

Dr. Al Masters Charge to Reverend Will Shelburne

Service of Installation – March 27, 2022

Will, I am honored as colleague and new friend to be asked to be a part of your official installation as Senior Pastor, Head of Staff, at First Presbyterian Church Greer. As a staff member and friend to this congregation, I can honestly say we are delighted you and your family are here—from what I’ve observed, there is already a mutual, reciprocal appreciation of one another.

Will, I knew you were good people before I met you—my daughter told me stories about you from Presbyterian College and Columbia Seminary days—and I sensed in your emails an authenticity and “realness” and devotional commitment to Christ Jesus.

My first face-to-face or mask-to-mask impression of you was “faithful courage”—a willingness to move your family from the coastal beach of Savannah, Georgia to the Foothills of Greer, South Carolina—as you accepted the call to lead an established, older church with a strong history of good preaching and talented, long-term support staff—in the middle of a global pandemic, with increasing political tensions—a testimony to your faith, trust in the Holy Spirit’s guidance—a brave, bold move. I encourage and charge you to continue leading with holy boldness. Don’t lose your focus on what God has called you here for.

My second impression—your leadership style is easy-going, collaborative; you have a refreshing sense of humor—even with all the distractions of Covid decisions, and while learning the habits and traditions of this particular group of people. One learns quickly in this church to be careful talking about members—because there is a good chance you are talking about a relative! Thank you for not taking yourself or pastoral ministry too seriously and helping us all to relax in these crazy times.

Another observation: like all the rest of us, you are learning and growing and living into your baptism. Being Head of Staff is new,

different, more administrative details and your openness to suggestions is welcome.

Your preaching and newsletter articles have theological depth and insight—may study and prayer and continuing education remain important sources of feeding your mind and spirit.

Thank you for your witness for keeping Sara, William, Sam, Hannah your number 1 priority—while church family is important, and the demands of pastoral ministry can sometimes be overwhelming, always be AT home when you ARE at home—as much as you can.

Comments from PNC: I asked your PNC this question: What was the most attractive about Will becoming our next Senior Pastor? The thing I found most attractive was his calming demeanor and his ability to meet people where they are. He has an ability to make you feel comfortable right away...Will was so eloquent in his personal statement that I was drawn to his wisdom and sense of calmness, his warmth, his wit and his wonderful family...I can vividly remember feeling a sense of peace from the Holy Spirit when I watched the first sermon. His presence from the pulpit was calming and caring, yet challenging, which is what I need...When we met Will, I immediately thought of the word compassion—it is my belief that compassion is paramount to leading this congregation. I also think of Will when I think of Micah 6:8 What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.

Psalm 19: honor and protect creation, the Law of the Lord (scripture) revives the soul, admit your mistakes when you screw up, and ponder this question: How do our lives give shape to the meditations of our heart?