

A Culture of Call

Synod Assembly Report of the Region 3 Candidacy and Leadership Manager Deacon Krista Anderson

In baptism, we are each called, gathered and sent by the Holy Spirit into the world on behalf of others. In community, through worship, fellowship, learning and service, we encourage each other to live into the covenant God makes with us in baptism. Each one of us has a story of being called through baptism for the sake God's mission in the world.

My work as the Candidacy and Leadership Manager calls me to places and spaces where I have the privilege to be invited into the stories of those being called to rostered ministry as deacons and pastors as I walk with and support the 9 synod candidacy committees of region 3. Their stories, much like mine, are filled with people who encouraged them, safe places where they could ask tough questions and explore leadership, and opportunities and experiences to grow in sense of self and sense of who they are as a child of God called, claimed, and sent. Although each story is as unique as the individuals, there are common themes that I hear time and time again.

Many who are called to become a deacon or pastor speak to a comment from or conversation with a pastor, youth minister, mentor, or someone else who saw something in them and said something. Others speak to an invitation to explore their gifts through an experience of volunteering, a mission/service trip, or increased participation in worship/congregational life. Many others speak to being involved in outdoor ministry, campus ministry or a similar student-focused ministry that gave them space to become aware of the Spirit's call in their lives and explore the gifts they might bring to rostered ministry. Regardless of the specific situations that results in someone feeling called to pursue rostered ministry, I constantly see how the call to ministry comes from relationship and from community. Here are some of the stoires...



My actual call-to-ministry came in a dream, but my preparation has encompassed my entire life. I was blessed with parents, and other family members, for whom church, Sunday School, and church-related activities, were very important to them. I recall many lay leaders, mentor pastors, and friends of different denominations, who supported and challenged me in my Christian walk. How grateful I am for them, and for the opportunity to serve the Lord in this new way! (Cathleen Morris, candidate from the SEMN Synod assigned to the SEMN Synod)

I learned about the Word and Service roster while I was working as a music director in the Nebraska Synod. As I was making my first baby steps and contemplating candidacy, I asked my pastor how you tell whether something is a call or just something you want to do. He didn't really answer my question, but he encouraged me to find out more about the process. Looking back, the fact that he listened to my questions and gave me permission to explore was an important moment in my discernment process. (Sr. Stacie Lightner, assigned to the St. Paul Area Synod)





About ten years ago, Jacey and I along with our daughter, Josie, became members of Concordia Lutheran in Duluth, Minnesota. David Trygggestad served as the pastor then and was instrumental in helping discern a call to ministry by inviting me to try on various “hats” so to speak along with supervising my contextual learning. Since then, Tom Zarth, Brice Eichlersmith, and the people of Oak Grove Lutheran, to include my intern committee, have been influential in affirming God’s call to ministry while serving on internship in Richfield, Minnesota. Recently, being assigned to Northwest Minnesota Synod and conversations with Bishop Larry along with the warm welcome to the synod have affirmed God’s call to ministry. (Scott Hoecker, candidate from the NEMN Synod and assigned to the NWMN Synod).

Pastor Don Wisner, my campus pastor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, was the first to suggest I should think about seminary. That was in 1996 and my answer was, “I don’t think so.” Well, the seed was planted that simply needed 17 years to germinate. When my career was no longer going as I thought was the plan, I visited Luther Seminary where I heard very clearly that God was leading me to ordained ministry, and my experiences since have only confirmed that call. I graduate in May and am in process of first call in the Northwestern Synod of Minnesota. (René Mehlberg, assigned to the NWMN Synod)



I'm Fred Bartelt, my home congregation (Hope Lutheran, St. Pete, FL) was very instrumental in nurturing and affirming God's calling to ministry. I first primary call to ministry came during my summers as a church counselor for Luther Springs where I had great experiences both living and working in my faith and talking with pastors about my sense of call. Since starting seminary, many people have been influential in my life such as my field education church (Pisgah Lutheran Lexington, SC), my internship congregation (St. John Celina, OH), and the community at Southern. I am excited to be a part of Region 3. (Fred Bartlet, assigned to South Dakota Synod)



My sense of call was nurtured from a young age by my grandmother Ethel Ann, my parents, and the people of God at Trinity Lutheran and Redeemer Lutheran Churches in Stevens Point, WI and the people of God at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Plover, WI. Especially formative for my faith and sense of call growing up was my experience participating in the youth groups and choirs of these three faith communities of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin. My time as a camper and counselor at Crossways Camping Ministries in Central Wisconsin and while serving as the Coordinator of Christian Education at Saint Andrew Lutheran Church in Wausau, WI gave me opportunities to walk alongside faithful people who affirmed my sense of call, lifted me up as a leader, and gave me the courage to boldly profess my faith. I give thanks to God for the blessings that are the faithful people of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin and for the ministry that they continue to do for the sake of the Gospel. (Matthew Seegert, assigned to SWMN Synod)

As you reflect on your own story, who has been instrumental in lifting up your gifts, or seen something in you and called it out through affirmation and encouragement? Who have you impacted by naming the strengths you see in them? What experiences have been transformational in your understanding of God's mission in the world? Whether you are a deacon or pastor, and whether you have been to seminary or not, God is active in and through you. As a baptized and called child of God, you may be the one through whom God is calling others.

In the Old Testament story of Samuel, when Samuel heard the voice of God, he wasn't sure what to do. It was Eli who helped him understand and respond to this call from God. I am aware that many people have a desire to be part of what God is doing, but are not sure where to start. A conversation with a deacon or pastor, a call to the synod office, or an inquiry to a seminary are great first-steps for those who might be discerning a call to rostered ministry. The call to discipleship is also a call to community, and in community we walk with one another as we, together, listen for the voice of the Spirit in our lives.

How are we, together, continuing to respond to the covenant God made with us in holy baptism: to live among God's people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God through word and deed, to serve all people, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth? How is God calling you? What gifts have you seen and named in others?