

Laying On Of Hands and Installation Prayer
Rev. Richard M. Fewkes
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I am reminded of the recent television ad for the Verizon Wireless network cell phone. The would be caller opens his cell phone and lo and behold a vast network of workers and helpers are revealed before him, hundreds and thousands of embodied souls ready to do his bidding, filling streets and buildings and hillsides as far as the eye can see. And they follow him wherever and whenever he is ready to make a call.

Edmund, whenever you are moved to act upon and follow your call to ministry, there is a vast network of like-minded souls supporting you, walking with you, moving with you, acting with you, as you extend your hand in the being and doing of the work of ministry. It is we might say a new Horizon Wireless network of family and friends from times past and present, of fellow ministers of every persuasion, of members and parishioners of this Meeting House of the Spirit, and of all churches. It is not possible to do the work of ministry all by your lonesome, though it may feel that way sometimes. Even when we are alone we do not act alone. The Network of Ministry continues to act in us and through us in all that we do and are. It is an unbroken connection across time and space.

To symbolize this fact I now invite members of Edmund's family to come forward and lay their hands upon him, followed by clergy of all denominations, and by all members and friends and guests of the UU Meeting House in Chatham, until we are all connected to one another, hand to hand to shoulder to hand. And then I will offer an Installation Prayer.

O Thou who art beyond all names, the ultimate power and mystery of being in all things, we call upon your creative life giving spirit for a blessing on this special day in the life of Edmund Heyward Robinson, his installation as minister of the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House of Chatham. May his ministry here, already begun, continue to grow and flourish with blossoms of love and joy and peace for all who grace the doors of this church and beyond.

Your servant, Edmund, has been deemed worthy by the members of this church to bear the name and title of Minister of this congregation and by extension the larger community of town and nation and world of which we are all a part. We pray that he may ever carry the privileges of this office with the honor, pride and dignity it deserves. May he be a source of wisdom, hope and compassion to people of all ages, and a model of faith seeking understanding and a better way of life for all humanity wherever his ministry takes him.

Let your spirit of Logos and Reason be wed within him to the deeper spirit of Sophia and Wisdom. Make him wise with the unfeigned wisdom of the child and the old who have no one to impress and are fully and unashamedly themselves.

May he always remember that to understand all mysteries and to gather all knowledge is to gain nothing without your Universal Spirit of Love and Agape.

We are thankful for Edmund's native gifts and talents and years of experience as a lay leader in his church and community in Charleston, South Carolina, and in his former professional life as a lawyer of competence and renown. May his life experience and education enrich our Unitarian Universalist heritage even as he himself is broadened and deepened by the spirit of Unitarian Universalism. May his ministry ever be one that bridges cultures and traditions and peoples and unites them in that which is both universally human and divine.

May your servant, Edmund, find strength and courage for ministry welling up from the depths when his talents and resources are taxed beyond their limits--as they will be--and he wonders where he's going to find the time to do the things that must be done, find the words that must be spoken, offer the comfort that must be given. In such times let him know the miracle and mystery of time redeemed by the eternal breaking into the temporal, of the spirit holy and creative speaking through fumbling words and stammering speech, and of the comfort that comes to those who would be instruments of thy love brought near.

May the people of this church come to realize that they do more than install a minister this day. As they call a man to be their minister they call themselves to be partners with him in the shared ministry of the priesthood and prophethood of all believers as they respond to the demands of conscience and compassion upon their lives.

Because truth and love reigns in this place, has a human face, has crafted out of stone and wood and altar this holy space, we lay our hands upon our brother and colleague, Edmund Heyward Robinson, and declare him to be a minister fit for the running of this race.

From hand to hand the greeting flows,
From eye to eye the signals run,
From heart to heart the bright hope glows;
The seekers of the light are one.

It is accomplished.

So be it. Amen.