



Love, No Matter What

Going from ‘designated’ to ‘installed’ Pastor

Written by Rev. Heidi Vardeman

Yep. Not designated pastor. Not interim pastor. Not “she-might-stick-around-or-not” pastor. Installed pastor. On Sunday the presbytery installed me as your official, you-can’t-get-rid-of-me pastor.

There was good music by Patrice Meschke, Val Eng, Kent Hall, Sam Schmelling, Mackenzie Uhlenhopp and Bob Volk. Caleb Dayegba wore glorious Cameroonian garb. There was an official commission headed by the Presbytery’s moderator Anna Kendig. Ministers in robes showed up, among them executive presbyter Jeff Japinga and some of Heidi’s minister colleagues, some of whom went back to New York and Indiana (Dave Comstock) and Florida (Cindy Ray). Official ministerial gifts were presented, including a lovely stole and a

magnificent Quilters' quilt. Heidi's mother Jinny, daughter Jane and grandson Aaron were there, though Frank had to stay home (he'd had surgery—successful but painful--on Tuesday). People were given a nice lunch before the service and a lovely reception (there was cake!) afterwards. Gifts were given. As I write this, I am still in the process of opening cards! Thank you for everything, especially the very generous cash card. They are greatly appreciated.

Both parties - the congregation and the pastor - said "Yes!" to all those questions. The ceremony took place. An official document was signed. And now we're stuck with each other.

An installation is a bit like a wedding. After a long engagement (2 ½ years), we finally made it to the church where we made promises to each other. Terry Kubista and Tom Goodrich asked the congregation "Will you respect her decisions?" and "Will you pay her fairly?" These questions are asked at every Presbyterian pastor's installation – makes you wonder about the situations in which pastors have not been listened to or paid well. Moderator Anna Kendig asked me a whole load of questions, the same ones that are asked when ruling elders and deacons are installed about considering scripture to be authoritative, being led by the Confessions, etc. and finally, the most important one: "Will you serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love?" That question makes you wonder about the situations where pastors have been lazy, boring and mean. We Presbyterians are known for having a realistic view of human nature so we ask some tough questions.

Both parties – the congregation and the pastor – said "Yes!" to all those questions. The ceremony took place. An official document was signed. And now we're stuck with each other.

Thank you welcoming me into your church family, respecting my decisions, and paying me as well as you are able. (I really mean that. I've made a lot more money at other

churches, but I feel better paid at Peace because you are generous.) In turn, I promise to be conscientious in my care, honest in my practices and faithful in my preaching and teaching – but, most of all, to love you, as my friend Dave Comstock instructed me, no matter what.

Love from your INSTALLED pastor,

Heidi