently touched those who came to kneel in prayer at the altar during the 11:00 service, communicating God’s blessing. I listened as he spoke words of encouragement and affirmation to individual members of the staff, affirming their gifts and their ministry. He celebrated the work of God that he saw and sensed in the life of St. John the Apostle, extending his word of affirmation to you and your faithful stewardship as the people of God. He was only in our midst for a few hours, yet he was fully present with us, intent to give to us and – in that giving – to be a blessing.

Thank you for being a part of receiving and hosting Bishop Keaton. You came to experience worship under his leadership – 405 in the 4 services (one of our highest non-Easter attendances in the 6 years I have been your pastor). You came with a spirit of expectancy and openness, responding as he greeted, questioned, joked and called us to respond to God’s word. You gave him your words of encouragement and affirmation in your greetings. I am grateful to be a part of a congregation with such a generous spirit! As I was blessed through Bishop Keaton, I am blessed through you.

One other word of gratitude – a special *thank you* goes to John Moran, Chris Manzo, Matt Hatley and Julie Ann Levey for the excellent *Ministry of the Month* video this past Sunday. Children’s ministry gives us much to celebrate. This video focus allowed us to do so.

I am grateful to be a part of God’s good work in this place. I’ll see you Sunday in worship.

Grace and peace, Steve