



Installation Service – February 21, 2021
Kyle Hoover

Verses Covered This Week

1 Peter 5:1 – 4

Hebrews 13:17 – 18

Acts 2:42 - 47

Good morning, Central family. What a great day we have to be here in worship. Invite you to come in, find you a seat, and let's prepare our hearts to worship the Lord together this morning. This is really, really special day. But you know, every day, every week we come on the Lord's day and lift up His name. So this is special because the presence of the Lord is here when His people gather. But beyond that, it's a very special day to mark the anniversary, the first year anniversary of having, of the calling of Dr. Phillip Bethancourt, to be our lead pastor. And so we want to mark this day as a really, really special day in the life of Central. And not just because he has become our lead pastor, but because God has done so many amazing things this last year. He has worked, He has led, He has sustained us through this last year. And Tim's going to tell you how we want to celebrate that and how you can be a part of that a little later. But as we begin this first song, I want to remind you of something. No matter, as we look out into this world and we see the darkness that seems to pervade our lives, I remind us this morning that He is worthy and He has overcome and He is on the throne. So today let's come and let's celebrate Him and let's lift Him up.

You may be seated this morning.

I want to welcome you, Central Church family, to our much anticipated installation service. We would have had this service, it would have happened a year ago, but we were unable to meet. And so we thought the one-year anniversary would be a great time to have this installation service. Now, how many of you have never been a part of an installation service, raise your hand. Well, you can check that off of your bucket list, alright. Because you will have, alright. Well, what does that look like and why are we doing this? Well, what we want to do is we want to come together as a Central Church family, as a congregation along with our pastor and just commit to one another to continue to serve God in such a way that He'll receive all the honor, glory, and praise. We have a special guest, Kyle Hoover, who was out University Minister many years ago it seems like. And he brought Phillip on as Associate. He is now the lead pastor at Charlottesville Community Church in Charlottesville, Virginia. He may tell a little more about

that. But let's welcome Kyle as he's here to bring our message from the Lord this morning. It's great to see him. Great to see him. There's going to be a time, there'll be a charge to Pastor Phillip, there'll be a charge to the church. But at the end of the service, we are going to have a reception. And the area is going to be in front of the Family Life Center over by the, where the cross is and the fountain, and you know that area well. There are going to be some baskets on a table, there's actually baskets on this table here, this exit and entrance here, this exit and entrance here where you can place the Celebration Card. In the seat back in front of you, there are a couple cards in each of those slots. And it simply says, let's celebrate God's work. And it shares this Scripture. They shall speak of the might of Your awesome deeds. I will declare Your greatness. Psalm 145:6. And what it says, and there's some pens there for you to use, how have you seen God's work through Central in this past year? So the best part of this day is we get to celebrate God's work this last year. And I'm excited about that. And so, think about it. However God has worked in and through Central in your life and maybe in the community. There's so many things I thought of. Jot those down so we can celebrate. Because here's what we know. More than anything else, this service is about God. And we want Jesus Christ to receive all the glory, praise and honor for all He has done and all He's going to do. So be in prayer as we continue to worship and honor the Lord today.

Hello, this is Russel Moore and I am wishing that I could be at Central Church today for this joyous celebration. Phillip Bethancourt is just like a brother to me and has been for many years. We've worked very closely together in almost every way imaginable from the times when Phillip was a student, an intern, teaching Sunday school together, then serving together in administration at Southern Seminary, and then, of course, as he was Executive Vice President for me here at the ERLC. And in every one of those roles, I have seen Phillip operate in ways that can only be described as excellent and well-received by all. And that is certainly seen in the ministry that God has given to him at Central Church. You know, the first time that I ever met Phillip and Cami was right there at Central Church when Phillip was working in the college ministry with A&M students and others and I had come into town to preach. And I remember thinking this, "He fits here. He has, at Central Church, not just a home church but a home." And seeing the way that God has brought him to this place of leadership in your congregation is a joy for me. And what I can say to you is what you no doubt already know by now. And that is you have as your pastor someone who is totally committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the word of God and the Bible. Someone who loves people and loves to see people transformed and changed in discipleship in the way that they live out their lives, their marriages, their families, their relationships, and in every other way. And he's married to a remarkable and wonderful woman who displays the fruit of the spirit and godly leadership in every way along with those great Bethancourt boys who are growing up now. So I'm so thankful for Central Church, so thankful for the Bethancourts, and I can't wait to see the exciting things that God is going to do in the years to come. So, congratulations Pastor Bethancourt and Cami and congratulations Central Church.

