

Becky Durham – Answers to Two Ordination Questions

Will you in our own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

I will, with God's help. As a disciple of Jesus, I am called to follow my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and be guided by and obedient to his teachings. Jesus called his disciples to be people who love neighbors and people who seek and work for reconciliation (Jn 13:34, Lk 10:37, Mt 5:24, Mk 1:15, Jn 3:16-17). This is not always an easy road to walk, as very often in relationship with my neighbors I find that I would rather act from a place of selfish motive and withhold forgiveness or love. A mark of maturing in faith, however, is the ability to treat all neighbors with love, grace, and mercy, just as Christ has treated us each with love, grace, and mercy immeasurable. I hope that the people who know me well would say that I am a person who is mature in these things, able to overcome any internal inclinations I might have otherwise.

This vow reflects that pastors have a calling to witness to this love and reconciliation in Christ. We do not just teach and preach Jesus' words about loving neighbors, we model these postures and call others to do the same. We do not just hold out forgiveness and reconciliation as Kingdom values, we seek ways to further reconciliation between humanity and God, between brothers and sisters and neighbors, and between humanity and the created world. As we walk with people through some difficult, unloving, broken situations, most of which we cannot fix or change, we can hold out the one who is reconciling all of creation to himself and restoring all that is broken and unloving, and proclaim hope and resurrection.

Will you be a faithful teaching elder, proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people? Will you be active in the government and discipline, serving in the councils of the church; and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

I will, with God's help, serve faithfully as the pastor of Peace Presbyterian Church, as a member of Coastal Carolina Presbytery, as a pastor in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, and as a pastor of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Serving as a teaching elder in the PCUSA is a broad ministry, and I will understand that my calling is first to a particular church, but also to a connectional church in many councils.

Called to a particular church, I will shepherd a flock as their pastor, providing for their pastoral care needs, praying for members by name daily, leading worship that includes the Word of God proclaimed to the Glory of God and the sacraments rightly administered, and caring for the needs of the church, spiritual and practical, as assigned to me as pastor. I also understand a call of service to the wider church as part of this vow, and will gladly serve the other councils in ways I am called upon to do so. I will attend Presbytery meetings, support my fellow pastors as a friend and encourager, serve on committees, and seek out ways the gifts given to me by God might be of service to others.

John's gospel introduces us to Jesus as one who is "full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14)." These two traits create a bit of tension in Jesus' ministry, and they can create a bit of a tension for pastors to balance as well as we "try to show the love *and* justice of Jesus Christ." Sometimes it's tempting to sacrifice one for the other, and set aside truth for the sake of loving neighbor OR cast aside love in order to proclaim the what is just. In ministry, it is not an either/or situation. As I pastor a church and as I serve this presbytery and my colleagues in ministry, I will strive to be someone who keeps both justice and love as guiding principles in my ministry.