

“Meditation and Litany of Installation of Church Servant Leaders”

2015 Installation of Church Board Officers and New Elders, Deacons,
and Members of Nominating Ministry and Endowment Trustees
Season of Epiphany, Sunday, January 18, 2015
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Decatur, Georgia
Senior Pastor James L. Brewer-Calvert

Holy Scriptures: I Samuel 3: 1-20 John 1: 43-51

1 Samuel 3

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

²At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; ³the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. ⁴Then the Lord called, “Samuel! Samuel!” and he said, “Here I am!” ⁵and ran to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call; lie down again.” So he went and lay down. ⁶The Lord called again, “Samuel!” Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” But he said, “I did not call, my son; lie down again.” ⁷Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. ⁸The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, “Here I am, for you called me.” Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. ⁹Therefore Eli said to Samuel, “Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, “Samuel! Samuel!” And Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” ¹¹Then the Lord said to Samuel, “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

¹²On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. ¹³For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. ¹⁴Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever.”

¹⁵Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. ¹⁶But Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel, my son.” He said, “Here I am.” ¹⁷Eli said, “What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.” ¹⁸So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, “It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.”

¹⁹As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

²⁰And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord.

John 1: 43-51

⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, “**Follow me.**” ⁴⁴Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.” ⁴⁶Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” ⁴⁷When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, “**Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!**” ⁴⁸Nathanael asked him, “Where did you get to know me?” Jesus answered, “**I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.**” ⁴⁹Nathanael replied,

“Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”⁵⁰ Jesus answered, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.”⁵¹ And he said to him, “Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

Someone once told me that
what you win people *with*
is what you win them *to*.

Can anyone bully you into believing?
Can someone convince you with evil to love? Or with
violence? Or hatred? Prejudice?
Can someone argue you into faith?
Have you tried to argue someone else into believing or
loving as you do?
How’s it working for you?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., believed in the practice
of soul force,
in the power of love to overcome evil,
in the power of nonviolent social action
to bring about peace and social change
and civil rights.
At the core of soul force is love— love of God, love of yourself,
and yes, even love of your enemies.

One day Dr. King preached in a sermon in which he said:

*Now there is a final reason I think that Jesus says, “Love
your enemies.”*

*It is this: that love has within it a redemptive power.
And there is a power there that eventually transforms
individuals.*

Just keep being friendly to that person.

Just keep loving them, and they can’t stand it too long.

Oh, they react in many ways in the beginning.

*They react with guilt feelings,
and sometimes they'll hate you a little more at that
transition period,
but just keep loving them.
And by the power of your love they will break down under
the load.
That's love, you see.
It is redemptive,
and this is why Jesus says love.
There's something about love
that builds up and is creative.
There is something about hate
that tears down and is destructive.
So love your enemies. [1]*

You see, what you win people *with* is what you win them *to*.

*"The imperative of a life of Christian witness
flows from the grace of God's initiative, God's "yes" to us."
(James Childs)*

In love, God says YES to you.

 You are good enough.

 You are a Child of God.

 God trusts you, loves you and will be
 with you forever and ever.

And in return, in love you and I say YES.

One day someone shared the treasure of the love of God,
and you said YES.

You said yes to an ambassador, a disciple, a follower of
Jesus.

 And "the heavens opened" and you were never the
same. (*Amen!*)

Someone reflected toward you the nature and nurture of

God, and you said YES
We are called to respond to the power of love with an
affirming YES,
 a YES that starts us on a journey of faith,
 one in which we live and grow in community,
 one that continues all our days.
We live into our YES to God,
 a YES that originated in the one who Created and
Creates.
Our YES to God is a direct response to God's YES to us.

Are you more likely to respond positively to someone you
trust?
 Someone who is trustworthy?
 Are you more apt to trust someone who trusts
you?

Trust is the foundation of healthy relationships.
Faith is relational.
Jesus said, "Follow me!"
 Trust me. Follow in my path.
 I will lead; you follow.
 God said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do a new
thing in Israel!"
 Trust me. I will lead; you follow.

What you win people *with* is what you win them *to*.
The love you share and the relationships you build are
cosmic.
Relationships plus God's energy and grace become
transcendent.
Ministry is about relationships,
 where we encounter the holy.
In Christ, our ministries of relationships and grace are
cosmic.