Good morning, Central. It is an honor to be with you this morning. Only with I could be with you in person, but I have a job that keeps me somewhat occupied on Sunday mornings. So I've recorded this video and I would like to share with you a verse from 2 Chronicles, chapter 6. This is coming from a section of Scripture where Solomon is dedicating the temple that he had constructed for the Lord. And he prayed this prayer. He said,

18Behold, the heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house which I have built!

Solomon built a spectacular house of worship for the Lord, but he was acknowledging that ultimately only God is great. God has provided spiritual leaders for His people, but only God is great. And what that means is that the fundamental quality of spiritual leaders must be humility. And so I want to commend you on your selection of Phillip Bethancourt as your next senior pastor because he is a humble servant leader. Of course, Phillip is also very intelligent and he is articulate and he has a PHD and he's charming and he has a great smile and he's very athletic but, most importantly, Phillip is a humble servant leader. And so I look forward to partnering with Phillip. We've already begun to partner. I already trust Phillip Bethancourt and his spiritual leadership in our community. And so I'm thrilled for the future of Central and your ministry of making disciples in the community and throughout the nations. You know that Grace Bible Church and Central have a long history of deep personal friendship and relationships. But also of partnership in the gospel. And so I'm excited about this next season of ministry. Not just for Central, but for the churches and the body of Christ in Bryan/College Station. And I'm excited about our future partnership in the gospel together. So, on behalf of the elders and the staff and the members of Grace Bible Church, I want to say, Central, well done. Wise selection of Phillip Bethancourt. And on my own behalf and my wife, Tristi, I want to say, Phillip and Cami, welcome to Bryan/College Station. We are so excited that you are here and we are thrilled at the opportunity to make disciples of the nations together. God bless you.

Wow! What a great day in the life of Central. And we come to celebrate answered prayer. And behind me this morning are the members of the Pastor Search Committee. And we have been asked to share some of our reflections with you. Through the approved process of the church's bylaws, the nine members of the Pastor Search Committee were elected by you, the church family. And as your church-wide committee, we had one charge and we had one charge only. And that was to bring to Central the man and his family that God had clearly prepared and chosen to be our next senior pastor and shepherd. We started our journey on our knees and our responsibility on our knees. We started in prayer and we started in God's word and we stayed on our knees in obedience to the Holy Spirit. We kept our focus on God's will and made a commitment to ourselves and to you, our church family, that we would not be deterred from this sacred trust that was placed in us. Our guiding Scripture was very important to us. We looked at this at every meeting and it's from Isaiah 30, verse 21. And it says:

21And your ears shall hear a word behind you, "This is the way, walk in it,"

And walk in it we did. Every step of the way. We met and prayed together every week and we gave untold hours between the meetings during the week searching for God's choice in evaluating the many candidates. We spent exhaustive hours listening and watching sermon after sermon of the top candidates and we dedicated ourselves to hold those sermons up to God's word. And I can tell you that I never served with a more faithful and dedicated group of men and women who worked so hard to do what God had called them to do. We carefully worked through some 68 nominations and applicants and we narrowed that number to the top five qualified candidates. We then asked the committee to individually narrow it to top three. But independently and then corporately every single member that is standing before you this morning, seeking God's will, and again on our knees in prayer, came back with only one name:

Phillip Bethancourt. And the committee bonded, bonded very carefully into a united family of one heart, of one mind, of one purpose, and one decision. And that decision was unanimous, it was obedient, and it was unwavering to the man God had so clearly chosen to be our next pastor. And then COVID hit and COVID clearly changed our entire schedule. But we're here this morning to celebrate that answer to prayer in what God has done and to praise Him. For you see this morning, the decision was His and yours, not ours, but Gods. And the past year of the pandemic and some of the other challenges that we faced have more than confirmed God's choice. And Phillips has led us from God's word with vision, with transparency, with open communication, and perseverance. And for this, we're excited about what God has done this past year, what He's currently doing among all of us, and most of all, what He's going to do in the years to come. It should be clear to all of us by now that Phillip is leading us to put Jesus first and to be a Gospel-centered, a family-centered, and a loving church with a huge community impact that was even exemplified this past Friday night with the prayer vigil. We are confident and excited about the next chapter for Central because it's already been anointed by God. And we will have His rich blessings as we share the gospel of Christ and make disciples. But we would be remiss if we did not thank you, our church family, who stood with us and through your prayers and your encouragement and your support we thank you. And let me tell you something. We love you.

