

ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS DURING A PANDEMIC

OBSERVATION #1: IT WILL BE DIFFERENT THIS YEAR!

- This is a strange season – these rituals will not be the same as they have been in previous years. Go with it – the Holy Spirit is in charge!
- Health and safety are of utmost importance. Masks ... appropriate distancing ... only a few people speaking ...

OBSERVATION #2: DON'T BE AFRAID TO BE CREATIVE!

- Purchase for each officer to be ordained/installed an “Energy, Intelligence, Imagination, Love” T-Shirt - #WeAreTheChurch ...
- Consider making PCUSA masks for each person who is to be ordained and installed – for them to wear during the service of ordination/installation.
- However you're worshipping, the congregation could create a banner for the occasion ... ask people to trace and color their handprints on 8 ½ by 11 paper – set up a “drop-off” time for folks to bring their prints to the church. Ask one of your crafty people to glue the handprints onto a banner background – either fabric or butcher paper. Make sure the banner is visible when the service of ordination and installation is taking place.
- Ask someone in the congregation who sews to make simple stoles for those being ordained ... muslin works just fine (example). Set aside a couple of time blocks when the church building will be open by appointment for people to come and write their names or draw a symbol on the stoles. If you're worshipping in person or recording, the ordinands can receive their stoles before the service. If you're Zooming, make sure they're delivered prior to the worship service.

OBSERVATION #3: IF YOU'RE WORSHIPPING IN PERSON

- Invite those to be ordained/installed to stand 6 feet apart at the front of the sanctuary – wearing masks! – you might need to “mark” their spots.
- Ask the constitutional questions of both the officers and the congregation.
- If no one is to be ordained, continue with the prayer of installation.
- Anyone who is to be ordained may kneel in his/her “spot.” Invite a family member from that person's family to represent the congregation for the laying on of hands.

- Offer the prayer of ordination and installation followed by a brief charge from the liturgy. Welcome them to the ministry without shaking hands!

OBSERVATION #4: IF YOU'RE PRE-RECORDING WORSHIP

- You could do this as above – by asking the new officers to come into the sanctuary for a recording session ... plus several members of the Session to respond on behalf of the congregation. Again, distancing and masks are critical.

OBSERVATION #5: IF YOU WORSHIP VIA ZOOM, ETC.

- Use the traditional liturgy and ask the constitutional questions of those being ordained and installed.
- Make sure the congregation is unmuted for the answering of their questions.
- For the prayer of ordination/installation... invite any who are being ordained to kneel, if it's possible, and ask anyone worshipping with them (family members, most likely) to lay hands on them for the prayer – representing the congregation. Ask all worshippers who are ordained Ruling or Teaching Elders to raise their hands towards those being ordained.
- Offer a brief charge to the ordained and installed. Ask, in advance, for a couple of congregation members to be prepared to offer BRIEF words of welcome to the ministry.

OBSERVATION #6: KEEP THE CREATIVITY GOING

- When the time comes to worship in person once again, you might consider inviting those who were ordained to come forward for a time of prayer when the Ruling and Teaching Elders present could, indeed, lay on hands. Some may think this is “re-ordination” – I would frame the prayer as a prayer of confirmation and celebration of ordination.

OBSERVATION #7: ALL WILL BE WELL ..

- Remember ... the Holy Spirit is in charge and can work in all circumstances, even (perhaps especially) during a pandemic.

- For the Presbytery of Wabash Valley
- Carol McDonald -- 01/08/2021