Jesus said, "You will see heaven opened."

God pointed out that Samuel's words would not fall to the ground.

We are to offer to the wider community what we have to give.

We can be this.

We can do this.

First Christian Church of Decatur manifests itself as Christ's church.

God's love is made real through First Christian Church of Decatur

as a community of disciples bound together

for worship, service, fellowship, and human transformation.

We seek daily to nurture and renew our members and friends

in the church and city of God.

Our 93 year history of doing and being the Good News is long and significant.

Our present engagement with the city and the Spirit is grounded in faith and hope.

Our future is as bright as the morning sun.

To this purpose we are bound together by a covenant of love.

We are intentionally structured for mission, witness, and the practice of the spiritual disciplines.

We are grateful that God graces the church

with positive, loving, and wise lay leaders.

We give thanks that our leaders are equipped for good works by gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Today we are blessed to install and commission new spiritual shepherds

to serve as Deacons, Elders, Church Board officers,

and Christian Education Director.

Those whose names we call and come forward
have been nominated and elected in 2014 by our
Church Board
and then affirmed and elected by the
congregation, with the help of God.

Whether you are to serve as a Church Board leader,
a community ministry chairperson,
a part of the Eldership or the Deaconate, or on
the church staff,
remember always to do so
with deep humility, kindness, integrity, and
faith.

Each of us will do well to remember the model of leadership
so graciously provided by our Lord and Savior, Jesus
Christ.

He was a servant first and foremost, and through his acts of
service he led.

He recognized that there are people who need the help you
can offer and provide.

There are lives and relationships and families in need of
mending.

Your gifts of the Spirit can mend and rebuild,
plant and reap for the glory of God.

So use your gifts for the greater good.

You have been called and chosen to serve in a leadership
position
because we have witnessed in you gifts of the Spirit.

We celebrate the uniqueness and quality of your gifts

with which we are all equipped
“for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”

Listen for the Word of God from 1 Corinthians 12: 4-7:

*“Now there are varieties of gifts,
but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services,
but the same Lord;
and there are varieties of activities,
but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the
common good.”*

People need your help.
God needs servant leaders.
You are needed;

 you have been called to love;
 respond with all your heart, mind, body and
soul: *“Here am I, send me.”*

Installation of Deacons

We now call forward our new Deacons for terms starting in February 2015.

If you were elected to start serving a term last year and were not present to be installed,

 please feel free to come forward as well!

*Bridgette Boker, Tom Gard, Larry Todd, Joonna Trapp,
and Chair William Garner and Vice Chair Pat Ollife.*

A deaconate has been established through which those

named as deacons

serve together in a shared responsibility
of congregational leadership and spiritual
shepherding.

In different ways, members of the Body of Christ share
responsibility

for the church's government, administration,
discipline,

instruction, worship, and pastoral care.

A deaconate has been established

to serve together in shared responsibilities
and to represent to the whole people of God
servant ministry in the church and
community.

Deacons serve alongside our eldership and pastor

as representatives of the reconciling work of Jesus
Christ

and the whole church in the present day.

We are blessed to have spiritually mature Christians

who are called to be responsible in the following
arenas of the faith:

--to teach and express the nature of the church and Christian
living in word and deed;

-- to assist in pastoral care, looking after the needs of the sick
and those in distress;

--to assist in worship services and to serve Holy Communion
and in the ministration of baptism;

--to share in positions of servant leadership on the Church
Board

and in the wider community.

In light of your calling and election to this responsibility,
do you reaffirm your faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of
God;
and do you promise to follow him and seek to bear his will all
the days of your life?
If so say, **“I do, with the help of God.”**

Do you commit yourself to the well-being of the church
and through God’s grace fulfill a servant ministry of care and
concern
for all the church members and friends?
If so say, **“I do, with the help of God.”**

Let us pray:

*Mighty and Merciful God, we thank you for your servants
who have been called into the church’s deaconate. These
faithful Christians are set apart for a special ministry of
service. Grant them courage and compassion for this and
every task you set before them. We covenant to support
them with our prayers, encouragement, and respect. We
celebrate with thanksgiving the shared ministry we
anticipate in 2010 and the years to come. All praises be to
you, God of grace and God of glory. In your name we pray,
Amen!*

Installation of Elders

We know call forward our new Elders for terms starting in
February 2015.