Now pastor Phillip, would you please come forward for the charge? In 2 Timothy, chapter 4, verses 1 through 5, we find Paul's charge to the young pastor Timothy. And the words that Paul wrote then are as relevant and applicable today as they were at the time that he wrote them. And I read the words.

¹I charge you in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, and complete patience and teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵As for you, Phillip, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry.

The Bible tells us that the office of pastor is a noble calling. And we also know it to be a sacred calling and responsibility. Phillip, you will be judged more strictly and we will look to you to be an example of Christ to all of us and to the community. We'll look forward to you to cast God's vision for Central. And we look to you for leadership and to shepherd the staff. We will look to you to share Biblical truth. So Paul's charge to Timothy is really our charge to you. And we have four very specific charges for which we ask you to affirm and to pledge to faithfully keep. First, we charge you before God to preach the inerrant word of God without compromise. We want your wisdom. We want your experience. We want your shepherd leadership. And we want your advice. But we need most of all and above all, the sufficiency of the word of God. And we charge you to hold fast to God's word and the gospel of Jesus Christ as it proclaims to be a first priority in importance for this position. So, Phillip, in the presence of God and in the presence of this Central family, do you pledge to preach and teach the inerrant word of God in purity and without compromise?

I do.

Secondly, we charge you before God to lead us with strength, with courage, and with integrity. And correct us and guide us and lead us. Be whom God has called you to be. Do what He directs you to do and do not waver from your unique giftedness, your identity in Christ, and your commitment to this church family and community. You know, some leaders may trust in their education, their God-given talents and giftedness, but you must trust in the Lord your God and His word. You must obey God rather than man. Phillip, in the presence of God and the Central family, do you pledge to lead us with strength, courage, and integrity?

I do.

Third, we charge you to be as sober-minded about your life in ministry as Paul charged Timothy. We charge you before God to commit to these things, the faithful ministry of God's word and of prayer, so that your ministry may be fulfilled by God's grace. We charge you with all of this, not just because you are qualified to hold the office of senior pastor, but because our Lord Jesus Christ is above all names and preeminent. We commend to you a ministry worthy of His name because we sincerely believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit, God has equipped and called you for it. Phillip, in the presence of God and the Central family, do you pledge to be sober-minded, do the work of an evangelist, and fulfill your ministry?

I do.

Fourth and finally, we charge you to resolve to know nothing among us but Christ and Him crucified. Whatever the Lord's will for you and for Central, the eternal constant is God's grace in Jesus Christ. We charge you to obediently and steadfastly fix your eyes on His glory and His kingdom. Resolve to know nothing among us but Christ and Him crucified and you will fulfill your calling in ministry. So, Phillip in the presence of God and the Central church family, do you pledge to faithfully share the message of Christ and Him crucified?

I do.

Thank you.

And now, it is my joy to invite Pastor Phillip's family to join him on stage. The beautiful Cami and those great Bethancourt boys and Catherine Powell's going to come and have a time of prayer. And Catherine Powell's going to come and join Ricky Dickson who will pray. Let's extend our thankfulness and help me just thank, just say a big thank you to our Pastor Search Committee. Would you help me do that please right now? For all their beautiful work and we are very thankful.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank You and praise You so much for sending Your Spirit to the hearts of this church and the calling of Phillip Bethancourt. And as we move into the days, weeks, and months, and years ahead, according to Your will and following Your will, we just ask, Lord, that You'll anoint Phillip in a mighty way. That You will lead his steps. That You will guard his heart and his mind from any of the distractions that may come his way. And that You will speak

through him and as he leads and teaches our church body how to be a lighthouse for Your kingdom, we give You the praise and glory and thanks for bringing Phillip Bethancourt to this church. In Jesus name.

