

## **Devotion, First Week after Epiphany , 2023**

### **Rev. Jeanne Simpson**

It had been a while since Philadelphia had ordained a new, first-time elder. This past Sunday we ordained Fran Youngblood, complete with the laying on of hands. I asked all who had ever been ordained an elder to come forward for this holy moment in an ordination service, and it was a moving time to see all these faithful servants of the church come forward to do that. I don't know how Fran felt, but when I was ordained as an Elder, the weight of those hands felt so heavy.

Along with the laying on of hands, the newly elected elders also answered a number of installation questions – and they're not for the timid. They were asked to affirm their trust in Christ, as well as acceptance of the authority of the scriptures and the tenets of the reformed faith. They agreed to be governed by the polity of the church and to serve the members of the church with energy and love. We have a saying in the PCUSA: once an elder, always an elder. It's like being ordained as a minister. Those vows are lifelong – a ruling elder makes a commitment, just like someone does at baptism, to follow a series of beliefs and purpose throughout a life of membership in the church.

Thanks to all of you who have been ordained and served our church with such dedication. The members of this congregation count on the session to do things “decently and in order” and to look after our assets and congregational wellbeing. They make sure worship is carried out according to the guidelines of the Book of Order, they take care of the church property, they oversee the church's finances and make sure we spend your money wisely, they oversee the administration of church business and personnel, they oversee Sunday School and other church programs, and they promote and oversee outreach efforts in the community. Big shoes to fill – and your elders fill them well.

If you have never served as an elder, I ask you to start thinking about that. If you aren't ready to make that commitment, offer to serve on one of our committees. All the work the church does is summarized on the back of the bulletin – pick something to get engaged in and help us carry out the work of Philadelphia. We're shortly going to begin planning for the 2025 Homecoming celebration – the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this church. It will be an exciting time as we remember where we've been and look forward to where we are going.

In the meantime, congratulate Eliot Lawrence, Fred Rohrbach, and Fran Youngblood as they begin a new two year term as elders, and Greg Durden, Jennifer Rohrbach, and Mary Smith as they continue their term for another year. If you have concerns, let them know. We are all here to serve.

*Jeanne*