

God Called, I Answered!

In the 2007–2008 *Horizons* Bible study, *Above and Beyond: Hearing God's Call in Jonah and Ruth*, Carol Bechtel explores the concept of call. She shows that God's call to us can take on a variety of shapes—perhaps to be a prophetic voice, like Jonah, or an advocate for another, like Naomi. Our paths to arriving at our calls may be short and straight, or they may be long ones, filled with twists and turns. Our answers to God may be a passionate yes, a firm no, an uncertain maybe or even a Jonah-like sprint away from the call.

Regardless of what the call is or how we get there, God calls each and every one of us. For some, like LaTease Brooks, the call is to attend seminary to pursue ordination. For others, like Cathy Ballenger, the call is to be the welcoming voice people hear when they call the church office. For still others, like Kathy Randall, answering a call doesn't come with an official title—it's volunteering and championing causes that are personally important.

Enjoy these women's reflections on call and let them inspire you to reflect on your own call and journey.



After more than 20 years as a church administrator, I know my call to this vocation is much more a ministry

than a job. The benefits come in nonmonetary form with opportunities to serve others through my actions. It might come from the smile given the stranger who asks for a gas voucher, the "congratulations" said to a church member who calls about the birth of a baby, the hug given the widower who calls me "honey," or the simple conversation with the elderly man who stops by because he is lonely. For me, it is about serving God's people.

—Cathy Ballenger
Administrative secretary for
Covenant Presbyterian Church



Several years ago, if you knew that I was a Korean American young woman discerning whether God was calling me to sem-

inary and ordained ministry, you might think, "Of course God is calling her to serve with Racial Ethnic Young Women Together (REYWT)!" What seemed clear to the leadership team when they extended me an invitation to serve, wasn't obvious to me. Looking back on the ways that I've learned and grown by serving with REYWT, I can sense that God has been affirming my call to be a leader of the church.

—Cathy Chang
Outgoing moderator, REYWT



My call began with a desire for a degree in Christian education; thus an eight-hour round-trip journey began. During three years, I traveled two days a week and graduated cum laude from the University of the

Ozarks in 1987. I met many wonderful people. Doors of opportunity have been opening ever since.

During my second year at the university, I enrolled in a commissioned lay pastor program. God had an agenda for me to serve 12 Choctaw (Native American) congregations, which I have done for 20 years, now. All the churches have been in existence for more than 100 years. Today, I lead worship and serve the sacraments.

When God calls, God provides the opportunities and the means, whether in education, congregations, a mission trip to Malawi, curriculum writing or work with Presbyterian Women.

—Eveline Steele
Commissioned lay pastor and member of the
Churchwide Coordinating Team of PW



I'm 70 years old and deep into work that I love. I help people move beyond blame and anger to fair solutions, and sometimes—when the Holy Spirit is present—even forgiveness. I'm a mediator. God has called me into work and called me out. I've been a trial lawyer (eight years) and a federal tax judge (16 years). Now I help people avoid courts and settle their own issues. Some clients pay, some don't. Mediation isn't a rejection of my earlier work. It's a culmination. The thread of my life has been a passion for justice. Mediation is a path to justice through peacemaking, a holy path.

—Carolyn Miller Parr
Grassroots peacemaker and founder of Beyond Dispute Associates



My call to seminary was like a telephone call from a telemarketer. I was minding my business, working at my church, Roxbury Presbyterian Church in Boston, Massachusetts.

Suddenly, my "spiritual telephone" rang and God was on the other end telling me that the next step in my ministry was seminary. The first few calls I just said, "Thanks, but no thanks." However, God, being a persistent caller, continued to call. I even asked God more than once to take me off the call list. Eventually, I said yes, and I am currently attending seminary, expecting to graduate in 2009. I thank God for the call.

—LaTease Brooks
Seminary student at Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary



I was a small-town pastor who had rarely traveled beyond my home state before ending up in the Czech Republic on study leave. There, I found myself wanting to give something back to the people who had preserved their faith so valiantly throughout centuries of oppression. Yet, given my

minimal knowledge of Czech, I could not have anticipated being asked to translate texts from that complicated language into English so that more readers could ponder the hard-won insights of Czech Protestants. Thus, I can only conclude that my present work is a gift from God. May I remain faithful to this calling.

—Joyce J. Michael
Mission coworker in the Czech Republic

"... lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" —Ephesians 4:1–3.



The definition of a vocation, to me, is being called to make a difference in the lives of others. I realized at a very young age that inspiring individuals,

creatively, was my calling. My career as a graphic designer is a subset of my vocation. It allows me to use creativity to inspire and encourage people through imagery.

—Stephanie Morris
Graphic designer for Presbyterian Women



I found myself drawn to projects of Presbyterian Women at quite a young age, even starting a

Circle of peers at age 27. For 27 more years now, I have served on the board of a children's home and led education initiatives connecting my church to community projects that involve at-risk youth. Following Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans was fertile ground for recovery. Spared personal devastation, I felt called to help others rebuild. I can see God's hand in my own life giving me strength to lend a hand to someone else. Today I know that a city worth saving lies beneath the water's ruin. Mine is a calling to make a difference for humankind.

—Kathy Randall
Volunteer and PW leader