



Installation of Officers | Celebration of Church Leaders

CULTURAL RESOURCES

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I. The Historical Section

Church officers and church leaders strive to live according to the Spirit as Christ representatives here on earth in order to serve in a manner that is holy and pleasing to God. Only when we allow the Spirit to produce the fruit of the Spirit in and through us are we provided the motivational energy needed to serve God.

We commend those being installed and celebrated as church officers/and leaders today. It is humbling because it is not a position that one chooses for him or herself. We are reminded of the sacredness of this moment and that the call to serve is a call from Almighty God. As we contemplate the significance of this moment, we are reminded of the ministry of our Lord who served the marginalized in society. In our contemplation, let us never forget about the less fortunate and those who have no power or influence. Let us never forget about the struggling

children and persons with disabilities. Let us never forget about LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender) people or other groups that are often forgotten about and overlooked.

Jesus did not forget about anyone. He served those he came into contact with regardless of their situations. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus reminds us, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” Too often we stay in our comfort zones, often ignoring the gifts that God has placed in us to meet the needs of those he has placed in our path to serve. Today, we happily celebrate those who have not ignored their gifts and have instead accepted the call to serve others.

II. Poems for Leaders and Church Officers

These Are They

These are they who give of their time and talent without complaining
These are they who take the heat when others shun it
These are they who attend the meetings, make the plans, and find the resources
These are they who stay in prayer, stay in action and stay committed
These are they who are undaunted by complaints and whose heads are unbowed by a lack of help
These are they who work without pay and often little appreciation
These are they who week in and week out just serve to make a difference
These are they who lead children, young adults, and older adults
These are they for whom we thank God.¹

Lord, Let Me Be a Blessing

Lord, mold my life so You can use it
to bless someone this day,
For You, dear Lord, are the potter
and I am but the clay...²

III. Songs That Speak to the Moment

As Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit, he served the least, the left-out, and the locked-out. Leaders would do well to let the Spirit do his perfect work in them so that they will serve as Christ served. The words of “Spirit of the Living God” make clear what posture is needed to be a servant leader. The hymn “I Am Thine” further expounds upon the servant posture needed by leaders. “Anointing” makes clear the need for the Spirit for all who would lead and serve in the Church.

Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall fresh on me.
Spirit of the Living God,

Fall fresh on me.

Break me, melt me,
mold me, fill me.
Spirit of the Living God,
fall fresh on me.³

I Am Thine

I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice,
And it told Thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith,
And be closer drawn to Thee.

Refrain: Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
To the cross where Thou hast died;
Draw me nearer, nearer, nearer, blessed Lord,
To Thy precious, bleeding side.

Consecrate me now to Thy service, Lord,
By the pow'r of grace divine;
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope,
And my will be lost in Thine.
O, the pure delight of a single hour
That before Thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God,
I commune as friend with friend!

There are depths of love that I yet may know
Till I cross the narrow sea;
There are heights of joy that I may not reach
Till I rest in peace with Thee.⁴

Anointing

Anointing fall on me, Anointing fall on me.
Let the power of the Holy Ghost fall on me.
Anointing fall on me.⁵

IV. Cultural Response to Significant Aspects of the Text

Our Scripture for today says in verse 19: “Do not quench the Spirit.” This is a fitting translation because fire is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Webster dictionary defines the word “quench” as meaning to put out or extinguish; to suppress or squelch or to cool by thrusting in water. When the word “quench” is used in Scripture, it is speaking of suppressing a fire. Christian leaders

ought to be on fire for God as they serve. Fire lights the way and it also gives warmth. Indeed, we are to serve as if we have fire shut up in our bones—Holy Ghost fire.

We love celebrations at my church. We perform the Installation of Officers via candlelight. This is a big event, as it is the first celebratory service offered in the New Year. It is one of the few services that are still celebrated in the afternoon. There is an excitement in the air as we present ourselves to God to be used in his service. All leaders gather with a candle in hand, a prayer in their hearts, and a renewed zeal to serve the people of God. We have a tremendous task ahead and must work together in the Spirit of cooperation. This reminds me of a song that I learned in grade school entitled “No Man Is an Island”:

No man is an island,
No man stands alone,
Each man’s joy is joy to me,
Each man’s grief is my own.⁶

Paul says, “Do not quench the Spirit;” but we also should not grieve the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). We grieve the Holy Spirit when we refuse to follow his leading. He gives us our marching orders, prompting us what to do and what not to do, and he even gave us a word for those who are not going to cooperate in the body of Christ. What do you do then? Paul tells us to admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, and help the weak. Those in the text referred to as the idlers, the fainthearted, and the weak can be likened to the marginalized. Everybody in the church is not going to pull his or her weight. Some need help. We must be filled with the Spirit by letting the word of Christ dwell in us (Colossians 3:16) and having the patience to bring people along. As church leaders, do not let it be said of you that you grieved or quenched the Spirit. The spirit will give you patience to serve the fainthearted, to minister to the idlers, and to help the weak.

