

Ordination Questions – The Rev. Derek Mcleod

Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

To trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior first requires a deep acknowledgment that I need a savior. Left to my own devices and desires I will wander and wither; trusting in anything else other than God is to find myself bereft and without hope. I need guidance, grace, forgiveness, and assurance. I need to be reconciled with others; to be accepted and accepting, to forgive my enemies, to let go of grudges, to be released from arrogance and be set free from what John Calvin describes as *the idol factory that is our heart*. God comes in Jesus Christ to not only share my frail flesh but to redeem it. All God asks is that I say yes to his yes in Jesus Christ. God comes in the limitedness of mortality that I may learn to see and trust in the freedom and expansiveness of God and his kingdom. The words found in a Scottish prayer book speak to my hope in Christ both in life and in death. I once used this prayer exclusively at funerals, I now utter these words every night I bow my head. They are an affirmation of faith and proclamation of the Gospel:

Because he has been with us, we shall be with him.

Because he has been like us we shall be like him.

Because he is for us, who can be against us?

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

How easy this is to answer and how hard it is to live out. Of course I will pray and love and seek to serve those who will be under my care and responsibility with all that I have and all that I am. But will it always be easy? Will I always want to? Know how to? Will I do so flawlessly, selflessly motivated only by what is good, pure and holy? No. Precisely why we make vows at ordinations and installations. There will be situations in our new life together that will be above and beyond our expectations and abilities and we will be forced- driven- to a deep reliance upon the Holy Spirit that will do more with and for us than we could ever hope, create or attempt on our own. I will want to bring all of me to this joyful, impossible task of ministry, but it will never be enough. Where I am at my best is when I am able to point to and make room for the Spirit of God that is able to make all things new. This is not to suggest I am helpless. Our Reformed tradition encourages us to be prepared, to be fertile soil for God's will. As a minister I will read, visit, pray, study, rest and work to help our community be both comforted and challenged; assured and motivated. But it will be God's lead that I follow, God's gifts that I claim, God's love that will abide, endure and sustain. *A bad habit of clergy is to refer to a congregation as theirs; "my church" the pastor will say. To speak possessively in such a fashion can be intimate and familiar but too often clergy begin to be drawn into the temptation of believing that it is in fact their church.* I will want to remind myself often that it is God's people that I serve, and despite the church upholding my *mastering of divinity* (is there a more ludicrous degree title out there?), the highest office of my calling will be that of servant. Even the great Calvin when describing the priestly office described Jesus as prophet, priest, king. What about servant Mr. Calvin? Of all those titles, it's the only one Christ claimed. I pray I can serve with love, intelligence, joy, energy and imagination. I will need more of those than I have and I will do more than I thought I ever could for such are the wonderful ways of our Lord.