

Saturday, March 19th, 2022

Rev. Timothy Lloyd

Dear Eastside Church,

Greetings in the name of Christ. I write to share the news of my transition as Eastside's pastor. You may remember learning about the UMC's Itinerant System in Eastside Orientation. Each year, across the globe, pastors and churches within geographic designations known as Annual Conferences are taken into consideration by their presiding bishop and district superintendents. Envision a group of passionate and devoted local denominational leaders gathered around complex matrices of clergy, congregations and local communities. Annually, bishops and cabinets pray, discern and assess the needs, hopes and dreams of their churches and pastors. After this process they finalize their best understanding of a fresh, holistic configuration of relationships between clergy, congregations, and the surrounding communities.

I officially began the work of starting a new United Methodist congregation in February of 2011. Oakhurst UMC launched our first public worship gathering August 7th 2011. In January of 2013 we widened our vision by changing our name from Oakhurst to Eastside. Then in 2014, we moved from our leased storefront Oakhurst to our own property in East Atlanta. We held our first public service in EAV on Resurrection Sunday - April 20th, 2014. Throughout the last decade we have undergone many changes but have continued to grow deep roots throughout the east side neighborhoods we serve.

It is best practice to keep a founding pastor in leadership until a new church has grown to stability and health. That milestone arrived a couple of years ago. However, due to the instability caused by the pandemic, we felt it wise I remain at the helm until at least the worst of the storm had been weathered. Thanks be to God, y'all have proven yourselves to be a remarkably resilient congregation. You are strong, stubborn, and relentless in your passion to not only survive, but to thrive on your mission to love God and do good. I am proud of who you have become. You are a rare gem of a church. Too rare in fact.

With a call to continue infusing the world with the spiritual DNA that has made Eastside so special, I need to embark on the next leg of my journey. With a need to discover how God might use me in new ways, I need to continue planting seeds of love in new places and new communities. My time with you has forever changed me. I have learned so much about what today's world needs in its pastors, preachers and prophets. For this and so much more I am so grateful. The growth, maturity, experience and transformation I have undergone as your leader and pastor has changed the course of my life. Thank you for the good, the bad, the joys, the sorrows, the committee meetings, the meals, the encouragements, the constructive feedback, and most of all, the many occasions of forgiveness. I hope and pray you will never forget who you are - a church of creative, historic, inclusive methodists seeking to remake the world in the shape of God's vision of justice and love.

It is important to stress that before my move had been determined by the Bishop, our church leadership had already committed to bless me with a gift of spiritual renewal leave. After 11 years of starting and pastoring Eastside followed by my leadership through the pandemic they felt it appropriate to bless me with time and space to recharge and restore my soul. I remain beyond grateful for the gift of this coming season of renewal leave but am also sad that it means my time with you is rapidly coming to a close. I will preach Easter Sunday and then begin my renewal leave. I will return towards the end of June to finish up any lingering tasks, help onboard the new pastor, say goodbyes and preach my farewell sermon on June 26th (Father's day). I will start my new assignment near the beginning of July.

Eastside family, know that you are deeply loved. You will always remain in my heart. God has used us to mutually form and transform one another. In this transition I pray your next chapter is one of new life and joy as you continue to restore this world God loves. So... as you all continue to traverse this spiritual journey together, along the way don't forget to, "Be like the fox who makes more tracks than necessary, some in the wrong direction. Practice resurrection."

May it all have been and may it all be to the glory of God. Amen and amen.

Grace+Peace,

-Pastor Tim