

Michael Swimley Moment of Personal Privilege

I want to speak about our Ordination Service, because this service in particular is very important to me.

My call to ministry started well before I actually recognized that it was a call. The widow of Lacy VanNorman, Martha, told my mother when I was six, that I was going to be a pastor. At fourteen, Sandy Foster was a guest preacher at my home church. And after the service I asked her what a call was. She gave me her story, and then said, "Michael, do you have a call?" And I said, nope. Five years later I am a dorm host at Messiah College, getting ready to go on vacation. My grandmother is a delegate to Annual Conference. And I am sitting for the first time ever in Annual Conference watching the Ordination Service.

Bishop May gives an invitation for those who have a call on their life at the end of that service to come forward. I do not know how I got from the middle of the Annual Conference floor to the stage, but I remember Sandy Foster running up onto the stage. And those of you who remember Sandy, know that running was not her thing. I've been praying for this since you were fourteen. Jay Morris was standing beside me, Guy Camp was standing beside me, and numerous other pastors and lay persons who had been praying for me since I was six years old, fourteen years old. Folks, the Ordination Service is a culmination of celebrating God's work in a person's life and the call to serve the church of Jesus Christ.

And when I see people leave, I think about the incredible lengths to which Mary came to be at my ordination. See, she was a family friend of five generations. And in her late nineties, after having broken her hip a few weeks earlier, she said she's coming to my ordination. I'm going, sure. And as we were marching in, she was sitting in the hallway. And she said, Michael, look. And she pushed her walker away and she said I've been told that we recognize and celebrate God's work in this by standing. And I am standing today. And she stood up.

I am begging every one of you to stay for ordination. You are an important piece of someone's call. Whether they are answering it for the first time or whether they are having a culmination of an incredible amount of work, to be recognized for commissioning, ordination, as deacon, or elder, or otherwise in service to the church of God, we need you here. Please don't leave early. Thank you.