V. Stories and Illustrations

Do not take a position of leadership in a church unless you are prepared to be honest and loving. Leadership is a privilege, and with privilege comes responsibility. God holds leaders doubly responsible because we who lead are in a position where we can either draw people toward Christ or drive them away from him. This is illustrated in the life of the famous author Mark Twain.

Church leaders were largely to blame for his becoming hostile to the Bible and the Christian faith. As he grew up, he knew elders and deacons who owned slaves and abused them. He heard men using foul language and saw them practice dishonesty during the week after speaking piously in church on Sunday. He listened to ministers use the Bible to justify slavery. Although he saw genuine love for the Lord Jesus in some people, including his mother and his wife, he was so disturbed by the bad teaching and poor example of church leaders that he became bitter toward the things of God.⁷

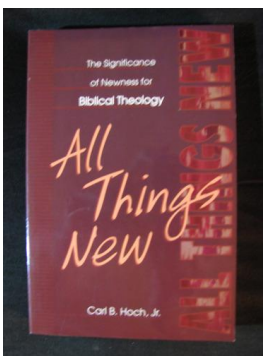
Indeed, it is a privilege to be a youth leader, to lead children, to be an elder, to be a deacon, to be a Sunday school teacher, to be a Bible study leader, or to lead in any God-allowed capacity. But it is also an awesome responsibility. Let's make sure we attract people to the Savior rather than turn them away.

VI. Making It a Memorable Learning Moment

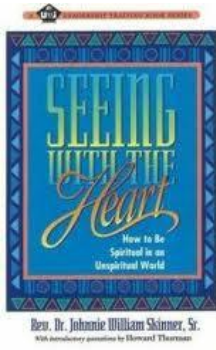
In our positions of leadership, we can become vulnerable. We will be hurt, disappointed, confused, defeated, but never driven to total despair, never forsaken, never destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8-11). We must keep on keeping on. Let us practice ministry to one another, using some of what are sometimes called the "one another" Scriptures:

"Be at peace with each other."	(Mark 9:50)
"Wash one another's feet."	(John 13:14)
"Love one another"	(John 15:17)
"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."	(Romans 12:10)
"Honor one another above yourselves."	(Romans 12:10)
"Live in harmony with one another."	(Romans 12:16)
"Love one another."	(Romans 13:8)
"Stop passing judgment on one another."	(Romans 14:13)
"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you."	(Romans 15:7)
"Instruct one another."	(Romans 15:14)
"Greet one another with a holy kiss."	(Romans 16:16)
"When you come together to eat, wait for each other."	(1 Corinthians 11:33)
"Have equal concern for each other."	(1 Corinthians 12:25)
"Greet one another with a holy kiss."	(1 Corinthians 16:20)
"Greet one another with a holy kiss."	(2 Corinthians 13:12)
"Serve one another in love."	(Galatians 5:13)
"Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."	(Galatians 5:26)
"Carry each other's burdens."	(Galatians 6:2)
"Be patient, bearing with one another in love."	(Ephesians 4:2)
"Be kind and compassionate to one another."	(Ephesians 4:32)

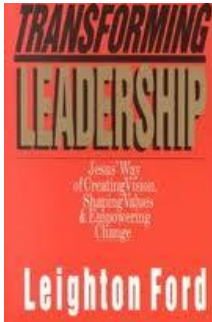
VII. Books for Installation of Officers/Celebration of Church Leaders Day



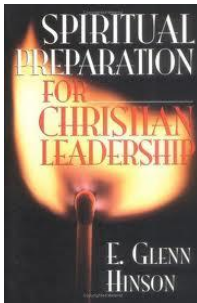
Hoch, Carl B. Jr. All Things New. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995.



Skinner, William Johnnie, Jr. Seeing with the Heart: How to Be Spiritual in an Unspiritual World. Chicago, IL: Urban Ministries, Inc., 1996.



Ford, Leighton. Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values & Empowering Change. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1991.



Hinson, E. Glenn. Spiritual Preparation for Christian Leadership. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1999.

Notes

1. "These Are They." Author unknown.
2. Brady, Sherry. "Lord, Let Me Be a Blessing." Online location: <http://sherrysheartbeats.homestead.com/LordLetMeBeABlessing.html>
3. Iverson, Daniel. "Spirit of the Living God." African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #320
4. Crosby, Fanny J. "I Am Thine." African American Heritage Hymnal. #387
5. Thomas, Donn J. "Anointing." African American Heritage Hymnal. #318

6. Online location: <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/no-man-is-an-island-lyrics-joan-baez/5adcd449cf2a36f948256c9c0022dbaa>

7. Online location: <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/l/leadership.htm>