

CHARGE TO KATIE LAUVE MOON AND TIM MOON  
CHARGE TO THE CANDIDATES  
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ST. CHARLES AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

I met Katie and Tim about 14 months ago and was impressed immediately by their smiles. They are, perhaps, the smiliest individuals at St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church. Before knowing anything about their sense of calling, their degrees and specializations, their interests or passions, I knew their smiles. I knew they were passionate and welcoming. I knew they listened intently when someone was talking. I knew they were sincere when giving their time and energy to a place or a cause or a friendship.

And those first impressions have led to a first year of getting to know all of the other parts of their personalities and stories. We're still at the beginning, but I know better now their giftedness, their vision, their big hearts, their sense of how big the kingdom of God is. The way their gifts and callings are lived out, however, may not always look like traditional ordained ministry in the church, and this is a good thing. Who and what we are blessing today is a practice in stretching our imaginations and stretching our awareness, and both of those acts are at the heart of who Katie and Tim are.

Tim and Katie, as I have thought of your ordinations today, my mind has returned to two non-traditional ministers as something of our patron saints for this day. First, I have looked to Dorothy Day who was born on this very weekend in 1897. Day is remembered for her involvement in the Catholic Worker movement and the attention she brought to matters of justice.

Day once wrote, "What we would like to do is change the world--make it a little simpler for people to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves as God intended them to do. And, by fighting for better conditions, by crying out unceasingly for the rights of the workers, the poor, of the destitute--the rights of the worthy and the unworthy poor, in other words--we can, to a certain extent, change the world; we can work for the oasis, the little cell of joy and peace in a harried world. We can throw our pebble in the pond and be confident that its ever widening circle will reach around the world. We repeat, there is nothing we can do but love, and, dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as our friend."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/119043.Dorothy\\_Day](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/119043.Dorothy_Day)

I hear that simplicity, confidence, and optimism in each of you. I hear in you the bold desire to change the world for good, to change the world to reflect what you understand God's desires for us all to be, and to love all whom you meet with great, big hearts.

But Dorothy Day also wrote, "We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it." Katie and Tim, I also see in you a call to make the church uncomfortable. When you keep systemic injustice before us, when you call us to learn and face the reality of our privilege, when you invite us to engage what we ignore, you make us uncomfortable. Please, dear friends, make us uncomfortable. When we in the Church are lulled to sleep by our traditions and familiar phrases, wake us up!

The second minister who serves as unofficial patron saint today is the beloved Fred Rogers. Known for generations as our television neighbor, Mister Rogers was creating a television program for children while also attending the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Child Development. Upon graduating from seminary, Rogers "was ordained as a Presbyterian minister in 1963 with a charge to continue his work with children and families through the mass media."<sup>2</sup> His call to change the world came through tv screens in family living rooms. He talked about death and anger and music and art and innovation and race and disability and love with three- and four- and five-year-olds and their eavesdropping parents. He trusted children to understand him. He trusted that they were capable of having complex conversations.

Rogers talked a lot about being kind, learning to forgive, being a good friend, giving your honest self to the world, and the importance of being a good neighbor. He also wrote and taught quite a bit beyond the television. He once said, "We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."<sup>3</sup> Tim and Katie, we know which kind of people you are. You are naming needs, listening to neighbors, inviting us to assess structures and systems that create such need in the first place, and calling us to join you in responding to the deepest hunger of the world. You are our heroes, when you live that out.

It was preacher and abolitionist Theodore Parker who began to write about the movement of the moral Universe back in the 1850s. He concluded, "The arc of moral the universe is long, but it bends toward justice." There are many who contribute to the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fredrogers.org/fred-rogers/bio/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/32106.Fred\\_Rogers?page=1](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/32106.Fred_Rogers?page=1)

slow but steady work of justice. Some are writers, poets, theologians, wordsmiths, even preachers. But the ones who move us all toward the just world that Jesus described as the kingdom of God, the scene described in the Isaiah passage we read earlier, are the ones who propel us forward by their doing.

You have asked us to mark your lives as ministers of doing. Tim, your call in the church is to love all people generously, calling out the good in every single person you encounter, while simultaneously disrupting our comfort with the realities of what is not right in our community and across the globe. Yours is a call to wake us up, inviting us to return to our best selves, to rely on each other as a community, to strive to live into our dream for what church is like at its best. As you grow into your ministerial identity, we will grow with you. As you fulfill your call to engage our community in all its facets, we will grow to engage that community alongside you. You model this way for us.

Katie, your career in truth telling is just beginning. Your deep love for your home in the church is tempered by your knowledge that the church universal does not often lead the way in equality, diversity, awareness, making space for those who are different or perceived as other. Plenty of others before you have made that assessment and given up on the church and disregarded the institution as behind-the-times, at best, or altogether irrelevant, at worst. But you, Katie, have hope for us all. You believe that the practices of welcoming, affirming, valuing, confessing, repenting, and transforming are alive and real and possible. You have experienced some of that here in this particular congregation, and you are committed to shining light in the dark places when we and other communities of faith revert to our unseeing ways. You are a seer and a truth-teller who reminds us of God's values.

At times, Tim and Katie, you will be tempted to think you must do this work alone. But you are being ordained today as a partner team. Your calling and ministry is collaborative. Resist the temptation to function in isolation. Instead, rely on each other and on a trusted community to support you, encourage you, and propel you forward when you get stuck.

When light does not shine and fruit does not grow and the stuckness lasts for a season, be vulnerable with us and with each other. We will sit with you. We will affirm you. We will remind you of that day in November when we whispered blessings over you and thanked God for your gifts. We will stay with you until you get unstuck.

As we have said already, part of your call is to "wake up" the church to issues and realities that are uncomfortable. That means you, too, must be aware, present, awake. Continue to cultivate practices every day that center you and return you to an

awareness of God's presence. Dorothy Day also said, "My strength returns to me with my cup of coffee and the reading of the psalms." You become busy, as we all do, you become overwhelmed by life's tasks, as we all do. Guard that centering, prayerful time. Be still. Listen. Remember that God is cultivating something in you that the world needs. You must honor and protect it with daily practices that help you grow.

Tim and Katie, you bravely and publicly stand with one foot in the world as it is and the other in the world as it should be. You hold a hand out to the rest of us who aren't as brave or who are too comfortable in the now to even consider a different future, and you invite us to take a step forward. Slowly, one step at a time, you invite us to move toward justice for all people. God has called you to this life's work, and you have said, "Yes." We have watched you, we have heard your stories, we have affirmed your call. You give us hope. You call us out. You invite us to join you in the work of your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger. We say "yes" alongside you. Thanks be to God.