

PRESIDENT’S COMMENTARY MINISTRY UPDATE 2025

“Well, that has never happened before...” That can be good or bad, right?

This summer we had an Ordination/Installation at one of our congregations. It was a beautiful day! God was at work as a man would be set aside for the Office of Public Ministry.

We were walking in the church, and as the candidate and the pastors processed, unprompted, the congregation began to clap and cheer! Yes, cheer, not jeer. They were happy for the candidate, and I believe they were honoring all the pastors there for the day, dressed in robes and red stoles. It was a joyful and encouraging sight! Honestly, I was astonished. It is easy to get caught up in all the negativity of our times and the lack of respect. This was heartwarming!

Recently, I was in a conversation with one of our pastors. He was talking about his congregation and lay leaders. With beautiful sincerity, he spoke of the care he and his family had experienced during a challenging time. He had tears, heartfelt emotion, and gratitude for those who loved on him. They were *“holding up the prophet’s hands”* (Exodus 17:12) and his family’s hearts.

We are living in dangerous times, even in the church. Have we lost our first love? (Revelation 2:4) Do we approach each other in sinful pride or as people who walk humbly with our God... and each other (Micah 6:8)? As I learned as a child, *“Pride cometh before the fall.”* (Proverbs 16:18) Spiritual danger is all around us.

We are invited by the Apostle Paul to *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”* (I Corinthians 11:1) Christian leaders are always learning from others who are ahead of them. These people know and live the Gospel. Every Christian leader follows Christ daily and lives in the community of the baptized. Daily, you and I die to sin and are raised up by the One who was raised from the dead for our forgiveness and salvation! We are a hopeful community of men and women, confessing our sins, rejoicing in our Savior, and building up the body of Christ!

How do we show respect?

- Show up
- Listen, and listen deeply
- Look into peoples’ eyes
- Acknowledge others as made in the image of God and redeemed by Christ
- Speak the truth in love
- Pray for them and ask for their prayers
- Respect their callings in life and in the Church (women and men, ordained, commissioned, and laity)

- Recognize, acknowledge, and give thanks for their gifts, especially ones you were not given

I am grateful I see heroes of the faith all the time. They may not be listed in Hebrews 11 - even at the end of the chapter, but their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, by His own blood (Revelation 21:27). Meanwhile, we get to serve together, hold each other accountable, feast at His table, and sing praises to God together. Once in a while, we might even clap for each other! Because of Jesus, we are "Stronger Together: Co-Workers for the Kingdom of God."

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