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Title: When God Calls

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Text: [Isaiah 6:1-8](#)

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[Watch the service.](#)



Have you ever made a phone call expecting a certain person to answer only to be caught off guard when someone different answered the phone? When you call Geist Christian Church usually the first person you will speak to is Lori Kline, one of our Administrative Assistants. However, on occasion, I will answer the phone.

When I answer the conversation typically starts like this... *"Good morning, Geist Christian Church this is Schuyler."* (PAUSE) After that moment of silence, the caller usually responds saying, *"Hello Schuyler, this is so and so, why are YOU answering the phone?!"* It's a valid question.

This morning, you might have a similar question. Why is Schuyler preaching? Earlier this year, Pastor Ryan came to me and said he would be on vacation at the end of the summer and would be gone for two Sundays. Pastor Kyle would be preaching one Sunday and he asked if I would preach the other. He said we would not be in the middle of a sermon series and that I was free to preach on a topic or scripture of my choice. While I was thinking about his question, he said, *"You know, you are a Pastor now and I just finished writing your review for the Commissioned Ministry Board and it was a GOOD review."* *"You're right,"* I said, *"and thank you for the good review. Yes, I would be honored to preach on Labor Day weekend."* So here we are...but there's more to the story.

In the summer of 2016, I was asked to work on the music team for an Emmaus Walk. You might be familiar with the Great Banquet, it's the community that is here in the Indianapolis area. The Emmaus Walk is a 3-day retreat where participants, known as pilgrims, spend time studying the Word, worshiping, and praying together. Throughout that weekend, the pilgrims hear 15 talks, or short sermons (if there is such a thing as a short sermon). Out of the 15 talks, 5 are given by members of the clergy team and the other 10 are given by laypersons.

After agreeing to work the walk, the Lay Director, a close family friend, asked if I would consider giving one of the talks during the weekend. I told him I would prayerfully consider it and felt honored that he asked. At first, I was excited about this opportunity but then immediately started coming up with reasons why I couldn't do it and how I would tell him of my decision.

For each talk, the speaker is given a detailed outline, unlike this sermon, where I started with a

blank word document and a flashing cursor. The outline is intended to aid the speaker in writing their talk as many are not in the practice of writing sermons.

I spent the next week praying and asking God for a clear sign as to how I should respond. Although I had my doubts, it was clear I was to say yes. As I studied, prayed, and prepared my talk, the excitement returned and I enjoyed the writing process. On a Thursday afternoon in September, I drove to the campground in Clay City, Indiana. I led music for worship, along with my Dad, gave my talk on Saturday afternoon, drove home Sunday evening refreshed, and returned to the office Monday morning. Although that event and experience had ended, things were only just beginning.

Over the next four years, I experienced feelings that I had never felt before. I thought after the walk things would return to normal. I would go back to my daily work and routine and life would go on. That happened but the feelings didn't go away. They only grew stronger. Again, I prayed for clarity asking God to help me understand these feelings and how I was to respond. The response I continued to receive was "*I want you to serve more.*" I had conversations with my wife and my colleagues seeking their counsel on what I was experiencing and I continued to receive signs that supported God's response "*I want you to serve more.*"

Fast forward three years, in this very place, I heard two sermons about a call to ministry and another about serving. When I heard these sermons, I remember thinking "that was written for me." It was clear they were signs. I met with Pastor Ryan again to discuss where I was at in the discernment process. Our conversation confirmed that I was feeling a call to ministry. Shortly thereafter, with his blessing and the blessing of the church board, I said yes, and entered the Commissioned Ministry process.

Commissioned Ministry is an office of ministry that is recognized and endorsed for persons who have gifts and personal qualities for ministry but are not currently on a track for ordination. In May of 2020, I received a letter stating that I had been granted a commission and was now a Commissioned Minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). What began four years ago was now becoming a reality. As Paul Harvey would say, "*and now you know the rest of the story.*"

God created each of us for a purpose. When someone talks about "God's call" they often refer to a divine encounter that leads to a life of service in the church. But in a deeper exploration, through a variety of biblical stories, it becomes clear that the meaning of God's call is broader. In Ephesians 4:1, it says, "*I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*" God calls us to be fully alive - and in that living, to grow in faith, serve the church, and transform the world.

