

Worship for July 21, 2024
Installation of Officers

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

*Call to Worship Psalm 95

O come, let us sing to the Lord!

Shout to the rock of our salvation!

**Let us come into God's presence with thanksgiving,
singing joyful songs of praise.**

*Hymn 482 Baptized in Water

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 lived up to our calling.

**We have been timid and frightened disciples, forgetful of your powerful presence, ignoring
the strength of your Spirit among us.**

**O God, forgive us in our weakness, strengthen us anew, and gift us with everything we need
to fulfill our common calling, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.**

*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. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Psalm 103 Pew Bible p.

Time With Our Young Disciples

New Testament Reading Luke 10: 25-37 Pew Bible p.

Morning Message

“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 John, Bonnie, Nancy, Connie, Judy, and Tim 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 four years, we have learned that life is dynamic, unpredictable, often challenging but, also full of opportunity. So the session will do some things differently than in the past.

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 been reflecting on some unplanned moments recently. We were in Winston-Salem awhile back, 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 plus a granddaughter. Thank you, Lord. No, he won’t call us Fifi and PaPaw. Ed and Cinda will do just fine.

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. A new opportunity is that a Ruling Elder

may administer Communion in their church of membership provided they have session approval and complete the required instruction. Two of our elders are fully qualified to do this.

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. The pastor is not a voting member.

In the Presbyterian Church, the whole congregation votes to call or dissolve pastoral relationships, but, 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. The General Assembly recently met in Salt Lake City and the presbytery meets at the Highlawn Church in Huntington on August 17th.

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 as a governing body, 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.

Ed and I like to say we have a mixed marriage: he comes from a General Motors family, and I come from a Ford family. We have had mostly friendly disagreements about cars. And...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 to advance to the kingdom.

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.

I've spoken many times about my cousin who was seriously ill for several months. Among the assaults to her body over the course of a year, was a stroke and the loss of vision in one eye. She

was hospitalized when it occurred. 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 though her health continued to deteriorate, she had no fear. 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.

*Hymn 69 Here I Am, Lord

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles’ Creed p. 35

* Hymn 580 Gloria Patri

Service of Ordination and Installation

Through the voice of the church, God has called the following church members to ordained and active service:

John Ball, Bonnie Draper, Nancy McIntosh, Connie Morgan, Tim Moore, and Judy Napier

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord’s Prayer

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

*Hymn 607 Doxology

*Prayer of Dedication

Blessed are you, O God of all creation; through your goodness, we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your church. Amen.

*Hymn 187 Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

***Blessing**

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Alleluia! Amen.

***Postlude**