Lord Jesus, thank You for the Bethancourt family. Thank You for this new assignment You've given them here that You've prepared and shaped them for and our Central family. Father, I pray that in the Bethancourt home and in this church home, that Your good design for family would be seen and that it would bring about flourishing and joy that points them back to Your love and causes them to love others well. Pray that You would continue to strengthen and build up Cami and that You would keep her encouraged in You. Knowing that You are a sure and steady anchor for her soul. And out of the abundance of Your steadfast love for her or that she would be known by all of those around her as one who walks with You. Lord, I thank you for Nathan, Lawson, and Weston, and Hudson. I pray that you would bring each of them to a beautiful, saving faith in You. And that You would become their greatest treasure in life. Lord, bless and keep this family, be gracious to them, make Your face shine upon them. Amen.

Father, Your mercy is new every morning. Thank You so much. I hear the Savior say. My strength is small.

Father, we praise Your name. We just lift it up to You. Yes, we celebrate You, God. Praise the One who paid my debt. Raise this life up from the dead. Father, thank You for the opportunity that brings us here today. Thank You for Your Spirit's presence in our midst. And now, God, as we turn to Your word, open our hearts to hear You, to hear Your voice, and to respond in obedience. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Good morning, Central. It's good to be here with you. I like the introduction that Tim gave me. I'm Kyle. I served as the university minister here for about 8 years and also helped with the missions ministry. And I got her early and was kind of walking around and just kind of walked down memory lane. And I was asks countless times, "Is your wife here too, Christine, or did we just get you?" And you just got me. And everyone for the most part did a really good job of hiding their disappointment. But on her behalf, my wife Christine and myself, I send you greetings from Charlottesville, Virginia. It is a town that's about an hour and a half outside of Washington, D.C. And so 13 years ago, we left with a group of Central folks, college students, and we started a small Bible study in our home. And the first one had ten people, 5 of them were my family, and one of them as from Virginia actually. And so from there, it grew and grew. And God has done a great work. But we have, we have brought so many of the values that are a part of the flow of life that, of Central and we incorporated them elsewhere in a very liberal town and it's worked. God's done an amazing work. And if you know me, you know it's in spite of me, but it's worked because it's been about the gospel. That God saves sinners through the life, death, resurrection of Jesus. And He keeps saving and He keeps saving and He keeps saving. And so we are thankful to be a part of this church. And so it's an honor to be here today. I love this church. My wife and I love this church. We are from this church and of this church. And so it is an honor to be here. This church gave us a start. And so I love this church. I love Chris Osborne and Peggy and role that they have played into my life and my wife. I am forever grateful to them. And so much of who they are still resonates and is a great work. And he will never know how grateful I am for him. And then I also, I'm so grateful for Phillip and Cami. I love them dearly. I love you guys both. And it's an honor to be here to commemorate this day.

You've been a year already, but here we are. And so when I was the college pastor, I hired Phillip to be the university ministry associate. And so we worked together for years. And both he and Cami became dear friends of Christine and I and we've had so many great memories together and we've stayed in touch. And I've seen his faithfulness to the Lord for years, for decades. I'm trying to do the math on how long I've known him and it's somewhere around 17 to 18 years. And he's always, as long as I've known him, he's been passionate for Jesus. And he's also loved Central. So whenever we talk, we talk about Central and our times there and the good things that have come out of this church. And now he's your senior pastor. And so I rejoice over that. So I'm grateful for just a little length that I was, been able to play, both years ago and then here in this installation service.

And so today three things are going to happen. One is I'm going to address you, Phillip, and kind of give you a few charges and challenges in this time about, and know who you are and know who you are not. And then also I'm going to address you as a church and your role in how to relate to a pastor and how to support him, walk with him through things, and then challenge him when necessary. And then I'm going to talk to all of you together. Because this is, yes, it's an installation service of a senior pastor, but also it is a time to shift in a forward motion. You're breathing and taking in air and that means that you have a commission upon your life, individually and corporately. And so I want to challenge you to know why you are still breathing. And for you to be about the work that God has called you to be about. So we'll do those three things.

Let's start in 1 Peter, chapter 5. So if you have your Bibles, please turn there. So Peter is talking in this little portion of Scripture to elders. He's talking to church leaders, to the pastors there. And so 1 Peter chapter 5 he says this:

1 So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: 2 shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; 3 not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Let's pray.

