

Charge to Congregation

It is a privilege and joy to address the Congregation of First Presbyterian Church in New Canaan, (*all others are welcome to listen in as well*).

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, by calling the Rev. Dr. Scott Herr you have affirmed that he is indeed the person that God has called to be your pastor.

Therefore, I charge you to be the church and to let Scott be your pastor.

You have welcomed him beautifully. Now - invite and welcome him into your lives. Allow him to be a witness to God's presence in your life and your life together. Welcome, all of who he is, his gifts, his graces, even his sense of humor, his passion for justice, his humanity, his love for Jesus, for you, and Christ's church.

Trusting that God knows what God is doing.

I charge you to open yourselves fully to Pastor Scott's leadership and to allow yourselves to become the church that the Holy Spirit is leading you to be.

God is already at work! God has called and placed you together in this place, at this moment – for a reason – Continue to delight in discovering the plans God has for you – and for a future with hope. Hope not only for you and for your community, but for the world that God so loves!

I charge you to pray for Scott. Every day.

Pray for his beloved and partner Kim, pray for their family, and for your family of faith. Every day.

Scott and Kim have moved to a new and strange country, returning to a home they've never seen before.

And they are new empty nesters. This is a lot of change.

In Ephesians, Chapter 4, we read that a pastor is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ...”

So, saints, expect Scott to preach well, with deep attention to Scripture, to ancient, historical, and current scholarship. Expect him to hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other! Join him in exegeting your community, your history, and God's call and claim on your lives.

Now as you envision, plan, and carry out plans for mission and ministry, some things will work, others will not. If you risk for the sake of the Gospel and fail, I charge you to fail better the next time by paying attention to what God teaches and reveals to you, by placing your trust in Christ alone, and by risking again.

I further charge you to let Scott know how God is using him in your life. Be specific and authentic. Support him as your pastor, in every meaning of that word.

Be full, and real, and honest in your support. Remind him that it is okay to be less than perfect, that there will always be work to be done; that you will do it with him.

Scott Herr is a pastor who notices. As he notices, sees, invites, makes connections, and gives permission for you to live into your calling, I charge you to celebrate and serve Christ with all of who you are. And, as your years with *Scott* unfold, expect to change.

The work of a pastor is...a lot. It is slow, consuming a lot of time each week, every day. Apart from Worship, visits, meetings, and classes, the fullness of Scott's work will be invisible to you, witnessed only by God. (ok, perhaps God and Kim)!

I don't know the precise ratio of Pastor to Congregants at First Pres. But I am guessing that there will always be many more of you than there are of Scott. Nevertheless, I assure you that you will never be far from his heart and mind and you will always be in his prayers.

Warning: this next charge might be a bit of a challenge:

I charge you to help Scott set and maintain healthy work boundaries. All pastors need time away with their families as well as alone time with God. Respect his days off and his time away. It is a challenge because Scott loves doing the work of ministry and may need encouragement for the being of ministry.

Scott's ministry flows directly from his relationship with Jesus Christ. He loves God with his whole heart in Worship. Devotion. And Study.

Scott has been and is a pilgrim on the Camino. A pilgrim on the Way. Let him be a companion to you as you walk together in the name and in the Way of Jesus and as First Pres New Canaan is a pilgrim house for all peoples.

Finally, I invite you to imagine ... the hundreds of members of the American Church in Paris. We are in a period of confinement and not able to worship in the sanctuary at present. But for right now, imagine hundreds seated in pews, or on zoom, turning to greet you with the peace of Christ, sending you forth into your season of mission and ministry with Pastor Scott.

ACP's theme and memory verse this year is from the book of the prophet Jeremiah 29:11, a word to a people in exile:

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans for your welfare and not for harm. To give you a future with hope.

May God bless you this day as YOU are installed in this partnership, this covenant, this call, this hope, with your new pastor. Thanks be to God!