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INSTALLATION CELEBRATION SERVICE

By: Glenn Mosley

An installation can be very meaningful. If done well, it will help lots of people to get an "emotional-spiritual" connection with the ministerial family and vice versa light years ahead of what it takes without one.

It is appropriate to wait a few months (3 to 5 maximum). That time is a little like a courtship and then the installation like a wedding or holy union ceremony.

I use the bi-unial candle (two half candles which are lighted early in the ceremony, after a brief "relationship lesson") including how important it is for the congregation to give you and yours prayer support just as you will do for them. I also mention the phenomenon of human nature to elect a person to a position of leadership and then to try to find ways to bring them down from that leadership, thereby undermining one's own benefit. (Presidents of the U.S., and other countries are examples). One might read Jim Freeman's "What is it to be a Minister" and point out before I do that everyone who attends there is also a minister (meaning to serve). Then I go on to say this leader is the one this congregation has chosen to facilitate mutual learning experiences. This (the minister) is the person who will support you when a friend or family member is dying, when you may become ill, and who will christen your children and grandchildren. S/he will perform your children's wedding ceremony, or perhaps yours. S/he will facilitate celebration for the life of your loved ones who die. S/he will teach and you will teach him/her. You are in this experience of ministry for your mutual spiritual growth and to share the Unity message with others.

I have the minister and spouse (or partner) on the platform standing on one side of the candle, (facing your congregation). Your Board President and another board member on the other side (also facing the congregation).

To the minister and spouse/partner (and children when they live in the home), I ask, "Do you take this congregation of people to be your spiritual community, to support in prayer and in spirit as you will be supported in prayer and in spirit and do you promise to love as you will be loved? If so, please respond by saying, "We do".

To the Board members (if they would like all of them could be there with the President and Vice President), holding hands and facing the congregation. The last one in line can, by prior arrangement, be holding the hand of someone in the front row (everybody connected through holding hands). To complete the circle, someone on the other end of the first row can curl around to come up and hold hand of spouse or partner). In any case, if only two Board members are there, the 2nd one should be holding a hand of front

row person (have front row curl around so that an end person is available to hold VP's hand by going on platform if necessary.)

Then I direct a question to the board and congregation: "Do you, the Board of Trustees, and congregation of Unity church take this family to be your ministerial family? Do you promise to love as you will be loved, to pray for as you will be prayed for, and to spiritually support as you will be spiritually supported? (Here I give a brief explanation of the Scripture: Exodus 17:8-12 and liken the support of the minister by the members of the congregation to that of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands and the support of individuals in the congregation being upheld by the ministerial family.) Then to the congregation, "If you so promise to uphold in all ways before stated, please respond by saying, "We do."

I then speak to minister and husband (wife, partner) and to the board representatives standing next to the candles to bring them together until the two halves are made into one light to be placed not under a bushel, but upon a hill, so that the whole community may have light.

I, as representative of Association of Unity Churches then pronounce "as each of you and all of you have made your declarations of mutual loving and prayerful support, I pronounce you all as ministers and teachers and congregants in common." You may be seated.

Ministers response. At some time the minister leads a benediction and then invites the entire community of ministers (God's servers) to join in a commonly known prayer (Master Teacher's model prayer if not already used in ceremony, or Prayer for Protection, etc.)

A suggestion: depending on community, consider doing this ceremony as a separate service Saturday night, early Sunday afternoon (like 12:30 p.m.) or Sunday evening with a reception to follow. It's nice to have specific "pomp and circumstance" type of music. If necessary, it could be the regular service(s) on a Sunday morning with the relationship lesson being fairly general.

God bless you.