God, I'm thankful for this day. I'm thankful for what You are doing in our midst. That You are on Your throne, You're acting for Your glory that is also for our good. And so in this time of installing a new pastor and commissioning an entire church, God, I pray that You would be here with us in power. I pray for those who are already maybe inclined to tune out, that You would capture them and do a great work in their hearts. Guide us and lead us right now in this moment. In Jesus name we pray. And all God's people said amen.

So Phillip, I want to give you just a few brief challenges in this moment. Things that you are about and I pray that you will continue about. The first one is this. Know who you are. It talks about in this passage, Peter says, I'm an elder and I know what's coming. That we are going to be partaking of God's glory together. But first and foremost, know who you are as an elder and you are a shepherd. So shepherd the flock of God that is among you. So, Phillip, the people that

are here, not your ideal church or what you hope it would be, but these folks here. Know who you are that you are a shepherd and first and foremost. See, what you have to understand, church, is pastoral ministry is a treasure trove of glories and deaths. Joys and sorrows. It is hard work because he is caring about his own spiritual journey and you are thinking about yours as well. But he is always thinking about his own and yours and yours and yours and yours and yours as well. And so, Phillip, more than anything else, you lead the way by being a really good shepherd that leads the way by being a follower of Jesus Christ. That is your primary thing. And then love and care for these people. Do not be their accuser. They already have one of those. But love them and seek their good. So you're not a manager of spiritual enterprise. You are not the CEO of a Christian organization. You are not an administrator of skills in competency. You are first and foremost a shepherd. So you serve. And that's to be your task. So more than Dr. Bethancourt be Phillip the servant, Phillip the shepherd. That is what they need more than anything else. You're a shepherd. And this passage says that there is a chief shepherd that's coming. So you're not even a big deal shepherd. You're an under-shepherd. You're a private, first class shepherd. You have one year of shepherding experience. And you don't get promoted into anything better than a private first class under-shepherd. And so live that out, embrace it. Because the most amazing thing that's happened in your life, Phillip, an absolutely wretched, rascally sinner has been saved by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. And that's the case for all of us in this room. And by His ridiculous mercy, He has given you an opportunity to serve a bunch of people and point them to Jesus. And so may that draw you to your knees day in and day out. And may it be more of Jesus and less of Dr. Bethancourt. More of Him and less of you. Shepherds; they feed and they care for their sheep this pastor says, this passage says. And so, Jesus when He looks around in this room, He sees people who are resplendent in value. People that He felt like was worth coming and dying for. And so these are God's people. So shepherd them well. Shepherd them because this is not, these are not your people, they're Gods. This is not your church, it's Jesus'. And you are a mere under-shepherd of that. So that's the first thing. Know who you are.

But then be who you should be. And so it talks about here that it says that you are to be an example. Not domineering, but being examples to the flock. Because you at some point in time as well, you are just waiting for Jesus and trying to obey His call on your life until He comes back where we all receive a crown of glory. So, be who you should be. And that means an example, it talks about in this passage, in humility and holiness. And so, Phillip, be that example. So make Christ-likeness be more apparent and visible in your life. The closer and the longer that you walk with Jesus, because again, they don't need more of you, they need more of Jesus. And as you walk with Him and you grow in humility and holiness and personal devotion to Christ, they will see Him in you. And that is what they need more than, a healthy life-pursuing pastor is the greatest gift and a selfish, self-centered pastor is a horror of horrors. Inflicting damage on everyone, all the sheep, in every direction. So, be an example. So pursue Christ. Not for a better sermon, but grow because you need Him. And to stop that is to forget who you are. So pursue Him with all your heart. Pursue holiness because pursuing holiness is pursuing Christlikeness. And you will never drift into holiness; you'll drift into unholiness. And so your, your folks, this church, they need you to love Jesus with all of your heart and for you to rely upon Him more than anything else. When you do, they'll follow. They'll follow. They will see Christ and that will be compelling for them. And so when it comes to transparency and vulnerability, you go first. When it comes to sharing with unbelievers, you go first. When it comes to serving people, you go first. When it comes to discipling, sitting down and walking

through the Scriptures, Phillip, you go first. When it comes to singing with joy, you go first. When it comes to living a generous life, you go first. When it comes to picking up your cross and following after Jesus, you go first. And so, set the example for folks. Make sure that you surround yourself with truth-tellers. You don't need, you need true friends, not more sycophants. You don't need fans. So make sure that you keep company with truth-tellers and that you don't punish them for the painful truths they have to tell you. We all crave affirmation and validation and the role of pastor is, it can eat someone's soul alive if they're not pursuing Christ. And so, Phillip, don't try to be Chris Osborne. Don't try to be anyone else. Be who God has called you to be and you have been appointed in this role until that will be enough. But pursue Christ.