Defining our call can be challenging. Theologian Frederick Buechner said, "The place God calls you to is the place where deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." If you can discern what your greatest joy is and what you believe is a pressing need in our world, and then find where the two intersect, chances are you will begin to understand God's calling in your life.

A call is unique for every person, but every call shares certain characteristics. A call is always personal and builds on one's spiritual gifts. It usually feels urgent and persistent. It is both a challenge and a joy. It is not uncommon for people to resist their call. We find excuses as to why we can't answer a calling. "I don't have the resources, the ability, the skills, the time, or the courage." However, "What God envisions, God-provisions." God calls and God provides.

The Bible is filled with call stories. God called Noah to build an ark. God called Abraham and Sarah when they were old to leave their home and go on a journey to found a nation. God called Samuel out of deep sleep. God called Esther and Jonah and He called Mary, a teenage girl, to give birth to a Son who would be the Savior of the world. God called Peter to be a rock upon which a church could be built. God called Paul on the road to Damascus and set him on a path that would transform the world. And God called Isaiah.

The calling of Isaiah in the temple included all of the major elements of a prophetic calling; a vision of the heavenlies, interaction between the heavenly beings and the Lord, the prophet's reluctance, the granting of a sign, and the clear prophetic message that is meant for the people. While some people sense their calling as a lightning bolt sent straight from God, not all calls are received this way. However, most go through a series of steps, a cycle of discernment and action. Maybe you have experienced these steps in a previous calling or one you are currently experiencing.

1. **Revelation** - When you get a clear glimpse of what God is calling you to be or do.
2. **Resistance** - A phase filled with doubt and questions.
3. **Commission** - God's voice becomes clearer, and you feel compelled to respond.
4. **Partnership** - A time when your call begins to fit into the church or other ministries, and your call becomes part of the community's call.
5. **Service** - You move into action, bringing God's call to life.

This cycle recognizes that God gives each of us spiritual gifts to equip the church to do ministry. God has gifted us to make the world and the church a better place. God wants us to be a part of the body of Christ and enrich it with our presence. That is what God calls us to do. The point is to say yes to our own call and then to sound it in the community so that others may partner with us. Helping us live out our call in practical and life-changing

ways.

When God calls, how will you respond? I love Isaiah's response. *When he heard the voice of the Lord saying: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" He said, "Here am I. Send me."* (Isaiah 6:8) Without hesitation. Without asking questions. He said yes. Despite being a significant and prominent prophet dedicated to the service of God, Isaiah fully felt his inadequacy and sinfulness in God's holy presence. And in that reality, he confessed his uncleanness. Isaiah came to know the revealed will of God and received the power to do that will when he saw God.

God's call often asks us to let go of things that are comfortable to us to let something else come in their place. It's not always an easy task. But letting our call fall dormant and silent within us does not serve God. Sounding our call helps to create the space for the Holy Spirit to bring about what God is intending in the world.

Fanny Crosby, born in 1820, became blind when she was six weeks old. As she grew, she depended on her grandmother, who described the beauty of the world to her and introduced her to the Bible. With the encouragement of a woman named Mrs. Hawley, with whom they both lived, Fanny began memorizing passages from the scriptures, and the poetry of the book spoke to her. In school, she got in trouble for making up poems; but she could not stop herself. She believed that God had placed a gift within her.

She said, "I seem to have been led, little by little, toward my work; and I believe that the same fact will appear in the life of anyone who will cultivate such powers as God has given him, and then go on, bravely, quietly, but persistently, doing such work as comes to his hands." Crosby became a prolific poet, writing up to seven hymns a day. When she died at the age of 95, Crosby had written more than 8,000 hymns.

In different stages and places of our lives, God calls us to new things. Our call to ministry never ends. What might God be calling you to this day and how will you respond? Will you step out in faith and trust that whatever calling God places upon you, he will provide and equip you to fulfill that call. I challenge you this morning to find ways to use your gifts. Maybe that's here at Geist Christian Church. There are a variety of opportunities to serve. Maybe it's volunteering in the community or serving in the mission field. Whatever your calling is, I pray you will say yes. Yes, Lord, here I am, send me. Amen!

¹ "God's Call" <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2204/gods-call>

² The Tony Evans Bible Commentary, pg. 639-641