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Charge to New Officers
Energy, Intelligence, Imagination and Love

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Georgetown Presbyterian Church
1 Corinthians 15:12-22

Albert Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

As Christians, we have fundamentally been called to a life of service. Christ's life was spent in service to others – to the lame, the outcast, the poor, the grieving, the hopeless. Jesus came alongside these people and provided for them – healing, friendship, basic needs, comfort, faith, and hope. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must become a servant of all." As we conclude today our six week series on Paul's letter to the early church in Corinth, and as we ordain and install new officers to our own church – we are reminded of Paul's calls to service, Jesus' example of service, and our own inner calls to use our gifts and lives in service to God and our fellow man.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s line stands out: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, "What are you doing for others?" In the Christian life, you commit to living in service to others. This is the call that we all accept whether we are pastors, or elders or deacons, or Sunday school teachers, or ushers, or bottle washers. We are called to serve. And the church gives us a place to enact our service. The church becomes our testing ground or our 'innovation hub' as recent church sociologies have labeled it, the place where we have a chance to learn what it means to be servant and how to be a servant.

In 1910, President Roosevelt wrote these words, "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

I love these words from Roosevelt about committing ourselves to worthy causes, risking the vulnerabilities required of leaders, and accepting the work with its toils and tasks. As Christians and as members of Georgetown Presbyterian Church, we get to be in the arena – seeking to do the work of the church, striving to live out the gospel, and working to reflect God's love to others. In this work, we understand that we will fall short; that our church will not be perfect, and that there will always be more to do. But at least we are here – we have a place where we are needed, we

have an opportunity to grow in faith, and we have that chance to commit our lives to something bigger than ourselves.

I do not remember many things about the words that were said at my ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in 2006. But there is one line that stuck out for me and that I have heard as a chorus during the last 13 years of ministry. It comes from one of the ordination vows – in the vows you are asked what you believe and what you will do. There is one vow that is a descriptor for me of *how* you go about fulfilling your calling. The vow asks, ‘Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?’

These adjectives are the four legs on the chair of service to the church and to one another: energy, intelligence, imagination, and love. If you want to have an effective ministry and joyful service then these are your North Star words. As followers of Jesus Christ, a man who embodied these words, we strive to harmonize them in our own lives. For a ministry with intelligence but no imagination will miss the movements of the Holy Spirit. A ministry with imagination but no energy will falter. A ministry with energy, intelligence, and imagination but no love – will fail. It is a wonderful way to check your own status as a servant of the gospel - what are your strong suits, where can you stand to grow, where does God need more from you, how can others better rely upon you?

Do not tell Chris and Rachel this but it is one of the things I admire the most about their ministry to this church and beyond this church – these two pastors bring energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to work with them every single day of the week. They take this vow seriously whether they remember it or not. I try to remember this vow as well. I try to remember who is the inspiration behind this vow – it is because of our faith in God and our love for God’s Son that we strive to be this way – to live these lives – to embody these words – to serve in this fashion.

And so to our new officers, I wish you joy as you minister to this great congregation. May your service, bless your lives and enrich the lives of those around you for therein lies the place where greatness is found. To all who hear the call of Jesus and respond with grateful lives of service – may you find deep and lasting happiness as you give yourself to others in the name of the One who was and is energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

Amen.