Lastly, this will be very quick. Thirdly, is do what you should do. So we know what that tells us. We know what the role of pastors are. They're the proclaimers of the, of God's word in a very public, corporate setting. And they serve the church by leading in it. And so a guy named, I'm going to colloquialise his name, Nick Zinzendorf. He has this great word about pastors. Here's what he says. Preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten. And so Phillip, my friend, there you go. Just passing it along, brother. Care nothing for legacy. Care nothing for a heritage. Care nothing about your name that might get thrown in the dirt. Care nothing about fighting fire with fire. Care nothing about controlling a narrative. Care nothing about an authoritarian posture. Care everything for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And proclaim Him. Christ crucified. And then die. And it says a crown of glory awaits. So live for Him and His approval alone. And you know what you're told to do. Acts 6. When things got super busy, a mega-church started taking place. In a few days they were like, "Man, the leaders, we've got to give ourselves to ministry of the word and prayer." And so know what you're supposed to do and do the things that pastors ought to do. Love Jesus. Love People by pointing them to Jesus and then get out of the way.

And I want to tell you as a church that I've seen his faithfulness and his servant-heartedness over, again I think 17/18 years. I know him. I know what he has been about. I know that he has been faithful. I know that he has sought to give his life for the sake of the gospel. And he's done that on a country-wide level and now God has brought him here to you. And so when Phillip, he said that, when he said he was going to throw his name in the hat, we were talking on the phone, and he asked me. He put me on the spot immediately and was like, "What do you think?" I was like, "Alright. Here we go. Here's what I think. I think you have very little pastoral experience as being a senior pastor." And he was like, "Yeah, I know that." And I was like, "Here's what I know as well. That you will be a quick study." And, church, he will give everything he can to being an effective and faithful pastor for you. I know him. I know what he is about. I know who he is and what he does. And so I know that, that he will learn and he will grow and hopefully this is the worst version of Phillip as pastor you'll ever see. That he only grows. And if you give him time, he will. And you get experience by getting experience. But he will be faithful. He will love Jesus more than a title. He will love Jesus more than affirmation and approval of people. And I know that he will love this church in particular. He will love you well. And I'd say the same for Cami. And you have in his wife, someone who is joyful, kind, and willing. And she will seek to love and serve as well. She is not an employee. But I hope that you will see her for who she is as well and not just Phillip's wife. She is valuable and a gift and a blessing to your church.

The second thing is I want to challenge you as a church. So now, turn to the left, not far. We're going to look at Hebrews 13 quickly. Verses 17 and 18. This is how you are to relate to your leaders. Not just your senior pastor, but your staff. They have not paid me for this. It says, Hebrews 13, verses 17 and 18. One of the last words the author gives to the folks he's writing. He says:

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they're keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