If you were elected to start serving a term last year and were
not present to be installed,

please feel free to come forward as well!

Co-Chairs Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert and Yolanda Lewellyn

& Rev. Lynn Trapp

An eldership has been established through which those named as elders

serve together in a shared responsibility
of congregational leadership and spiritual
shepherding.

Elders serve alongside our pastor as representatives of the reconciling work

of Jesus Christ and the whole church in the present day.

We are blessed to have spiritually mature Christians who are called to be responsible in the following arenas of the faith:

- to teach and express the nature of the church and Christian living in word and deed;
- to give Christ-centered counsel to individual members and friends and to the congregation as a whole;
- to represent with disciplined clarity the church's understanding of the significance of Holy Communion as you preside and pray at the Lord's Table;
- to share in positions of servant leadership on the Church Board and in the wider community.

In light of your calling and election to this responsibility, do you reaffirm your faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and do you promise to follow him and seek to bear his will all the days of your life?

If so say, **“I do, with the help of God.”**

Do you commit yourself to the well-being of the church and through God's grace fulfill a servant ministry of care and

concern
for all the church members and friends?
If so say, **“I do, with the help of God.”**

Let us pray:

Gracious and loving God, giver of every good and perfect gift, we thank you for raising up these elders in our midst to serve you and to shepherd the church. By your grace assist them in the building up of the church into the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. We covenant to support them with our prayers, encouragement, and respect. We celebrate with thanksgiving the shared ministry we anticipate in 2010 and the years to come. All praises be to you, God of grace and God of glory. In your name we pray, Amen!

Church Board Officers for 2015
New Nominating Ministry Members
New Endowment Trustee

We now call forward our Church Board officers for 2014.

<i>Moderator:</i>	<i>Elizabeth Hamm</i>
<i>Vice Moderator:</i>	<i>Doug Schuette</i>
<i>Secretary:</i>	<i>Cathy Keeler</i>
<i>Treasurer:</i>	<i>Laura Andrew</i>
<i>Asst Treasurer:</i>	<i>Steve Oliver</i>
<i>Nominating Ministry:</i>	<i>Tom Rosenberg and Doug Schuette</i>
<i>Endowment Trustee:</i>	<i>Helen Huyler</i>

Each of you will serve in leadership capacities
to build up the congregation,

to share your vision and sense of mission,
and to fulfill administrative
responsibilities
in the conduct of the church's
work.

We charge you to work together for the greater good.
We acknowledge that you will put in extra hours and long
nights;

that we will rely on your preparations and on your
guidance.

In advance we give thanks and covenant to hold you in our
prayers.

Do each of you accept the office to which you have been
called and elected,
and do you promise to fulfill its duties faithfully, the Lord
being your helper?

If so say, **“I do, with the help of God.”**

Congregation, please stand if you are able.

Will you pledge your eager support to the work of God in this
congregation

under the servant leadership of these good people
with whom you share ministry in the body of
Christ?

If so say, **“We do, with the help of God.”**

Will you pray God's blessings upon our Deaconate,
Eldership, and Church Board Officers as together we seek to
support one another in selfless service?

If so say, **“We do, with the help of God.”**

Let us pray:

Almighty God, we rejoice that you have called us to be your people in this sacred place and time. Thank you for these leaders you have called forth to serve. Help us to work as one to fulfill the mission you have set before us. Strengthen our resolve to love, unite us to serve, empower us to agree to disagree, and sustain us as we break bread together. May the vision and hope that emboldens us for ministry be forever grounded in your grace.

Eternal God, hear the vows we have made to one another this day.

*Strengthen us to carry out the work and play, the music and ministry you have set before us. Gather the varied fibers of our being and fashion us into a living tapestry of loving service – a living community in the world, witnessing to your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. And the whole people of God said, “**Amen!**”*

[1] Clayborne Carson and Peter Holloran, eds. *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration from the Great Sermons of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 1998).