

CHARGE TO THE PASTOR
Installation of Paul Phillips, Associate Pastor of Care
Valley Presbyterian Church, Green Valley, Arizona
February 8, 2015

Thank you Paul, for the honor of giving the 'Charge' to you at your installation as Associate Pastor of Care in this church.

As you can imagine, I have had quite a bit of interest in knowing who this congregation was going to call to the Pastoral Care position for this family of faith. So, I have been watching and listening. I have read everything that you have written in the Valley Voice, and the three sermons that you have preached (I was present for two of them)! We have sat down a couple of times so that we could get to know one another better. And what I have heard about your ministry from the people of God in this place warms my heart. I am assured that the heartbeat of your life in Jesus Christ matches the heartbeat of the mission and ministry of Valley Presbyterian Church.

As I have thought about this charge I've concluded that it's a bit like the old saying, "Preaching to the choir", you being the choir in this case. That said these offerings come from the heart.

I am to 'charge you' - urge you- to care for yourself in body, mind, soul, and spirit. So, yes, by all means, do just that! I don't know what your track record has been since you have been in the ministry, but I do know that it is very important to not mess with a day off. Of course there are occasions when ministerial responsibilities need attention. The two of us have talked about the honor and privilege it is to be a pastor, of how humbling it is to be invited into people's lives, to experience with them the joys, the heartbreaks, the brokenness, the grieving and growing experiences of their daily journey. Priceless may be the best word, to bring the love and grace and mercy of our Lord to those who hunger for God's presence. It is often a 24/7 endeavor. All the more reason, Paul, to determine to honor your need to be refreshed, to have a change-of-pace, to be renewed, to take a day off. Go on a hike, play canasta, go 'birding' in Madera Canyon, wash the car, go back to Madera Canyon, go to a movie with a friend--- just make sure you treasure your day off. Got it? Really?

Visiting in homes and offices through the years, I always noticed what people have on display. So, of course, I talked with you about the stories of your heart represented by items in your office. Among them there is a vase with a butterfly on it, brought back from your ministry trip to help in a poor village in Nicaragua;

and a lithograph of one of your hero's, Abraham Lincoln, whom you admire for his persevering faith. In different ways they are all important to you, they warm your heart and keep your faith burning bright.

As I listened to you, and looked around your room, the word 'perseverance' stayed with me. In your words, perseverance has been a strong theme of your life, Paul. In a Valley Voice article you wrote that from your youth you journeyed through physical hardships and the accompanying rejection from others. You persevered, and you realized early on, that Jesus was with you, that Jesus understands.

The treasure in your office that really caught my attention is this cross with rays of sunlight coming from behind it (HOLD UP), which you had an artist make for you. The cross symbolizes Jesus' perseverance through so much of hardship, being misunderstood and rejected, to finally give his life on the cross, for you, for us. In your words, quoting Romans 5, perseverance in faith gives us hope. And that's where the light comes in. It is the light of hope in Jesus.

I quote your words again, from the Valley Voice: "One of my goals here at VPC is to continue to always *listen first*. Another goal...is to have an *accepting relationship* with each and every one of you here. *I believe my call as a pastor is to witness to God's unbounding grace and love.*" Your words and your hope, strengthened by the perseverance, the light, and the love that is in Jesus Christ.

I charge and encourage you, Paul Phillips, Pastor of Care to the pastors, staff, and people of Valley Presbyterian Church: continue to persevere, to grow into Christ through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Amen, and so be it, as you serve your Lord and his people.