So they have this incredible burden. They think about church and you all the time. Because they are watching, keeping watch when you're not, over the souls of the people here. And it says in this passage; let them do that. They're doing that willingly and joyfully. But help them do that joyfully. Have a gracious, submitting, heart towards your leadership and to Phillip as he starts his new role. Because you're going to have to always remember that these people, they'll be on a stage, but they're the same thing as you. People in desperate need of grace. And so give that to them. Give that to them. Don't take a critical and defensive posture unnecessarily that is going to inflict harm; not just on them, but also on you and the corporate church together. It says, make it a joy for them to serve and lead you. And this is not saying that you have a free, that they have a free pass for intentional unrepentant sin. It says, make their, when they're, if they're doing that, make their life harder, not easier. But know that these are not perfect people. They're folks like you and they need grace and they need understanding and they need compassion. And make it a joy for them to lead you. See, they, when you leave church every Sunday, oftentimes you leave rejuvenated, refilled, you have encountered God, you've sung praises to Him. You've done all that and you leave with a little bit lighter step as you walk out. Your leaders, they leave exhausted. They leave tired. Because all week they've been planning and praying and hoping and then here it is. And they do it willingly and joyfully. Wanting to be a blessing to you. Wanting to connect their Savior with you. And so how can you be an intentional encouragement and blessing to them? What does it look like for a church to really, really value one another; for you to see them? Because you'll, oftentimes people don't need pastors until they really need them. And when you need them, guess what they'll do? They will come running. They did in my life. When we had a diagnosis with one of our sons that was soul-crushing, Sherry Maggard came at a run. She ran towards us. I've seen Jeremy Lewis run to parents and to youth who were struggling. I know Phillip is doing that as well as well as so many folks, Tim, all the folks that I served with. I've seen it. What does it look like for you to walk towards them and encourage them and bless them? And again, I'd like to return for a second to Cami and their sons. What does it look like for you to be a blessing and an encouragement to them as well? To not see them and her as an extension of Phillip, but as people who have their unique passions and giftings and desires. You are their church family. And so be there, church family, to them. Because you have to know this. She will never tell you this. But she and her sons, they're going to have to make sacrifices for you that you'll never know of. She, every Sunday morning, comes in as a single mom. And she will do things willingly and joyfully. And so I'm just saying, will you see her? Will you see her? Will you see your leaders as people? And will you think about what it looks like as a church to be a blessing and encouragement to Phillip as a new young pastor and to all of your leaders.

Lastly, I'll close with this. It's a challenge to the whole church. I ask this at every membership class that we've ever done at our church. And I didn't come up with this, but I ask the question. If you were a part of a church that you loved, not the perfect church, that's coming. We'll have that in heaven someday. But a church that you loved, what would that church be like? I want you to think about that and work that out. And it's always interesting in our membership class. We have to hear, and it's really, it's boilerplate what people answer and how they say it. And they say essentially what this passage says. If you quickly have your Bible, we can turn more to the left to Acts chapter 2. This is mine. This is my hope and dream for my church in Virginia and as one that I would like to encourage and exhort you to embrace as well. It's Acts 2, verses 42 to 47. And it says. This 3,000 megachurch broke out in one day. They're like, "What do we do?" He says, "Here's what they do."

⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And so the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

I want that. That's, there is rejoicing that's coming our way in heaven. Man, let's stretch that out into the here and now and let Central be a church that experiences this. May you be a church that as it talks about here, that you are centered around God's word and the gospel. Where people are known and valued. Where you seek Him together. Where you see God at work in your midst. Where you see that needs are being met and people sacrificially and willingly extending themselves, one to another. Central, is this your dream? And so I call upon you and I challenge you as a church, Phillip, for you to lead out in this way. To embrace a future where God is at work, continues to be at work, in your midst. May it be so, church, may it be so.

Let's pray.

God, I thank You for this time. I thank You that Your gospel still saves people. And I'm thankful that You have brought forth a pastor who loves You and who loves Your people. And I pray that this church would continue to thrive and prosper and grow in devotion to Christ and in reaching the lost here and beyond. Bring about Your good work in our midst. May Your Spirit move in powerful ways. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

So I think that how this usually goes, if I remember correctly from back in the day, there will be some pastors and staff up here at the front. If you want to be a member of the church, then now would be a good time for you to come forward. Also, if you want to find more about who this Jesus is, how you can believe in Him, how you can be forgiven of all your sins, we would encourage you to come forward. If you just want prayer about anything going on in your life, those are the reasons by which you would come forward to talk to some of the leadership here. So now as we transition to a time of singing, I invite you to come forward.

Come on, staff. So, church, before we wrap up, I'm going to offer a charge to you. So this is going to be a responsive time where I'm going to ask a few things of you. And then if you are in agreement, I want you to signify it by saying, "We do." So first, as your years with Phillip unfold, there's going to be change that's coming. And it can be hard after a pastor that's been here for a long time to embrace change. But the task is is that God has brought you a new pastor and he's going to have new thoughts and new vision and new idea. But it's going to be the same gospel. And so with your leaders, as a church, I ask you, do you pledge to embrace Phillip as your pastor and as the staff team and follow them as they follow Jesus?

