



**Charge to the Congregation for the Installation of the Rev. Lisa Bovee-Kemper
The Rev. Sarah York
September 13, 2014**

When Lisa asked me to offer the charge to the congregation today, I thought, “Wait a minute, I’m *in* the congregation!” But I am pleased to have the privilege of charging us all today, myself included.

The story is told of a man who served as the minister of a small church. He earned his living as a bricklayer. He didn’t want the church to pay him anything to do the Lord’s work. As the church grew larger, the people wanted him to do more and more, but he didn’t really have time. Finally, they came to him and offered him some money. “No,” he said, “I can’t take a salary to serve God.” They responded, “Then think of it this way: We aren’t paying you to do God’s work; we are paying you to not lay bricks.”

Ministry is a calling as well as a profession. Lisa is called to serve her ideals. She is passionate about social justice. She will be there for you through the joys and sorrows and milestones of your lives. You do not pay her to care about you. You do not pay her to act on behalf of others. You pay her to not lay bricks.

What does this mean? This congregation has made a commitment to a new level of ministry. Five years before we called Lisa, Mark was our only minister. When he learned that I was retiring to Asheville in 2006, he asked me to be a pastoral care consultant at 10 hours a week. The next year I joined the staff as Assistant Minister. During the next few years I worked about 1/3 time. The rest of the time I was laying bricks. OK...raising goats. Anyway, when I resigned, it was a huge congregational commitment to hire a full-time second minister...with benefits and all, adding important ministerial support to social justice and membership. It was a stretch, but Mark and our leaders had vision and helped us get there. And then we chose to take the next step and call Lisa as Associate Minister. As we mark this milestone today, we affirm the ministry Lisa has done; we affirm our respect for her and her calling; we affirm our commitment to the programs she supports and the Unitarian Universalist message she preaches.

You may notice I use the word affirm a lot. That’s intentional. Lisa is not in the pulpit every week; most of her ministry is less visible than Mark’s. I charge you to affirm Lisa and her ministry. Let her know that you appreciated that hospital visit or liked her newsletter article or felt inspired by a sermon. Like her on Facebook when she posts from jail with a photo of herself knitting in her cell.

Lisa is a grown-up. She is approachable and she can also hear you if you have an issue with her. If you were offended by the sermon or if you felt neglected when you were ill or if she didn't make it to that important meeting, tell her. Don't tell others, tell her. Nothing undermines a relationship with a minister more than conflict avoidance and triangulation. But most of us humans are conflict avoidant. I encourage you to get past that and get up the courage to speak to her directly about things that may be bothering you.

Lisa has given us over two years of fine ministry. She has raised the profile of the congregation in the community and helped people see opportunities for engagement outside the congregation. She has offered support and grounding for social justice ministry. Her preaching is authentic; she speaks from the heart and says what needs to be said. She has built upon my work in pastoral care, while offering innovation and new energy. As Jake Morrill put it so well, Lisa has a ministry of "prophetic artistry." And as Lisa Schwartz said, she is the artist and the activist.

But chances are that Lisa will fail you at some point. All ministers do. There is way more ministry to be done than we have time or energy to do. We ministers are good at loading the guilt on ourselves when we cannot do it all. So I urge you to be large-hearted and forgiving. Also, you may have noticed that Cindy is in town more now, and Lisa, who has given most of her time to her work while maintaining a long-distance marriage, now has a good reason to stay home and share a meal rather than grabbing a sandwich on the way to a meeting. Understand that she will serve you better when she takes time to have a life apart from this community. Encourage her to take care of herself.

Finally, let me urge you to do as I did when Lisa asked me to speak today. *Say yes. Say yes* when she invites you to be part of the ministry of this congregation. Ministry is mostly about recruiting, training, and supporting volunteers. The effectiveness of Lisa's ministry depends on your participation. She is one voice, and with that voice she empowers our voices, and as we all join our voices we offer the voice of Unitarian Universalism in the world.