Springfield Presbyterian Church

June 2nd, 2024

Called to Service

1. Reflection

This morning, since we have our installation and communion, I’ll

try and keep my sermon short and sweet and give you more of a reflection. Though we have a lot going on this morning, it is another one of my favorite worship services of church. We recognize in a tangible way, through the laying on of hands, that the call to serve as an elder or a leader is a divine call. It is a gift for the individual called – for the Spirit has landed upon them in a new way and they are given the opportunity to work for the will of God and the people in the church. It is also a gift to the congregation – for this work is not easy; yes, it can be joyous and laughter can roll, but when there’s a decision that needs to be made, we, as the church, are entrusting these good folx to do that work. The gifts abound.

Another important part for me this morning is that while you often see me at the pulpit or milling about the church doing one thing or another; I am not the church. You are. While I have been ordained to service and I moderate meetings, I have no vote – and that is good – for the work of Springfield should come from the people of Springfield. It also helps me sleep a little better at night, because I know that the weight of the entire church’s health and wellbeing and action does not land on me alone, but rather as this ‘great priesthood of believers’, we have the divine gift of community decision making within the framework of the Presbyterian USA.

1. Elder

This season, I’ll also be rolling up my sleeves with our Elders and

we will go back into Elder training. It’s important, as the entire congregation, for you to know what an elder is and what they do. At Springfield, our Elders have to fulfill three major positions, while big churches usually have three separate groups – they are the Elders, Deacons, and Trustees of the church. What that means in brief is that they are in charge of the ongoing administration of the church as Elders, as Deacons, they are called to tend and care for the congregation, and as Trustees, they are looking at the finances and their health.

The benefit of being an Elder at Springfield is that you have a big network for resources and help. While we feel congregational in nature, because we are such a close family church, we are also part of the Presbyterian Church (USA). For us, that means that we are one of the 60+ churches that are part of Baltimore Presbytery. Beyond the Presbytery, we have a Synod, and then a General Assembly which is the national church. This structure is integral and by working together, on a regional and national basis, more voices can come to the forefront as the Spirit moves.

1. The Scriptures

So, that’s my very very rough sketch of Eldership, but hopefully it

gives you all a better picture of what is happening here today. Our Scripture this morning also tells us a bit more about what an Elder does. From Timothy, we hear about rebuking people for sin – generally, I don’t encourage our elders to go and rebuke, so know that you are safe there. But there’s a larger picture for Timothy here – there’s a sense of community accountability. For instance, let two or three be present, particularly when there is an issue at hand, so that more minds and hearts can be involved and can see the Spirit at work. The passage also requires the elders to step up to the plate – to be pure, to be discerning, and to live their lives according to God’s wisdom found in the Word and their calling.

1. Fun

Now, while Eldership is a gift, a calling, and a responsibility, I

think my favorite part of our passage this morning is the last line, because I know it will get some laughter. It says, “No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.” Yes, Elders, I suppose that is a spiritual mandate that you can bring wine to our session meeting.

Elders, those who are in active service and those who have served before, continue your good work in discernment with the Spirit and lead with courage, energy, intelligence, and love. Congregation, as three individuals renew their call to service, may you love and encourage them, tell them what is on your heart and mind, and be present with them in prayer. May this gift of service, this call that comes from God alone, be a gift for us all as we lead and love from inside these sanctuary walls, and then out to the community and world God has so beautifully created. Alleluia and amen.