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GREAT QUESTIONS!

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Three years ago, I was approached by the Christian Education Network to be interviewed about my experience in ministry. I am so glad that I said, "Yes." They asked great questions and afforded me the opportunity to really reflect on a God who keeps calling me to unlikely endeavors.

I revisit these questions and my answers several times a year to make sure that I am listening to God, replying to God's surprising call, and responding with both courage and comrades to these unlikely opportunities.

Who asks you "great questions"? How do you answer them? Or do you say you'll get back to them ... and then get busy with something else?

So, here is my interview ... and the same questions for you to reflect on, wonder about, and answer for this time in your life. Read this, knowing that I am not ordained, nor educated to be in ministry. No one could have been more surprised than I was to realize that God called me to follow, to do unlikely things, to be utterly outside of my comfort zone. Being off balance, I learned to lean on the Holy Spirit, God's gift to me in baptism. I could only do it because Jesus promised to be with us, with you, with me, always. Have I ever claimed that promise!

Can you describe your call to ministry?

God keeps jumping out from behind the burning bush, yelling, "Surprise!" and it always is. Implausible. The very things I'd vowed I'd never do. Teach seventh and eighth graders confirmation? Really? After I promised myself I'd never teach anyone that age anything. I'd only been a Lutheran for eight months. I couldn't pray in public. I'd fill their heads with heresy. I had two preschool kids and no access to a car. So, I only did it for 23 years, falling madly in love with those kids, with Lutheran theology, with faith formation. And I promised myself I'd never teach adults ... so, I've only taught adult Bible studies and parenting for 39 years! Coach congregations. Preach. Teach. Write a book. Do training. For the church! No, I could never do these things alone ... and that was God's whole point: I didn't have to do these things alone, because God was always there, just as Jesus promised.

Now, my ministry is a joyous combination of all things faith formation. I love it all and am so grateful not to have to choose.

What is the best part of your ministry today?

That's it: The best part is whatever I am doing in ministry today. Every day. Just put me with God's people and invite me to connect and wonder and explore and learn and teach and celebrate and grieve and love and give and receive, and I am in my happy place, the place to which God has called me. I am so far beyond content!

What is one fact about yourself that would surprise people?

I cannot hold a balance pose in yoga to save myself (so, good thing that's already been done for me!) and I am incredibly insecure about leading singing (love to sing, but can't carry a tune).

What is one trend in Christian education that we should know about?

Despite fabulous technology, great curriculum, edgy graphics, and boisterous games, faith formation is still formed the old fashioned way - incarnationally. It needs to be what we do as God's people for all of life, from infants to elders. Cross+generationally, as often as we can. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart, loving God with everything we've got and our unlikely neighbors, as ourselves. It's about relationships.

How can we pray for you?

Pray that I remember to sit, to listen, to wonder, to be surprised at God's ever unfolding call and that I have the courage and comrades with which to respond.

YOUR TURN

Here are the same questions for you. Light a candle. Sit in a quiet, comfortable place, without your smart phone, and just breathe. Let God be present with you, as you open yourself to these questions ... for you in your home, for you in your congregation.

Don't get hung up on the word "ministry." God calls all of us to use the gifts God has given us to build a better world. Luther was very clear that God's call - our vocation - includes the daily, familial calls to be together. He claimed diaper changes as part of his vocation. Mine, too!

- Can you describe your call to ministry?
- What is the best part of your ministry today?
- What is one fact about yourself that would surprise people?
- What is one trend in your ministry that we should know about?
- How can others pray for you?

If you have trouble getting started, ask someone who knows you well to do the interview. Have a conversation. Trust me, I never ever came up with the idea of teaching confirmation, leading Bible study, or being a parent educator on my own. In my life, God's call always comes in the voice of another human being, inviting me to do something they believe I can do (and I am never so sure this is a good idea). They named what they had seen or surmised might be my gift. They gave me support and colleagues with whom I could undertake this call. Ask others how they would answer these questions on your behalf. Ask them to pray for you as you discern where God is calling you now.

Blessings on this amazing journey of a life in Christ!


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