

*Charge to Georgetown Presbyterian Church ~ November 7,*

As a pastor in the presbytery, with several good friends in this church, to some degree, I know you. Hooray for you on a joyful day! And since I do know that there are many lawyers in this church, in the spirit of full disclosure, I am here primarily because I know your pastor very well. A dear friend, and my running partner, from Princeton Seminary. Hooray for you, Camille. I couldn't be more honored to be a part of this celebration of where God is calling you to go together.

There are many things I know about Camille, who may be getting nervous as this moment because of that. One that I will share... is that Camille is an asset on a long run. After running with her for 3 years, I noticed a phenomenon. Somehow – while running with her – I didn't seem to notice the huge hills as much as when I'd run by myself. She had a knack of asking me thoughtful probing questions at the bottom of the hill, and I'd be so excited to talk on and on about the answer that we'd get to the top right as my story (and supply of oxygen) was done. She smirked and said that it was no accident.

For you, Georgetown, trust me when I say, she's a good person to have by your side on any steep climb – in life and in ministry. She will draw out of you great strength by listening to your stories and that is what will take you places that might have seemed unthinkable before. You'll find that it won't need to be Camille and it couldn't be Camille that gets you to the top of the hill -- but it will be the way she can help you gain strength from your stories, and mostly from God's stories, that will push you forward.

Besides being a great runner, you probably do know by now that Camille is hilarious – no pressure. She works in irony like a potter works in clay, and her dry sense of humor has a way of sneaking up on you... not unlike the parking police in Georgetown. Her wit also has a way of disarming and bringing people together. Camille is a dyed in the wool Minnesotan, who could go toe to toe with Garrison Keillor in her stories of church and family and the land of 10,000 lakes, but, she has lived in Tennessee and New Jersey, South Africa and London, so she knows how to adapt and translate between different groups of people better than just about anyone I've ever known. She can play blocks with preschoolers, then have tea with octogenarians. And I imagine, given her experiences in London and in the church of Scotland, that she'll be able to bring with her fresh perspectives on this country and this church, while satisfying our Anglo-phile cravings by saying "Presbytry" once and a while.

But don't get the impression from her humor, her age, or her travels that she is flippant. Quite the opposite: She listens without flinching. She digs deep. She stands firm. She speaks out. As I witnessed Camille challenge Princeton Seminary to respond actively to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, talk about an uphill climb in a famously heady place, I saw her work within institutions to challenge without chastising, to cut through red tape without drawing blood, to lead people into change that made them feel like they are part of something good rather than on the outs to someone else's agenda.

So this is where I speak directly to you, Georgetown Presbyterian. There are things that Camille is not, and that no pastor could or should be. She is not, nor

should she be, the smiling shop-keeper at a store that deals in fine spiritual goods in Georgetown, meeting the needs of everyone who drops by. She is here to equip and to guide, to challenge and to teach. She is here to listen to the voice of God even more than the competing voices of a congregation... the voice of God heard even *within* the competing voices of a congregation. I have heard that within this church there are artists and musicians, justice lovers and teachers of the faith, lawyers who shape policies for the common good, children and young adults and parents and seniors, foodies and scholars, new members who can't find the bathroom and old time members whose family members are pictured along the hallways, and plenty of visitors. If she doesn't have all the things you were looking for in a church, perhaps someone within the church does. Maybe it's you? Camille's job, as we in the Reformed tradition believe, is not to be the only minister, but to equip all the ministers here for the work of discipleship. So, consider this an installation for you all.

So that means, she is *not* the embodiment of your future nor a statement about your past, nor is she the face you give to the larger community. That is your role. You are your future and you are your past, and you are the face that the community will see. Though she's a heck of a water-skier, thanks to time with her family near all those Minnesota lakes, she doesn't walk on water. She will need your grace, and she will dole it out liberally to you as well. And this is good news, she is more of a marathoner than a sprinter.

God has great plans for you all together. As you run this race. And it sounds

Paul's words to the competing voices within the church at Corinth, "Run in such a way as to get the prize." And it sounds like the words to the Hebrews, so fitting on All Saints Sunday, "*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.*"

May it be so.