

CHARGE TO JOHN AND DAN

by The Rev. Tami Seidel

A New Year. New calls to ministry. New pastors for the congregation. A New model of ministry for everyone involved. Wow! Happy New Beginning for all of you!

So how about some new clothes to go with your new call and your new life together? Dan and John, my charge to you comes from Paul's letter to the Colossians, the third chapter. I'll follow suit (no pun intended) and read from The Message:

¹² So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. ¹³ Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. ¹⁴ And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. ¹⁶ Let the Word of Christ - the Message - have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! ¹⁷ Let every detail in your lives - words, actions, whatever - be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

Now these are words that I usually like to share with couples who are getting married, and there are some similarities to what you two are doing as co-pastors. I mean let's face it, the two of you are probably going to spend as much, if not more, time working together as you spend with your respective spouses. And I have to confess that ever since the two of you met with Committee on Ministry for your clearance interview, I've been getting your names mixed up – John and Dan, Jan and Don. God help me if you really do start dressing alike.

But I think this comparison speaks to a fundamental truth about the relationship you are beginning: just like a marriage, this co-pastorate both of you have envisioned is essentially a partnership of two uniquely created and gifted servants of God. In the coming weeks, months and years, the two of you will be learning to work together and to live together in this new vocational home. What I think is so exciting about this partnership, however, is that it's not just about the two of you. Both of you are also partnering with the Session and the whole congregation, who are also created and gifted by God, to create a congregational home in which all are welcomed and encouraged to be the disciples God is calling them to be.

For such a partnership to survive and thrive, you've got to have the right clothes. Forget the latest trends and big-name designers. Paul tells you what really need to wear to work this partnership well – compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline, forgiveness, gratitude, common sense, and, of course, love. Love for yourselves, love for each other, love for God and for God's church here in Rye. These are the wardrobe essentials that will keep you focused on what's really important in this partnership, reflecting God's values and God's ways of living and working together for the good of our earthly home.

Before I close, I want to add just one more fashion tip. Two nights ago, as I was reading the 146 pages of the D.Min. thesis you recommended from your research into co-pastorates, one other wardrobe essential stood out – communicate, communicate, communicate. We all know that communication is key for any partnership to work, but it is even more important at the beginning of something new. So put on the garment of gab and communicate. Chat and check-in with each other, speak with the Session, deliberate with the Deacons, converse with the congregation, publicize everything in your publications, connect through social media, and provide as many opportunities as possible for open dialogue and discussion, listening, and learning about this new partnership and the vision and mission God has set before you. In even the healthiest of relationships and homes, there are misunderstandings and conflicts, but open, honest communication, both talking and listening, will go a long way toward strengthening your ministry and this household of faith.

So there you have them – the new clothes for your new call, the essential wardrobe for your way forward together as co-pastors and congregation. The beauty of the clothes in this wardrobe is that everything matches, you cannot outgrow them, and they will never go out of style. Wear them well, in worship, in committee meetings, at social events, on mission trips. As co-pastors, model them for the congregation and the community, and invite others to try them on too. Make faith fashionable and pretty soon, Rye Presbyterian Church will not be known for its image so much as for the quality of community you create together as you love God and serve your neighbors and the world.