

Worship for August 13, 2023  
Service of Ordination and Installation of Officers

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

\*Call to Worship

Let us worship God.

Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord.

**Let us exalt the name of the Lord together.**

Come, let us sing to the Lord,

**Let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.**

\*Hymn 761 Called as Partners in Christ's Service

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**Mighty and merciful God, you have called us to be your people and claimed us for the service of Jesus Christ. We confess that we have not fully lived up to our calling, being timid in our witness and forgetful of your powerful presence and the strength of your Holy Spirit among us.**

**O God, forgive us. As you have chosen and claimed us in our baptism, strengthen us anew to choose Christ's way in the world. Give us your Spirit, that each one in ministry may be provided with all the gifts of grace needed to fulfill our common calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.**

\*Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

May the God of mercy, who forgives all your sins, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep you in eternal life.

First Reading Isaiah 61:1-31

Moments With Our Young Disciples

Commissioning of Jon True to Service as Trustee

Second Reading  
Morning Message

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 27

There are different gifts, but it is the same Spirit who gives them. There are different kinds of service, but it is the same Lord. There are different types of working, but, in all of them, and in everyone, it is the same God at work.

Today is a special day when we celebrate God's call to Nancy, Hala, and Robin to serve the Lord and his church as elders-ordained, set aside, for particular tasks. We know what some of those tasks will be. They will help the church to continue in worship, study, fellowship, and service. They will do some things the ways they have always been done, but, if we have learned anything in the past three years, we have learned that life is dynamic, unpredictable. I have come to believe that it is in those unplanned moments that we learn and grow and draw closer to the people God created us to be.

I've experienced some unplanned moments recently. Ed and I went to Winston-Salem two weeks ago to see our daughter and her family. It is a "his, hers, and ours" type of family. After an evening at their pool, we headed home for a late dinner. The oldest of the kids is fourteen. He picked up his fork and says to us, "I don't really know what to call you. What would you prefer?"

Neither of us was anticipating the question, nor the hugs that followed, nor the warmth that flooded our faces, and the lump in the throat. Unplanned, but, a blessing indeed. We have gained another grandson, which makes three. Thank you, Lord.

And we hope that all our unplanned, unexpected events will present themselves in such a good way.

There are some things that do stay the same, are planned, for this new configuration of the session and all the sessions in the past and in the future.

God called each elder into service. Service on the session is not just taking a turn on the board of directors. When we stand before the congregation, deacons, elders, and ministers all answer the same ordination questions.

Ordination is for life, for the whole church. When an elder is not serving on the session, they are still eligible to perform many functions of ministry, such as serving as clerk, attending meetings of presbytery, serving a presbytery or higher office.

We will make decisions in a particular way. We are Presbyterian, not episcopal or congregational. Episcopal types of churches authorize their bishops to make decisions for the congregation. Congregational churches make decisions by action of the entire membership. We do a little of that, as in calling a pastor or electing officers. Most decisions are made by the session, a group of people elected by the congregation for this work. A lot of trust is placed in the session. To that end, the session works together seeking the mind of Christ in all they do.

Each member of the session will be eligible to attend meetings of presbytery as a commissioner. They can participate by voice and vote and can help shape the life of the presbytery. The Presbytery of West Virginia meets four times a year around the presbytery and by Zoom for those who can't attend in person.

Presbyters, or elders, are commissioners, not delegates. This is something of which we must remind ourselves from time to time, especially in times of disagreement. Whether we are serving on the session or a higher governing body, we seek to find the will of Christ, not the will of those who elected us. While their opinions may certainly influence us, they do not bind us. When we gather together we pray for God's guidance, listen to discussion and debate, and then vote as we are led by the Spirit.

Speaking of voting, that is an action that is addressed in a book called, "Parliamentary Procedures in the Presbyterian Church (USA)."

The author, Marianne Wolfe expresses our purpose and practices in this way:

*The rights and the unity of the body shall be preserved; the will of the majority will prevail; the rights of the minority shall be protected.*

We bear in mind that Christ alone is head of the church and is to be honored by all of our actions. We are a constitutional church, informed by the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*. We believe that our life together is best when lived with a disciplined concern for order. The contents of each part of the Constitution are more than a collection of rules. They are evidence of how we understand God's will for our faith and lives.

While the session takes care of matters of business, they must do so with a spirit of compassion. In some churches, deacons are assigned the responsibility for ministries of compassion and care. In churches which have a unicameral, or single body of leaders, such as Kuhn, the session takes on those responsibilities, too.

Try as they might, every session encounters moments of disagreement. We don't all drive the same make of car, so it is reasonable that we should differ on matters that come to our attention. Way back in 1788, when the church in the United States was young, Presbyterians recognized

that “there are truths and forms with respect to which men (people) of good character and principles may differ.” When that occurs, we need to exercise “mutual forbearance”. Disagreement is not a bad thing when it is expressed in ways that do not disturb the peace, unity, and purity of the church.

We are a connectional church. Each congregation is part of a web of relationships in our Presbyterian family. In part, this means that each congregation and each session is accountable to the larger church through the presbytery. We submit reports annually that are a witness to our activities and health of our congregation. Likewise, the presbytery and synod report to the next higher governing bodies. We are all in this together.

As has been the case for many churches and denominations, the pandemic changed the way we live and move and have our being. We have learned to adapt. Our call now is to move forward, embracing the opportunities and challenges set before us. This is the story of our faith, as testified in scripture: From Moses to maps, God’s people have loved and worshipped God, cared for God’s people, and demonstrated tremendous courage all in a spirit of justice, kindness, and humility.

God has gifted each of our elders to meet the needs of the congregation and this community. God has gifted each and every one of you.

As I began this message, I mentioned that I’ve witnessed a couple of unplanned events, moments that were gifts to those who experienced them. The first was the special conversation we had with the fourteen year old who is our newest and oldest grandchild.

This happened to someone else. It was in a moment of crisis, which had the potential to be a real disaster.

My cousin has been seriously ill for several months. She has been in ICU and is now recovering in another facility. A few days ago she lost her vision in one eye. The staff acted immediately to get her emergency attention. She had to be transported. One of the staff who was attending to her told her that she was going to be ok. Even if her vision never returned, she would be ok. He was a Christian and had the same condition years before and God helped him cope and adjust to his new reality. This man kept reassuring her and she was able to gain strength and courage from him. She had no fear, which is truly remarkable. And scripture tells us “perfect love casts out fear.”

To which I always add, “We’re not perfect, but Jesus is.”

I predict that we will have lots of opportunities to exercise that love in the year ahead.

There are different gifts, but it is the same God who gives them.

May it be so for all of us.

\*Affirmation of Faith      Apostles' Creed p.35

\*Hymn 581 Gloria Patri

Ordination and Installation of Nancy Jackson to the Office of Ruling Elder

Installation of Robin McComas and Hala Mosrie to the Office of Ruling Elder

Renewal of Baptismal Vows

Propounding the Constitutional Questions

Prayer and the Laying On of Hands (All those previously ordained are invited to participate.)

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

\*Hymn 606 Doxology

\*Prayer of Dedication

**God of goodness and grace, we thank you for the blessings of this day,  
for calling your servants into leadership and entrusting them to love  
and care for your people.**

**Give them vision to see as you see this world, serving Christ in humility and compassion.  
It is in his name and for his kingdom that we offer our gifts. Amen.**

\*Hymn 69 Here I Am, Lord

\*Blessing

Go out into the world in peace;

have courage;

hold onto what is good;

return no one evil for evil;

strengthen the fainthearted,

support the weak, and help the suffering;

honor all people,

Love and serve the Lord,

rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

\*Postlude