

April 27, 2008; Installation of Ron Gilmer  
Charge to the New Minister by Sandy Winter

### Introduction

Dear UPC, dear congregation, dear people gathered here today:  
Members of Presbytery, friends and family of Ron Gilmer,  
and most especially Ron.

I have so waited for this day to come and I know I'm not the only one!  
but I didn't expect that I would be here.

I am truly honored that Ron asked me to participate.

And it is with deep joy that I offer this charge.

### Pearl of Great Value

This church been described in many ways.

UPC's founding pastor, Bob Keever, likes to say that  
"UPC is the biggest little church in the south."

I think of you as "the little church with a big heart;"

or often I refer to you as an "island of light."

At times others have used less favorable phrases ☺

As I've thought about giving this charge, a tiny 2-verse parable kept coming to  
my mind, the parable of the "pearl of great value"... (maybe "pearl of great value"  
is a good description of UPC.)

Here's the parable:

*The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls: on finding one  
pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

(Matthew 13:45,46)

The parable is describing the Kingdom,

But when a congregation and a pastor find each other,

it ought to be like finding a pearl of great value.

You each recognize the great value of the other

and you each know that you are willing to take a risk to commit to the other.

Ron, I charge you to cherish UPC as a 'pearl of great value.'

.....That said, even a great pearl sometimes needs polishing!

### Anne LaMotte

So I want to tell you something that I heard Anne LaMott say at my SFTS  
commencement. (They've heard this before!)

LaMotte said:

"Remember that God loves you just the way you are! .....

and God loves you far too much to let you stay that way."

Ron, I know you are not God, but I encourage you, no I charge you,  
to be Godlike in loving this church and these people "just the way they are"  
and in loving them far too much to let them stay that way."

When with the guidance of the holy spirit and in your wisdom you sense it is time for growth, newness, (yes) CHANGE; remember to love the people and the church far too much to let them stay the way they are!

### **Passing the Torch**

When a former pastor gives a charge, it is also a *passing of the torch*.

I've been gone for 22 months now.

It's hard to believe that I have not been your pastor for 22 months.

And that was fine ... *well, almost fine*.

Except when it was 11am Sunday morning -- time for worship...

or when I knew you were troubled or hurting.

Sometimes I would catch my breath

and I would have this sense that I was supposed to be here,

walking with you (as I had for those 9 years.)

Happily, I haven't had that sense recently.

And it's because you have a wonderful very-newly-installed pastor.

(I know that your interim pastor, was 'an interim from Heaven!

But that's not the same as having your own called pastor.)

I haven't quit loving you and I won't do that.

And Ron and I both agree that you can love him and me!

And so dear people, in passing the torch

I entrust you wholeheartedly, without reservation,

to The Rev. Dr. Brice Ronald Gilmer II, your new minister

....Who will offer you wisdom and strength and compassion,

....Who will nurture and challenge you;

....Who will spend time with you and listen to you and learn from you,

....Who will walk with you in the dark valleys and on the mountaintops  
and on all those long paths in between.

...Who will cherish you as a pearl of great value!

*Ron,*

*Receive this people, with all of the fullness of who you were created to be..*

*Amen.*