

There was no burning bush moment, no angel announcement, no sudden moment of blinding insight. At the age of sixteen I felt a calling to ministry. It came in a time when I was no longer part of the church, when I was feeling vulnerable, broken, and needy. It came in quiet moments of comfort, in a yearning to return to my faith and to go deeper into it. There were little moments where the thought “maybe I’m called to be a minister” crept into my mind like the time that I was sitting with my mom and sister in McDonalds and I saw a minister with his family eating at another table, or when I was getting a haircut and I thought the black cape and white tissue around the neck kind of looked like a clergy collar –hmmm, maybe I’m supposed to be a minister. Mostly it came in a feeling of being drawn towards something new, back towards my faith and into ministry.

I started attending a church and found a welcoming home in my new denomination, the United Church. I was confirmed and became a member of First United in Cambridge. I started exploring what was involved in becoming a minister and soon was on an exciting and difficult path of getting my degrees, the many interviews from the wider church, an internship, and finally ordination and settlement. And even through the questions and wonderings, self-doubt and insecurity each time I took a step towards my calling there was a sense of being on the right path, a feeling of coming home.

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What they know is the sea and the fish. As children they grew up playing in the boats, gutting and sorting, mending nets, and learning the skills of their

trade. As they grew older they took their place in the family co-operative, taking on greater responsibility in making sure they catch enough fish to meet the Roman Empire's demanded quota, and make enough money to pay for the supplies, the docking fees, the taxes, the interest on debts, and if they were lucky, well, there would be just enough to get by for another day. Fishing is who they are, their blood flows with the rhythms of the waves, and the movements of casting and hauling. They don't just work as fishers, they are fishers, it's who they are, it's all they know, and it's all they will probably ever do. Their lives are tied to the sea and to the fish.

That is until the day they see a man standing on the shore calling out "The dominion of God is at hand – it's here and its coming! Turn your life towards this good news!" They should tell him to get lost, or maybe ignore him, they should keep working, they have no time for this crazy talk... but then they hear something else: "follow me and I will make you fishers of people." And there is something in the way he calls to them, the way he looks at them, the way he says "fishers of people." Something sparks to life within them and they feel a pulling, like a strong current, leading them towards this man. They hear the call and they set down their nets and they go with this stranger.

They are Simon and Andrew, James and John, they are fishers and they are fishers of people, they are disciples and an important part in the holy revolution of God's dominion being made known – of a life of holy love and justice being embraced and shared. They are called to be part of the blessedness of life.

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Today we hear just one of many call stories from our Bible. The Bible is full of these, tales of people encountering God and finding their life's purpose and direction within the blessedness of life. Call stories hold a prominent and important place in our faith for a very good reason. They don't just invite us to think about the holy things that have happened. Faith isn't just about looking back it's about living right here and now.

We are Simon and Andrew, James and John, we are Mary and Joseph, Abraham and Sara, Moses, Ruth and Naomi. We are the ones who are being called through the stories of faith and the richness of life. All of these great stories of calling are invitations for us to look within ourselves and to look around us and to see how God is at work. They are invitations to be part of the holy movement of life, that leads towards love and justice – the dominion of God, as Jesus called it.

The calling that echoes on the waters of the Sea of Galilee in our Gospel reading today resonates off the pages and into our lives. The calling meets us right here where we are in midst of our everyday lives, in the midst of our strengths and weaknesses, our hopes and our fears, our possibilities and limits, the changes we face, our gifts and our needs. The sacred calling comes to us and invites us to take our place, to claim our purpose and our potential in the blessedness of life.

Call stories are important because they encourage us to discern and to help one another think about our own callings. What is our purpose and

potential and how do we live it? How does the way our calling is expressed change with time and life situations, with health and ability? How do we live our calling in a way that brings blessing to all creation? What does our answer to our calling look like when it is lived fully?

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There is a quirky, beautiful sentence in today's Gospel reading: "follow me and I will make you fishers of people." It's a weird phrase, and the reality is that it probably has always sounded strange ever since the story was first shared. Really, what is a fisher of people? It's weird unless you are a fisher, unless you are Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Then, these words become powerful and personal. Follow me and I will make you fishers of people is an invitation for us to use our gifts and skills, our life and experience, our passions for the life of love and justice that Jesus that shared.

What are your gifts and skills, your life experiences and passions that you are called to share in order to enrich the world? For we are called to be a fisher, a farmer, an accountant, a minister, a trades person, a nurse, a Mason, a Rotarian, a volunteer, a partner, a parent, a friend, fill-in-the-blank – of people. We all have unique gifts, skills, and life experiences that we are called to share in relationship. And when we share these things we help create a more full and life giving world.

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My calling started nineteen years ago and this June I'll mark my tenth anniversary of ordination. My calling continues. Throughout all of this time as I have reflected upon my calling and heard the call stories of many other people I've learned something very important. Our calling in life, however it finds expression, includes our whole self. We are called with our pain and brokenness, our gifts and skills, our passions, our changing health, abilities, and life situations. Our whole unique and beautiful self is called to be part of the blessedness of life.

We are all called to take our place in bringing wholeness and blessing to this world. The question is not are we called, the question is how do we live out our calling? The question isn't do we add to the blessings of life, the question is how do we add our part? The question isn't are we called to be disciples the question is will we answer that call each and every day with our whole self?

The Holy voice that called the fishers from the shore echoes in us - "The dominion of God is being made known – come and journey with me." May we respond with our whole life to this sacred calling. May we find our unique place within the blessedness of life. May we share our life within community. May we encourage one another to hear and respond to our calling. May we hear the words "the dominion of God is at hand" and may we be part of this good news. For we are all called to be part of the sacred story. Amen. Let it be so.