Next, the charge is to remember that you're all called together as the body of Christ for God's great purpose. The great commission of making disciples of all nations. And so Phillip is not a proxy for your work. He is merely an under-shepherd and his task is to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. So these aren't the paid Christians that are supposed to be doing the work; we all do the work. We all do the work. So, church, I ask you, do you pledge to serve the Lord together for the sake of the gospel? Lastly, I want to challenge you to serve Phillip as he serves you. Not just Phillip, but everyone and their spouses as well. Ministry can be lonely and challenging and discouragement. Sometimes if you don't hear encouragement, all you can hear is discouragement. And so will you, I hope that you will take seriously what we talked about. To encourage and be a blessing to the people that are behind me. And so I ask you, church, do you pledge to serve Phillip and his team as they serve you? Alright, may this be so. May this be an exciting day in the life of Central Church.

I'm going to have Craig come up now.

I'd like to ask the deacon body to please join me on stage. As you can see, we are standing behind our staff in support and service of them. And we're going to pray right now as a congregation to come beside them as well. Let us pray.

Dear God, we thank You for this occasion. We thank You for all the blessings you've given this church in the past, the facilities, the staff, everything You've done. And God, now we just come to You and thank You for bringing Phillip to us. God, we just pray for him and his family. And God, we as a church, we pray, I pray that we would come alongside our staff and Phillip and just develop a servant's heart, Lord. We have so many ministries that can be a light to the dark world around us, Lord. And all we need are people with a servant's heart to come alongside our staff and help them spread Your light to the Brazos Valley, God. Everything from preschool to senior adults, all of the many things this church does. We have wonderful leaders that serve and work so hard, countless hours, Lord. I just pray that we would be the hands and feet that they need to help this church serve the Brazos Valley and to bring glory to Your name, Lord. As it's already been said, Lord, Kyle talked about it, please help us to be a blessing and an encouragement to our staff so that Your word may be multiplied to the people in our corner of the world. It's in Your Son's precious name we pray. Amen.

As they make their way back to their seats, I want to let you know that during the response time, we had several that came forward to make decisions this morning. I want to introduce them to you. We had a pair of friends that came today to join the church and start the membership process. Will you welcome Denise Thompson and Deanie Diamond? Also, ready to take a step towards joining the church, Gavin Bass. Will you welcome Gavin? Then in addition to that, so

excited, Mattias Brenner's come forward to let you know that he's met Jesus and he wants to be baptized. Will you express your excitement about that?

As we close out our time together this morning, I want to remind you that after this, we're going to have a reception out behind me in the FLC in the outdoor area. And if you haven't had a chance yet to take that Celebration Card in the seat back in front of you, we just want the change to hear from you about what God has done through our church over this last year to bring glory to Him during this time. And what we're doing here today is something very ancient. It's not something new that we developed. And in just a moment, when we read out benediction, it will come from Numbers 27 where we see an ancient commissioning just like what happened today. But before we do that, I just need to take a moment as your pastor to say thank you. First I want to say a big thank you to Kyle Hoover and to Chris Osborne. Y'all took a chance on me when I was a young graduate student with no experience. And I think it was that strawberry tart I brought you for my final interview that won you over and that's why I'm here today. It means so much that you came back. I love being here on the stage with our team. I've grown to love this team, to work side-by-side with them, our ministry staff. Their experience is incredible and it's just helped to make this first year a joy for me. And then I look back on the time I got to spend with our search committee and to have them up here praying over our family just means so much to see the way that they were a part of that. And I'm grateful for each one of them. But I also want you to hear how thankful I am for you. When my family and I stood on this stage last April to accept your call on our lives to come here, I asked one thing of you. I turned our attention to 2 Corinthians 7:2 where Paul says, "Open your hearts to us." And all I asked from you as a church was that you would open your hearts to us. And what I love about this first year is that's exactly what you've done. And we're grateful. We're so excited to see what's coming in the future. In some ways I feel like we're just getting started; we're just warming up. And I can't wait to enter into this next chapter with you. So as we go, let's hear this word of benediction. It comes from Numbers chapter 27. This is right as Israel is poised to go into the promised land and God raises up Joshua who is commissioned to carry on the work leading the people, following after Moses. Here's what happens. Verse 15.

15Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, 16 "Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation 17 who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd." 18 So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. 19 Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. 20 You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey.

Central family, let's keep pressing on knowing that in this time God has commissioned us to walk by faith. You are sent.