

This summer I have had the pleasure of serving as an intern for this charge. I have had the chance to get to know all of you and view church on a smaller, more personal level. Quite the change from what I used to. I grew up in a large church and in my internship that I did with the conference, I was also placed at a large church. While I appreciated my time working in the larger churches, I have found this summer that I enjoy doing ministry on a more personal level. I have enjoyed getting to know families and being able to have meaningful conversations. What I have felt calling to me lately, is how I miss working with the Children's Ministry and watching students grow with the church on a deeper more personal level.

You see, when I worked with children regularly, I often found myself thinking and interpreting what the Bible has to say into a level where a Kindergartener can understand the message. Then after that I try to think of how I would be able to give that same message to my family friend’s daughter who is about to start middle school or how I can present this on a level where my family friends who are still in high school. How can they use this parable or that scripture lesson in their everyday lives? This is how I process growth and understanding within the church. I have felt this urge to return to family ministry. For children and youth are the future of ministry and we no matter who they are and where in life they come from, we need to empower all children to find their voice in ministry. To show them that this is the hidden treasure of the church, unity; growing together as one.

We all know Genesis as the story of creation. The world was created in five days and it was good. On the sixth day God created humans in his image and it was very good. We were given life in the image of our Creator and given the task to have authority over the earth. Serving as representatives for the word of God and tending to our home that he has created for us. In this context, our relationship with our creator is impersonal. We were given a job to do and we are to keep that command. But, if we take a closer look, Genesis says “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them.” We are not an impersonal relationship. God took the time to mold and create us in his likeness. We are known on a personal level. We have been tasked with the grand task of maintaining the Earth, and even as we do so; it is easy to be overwhelmed and think that we aren’t equipped with the right tools. God has provided us with all the things we need. The texts to read, the pastors and leaders to help interpret and answer questions, and most importantly the ability to grow in a community together.

This togetherness is important to our growth as a community of believers. It is easy to get tied down with the thought of “what if I’m not good enough or what if I let them down?” As a person who suffers from those thoughts routinely, I feel it’s important to point out that all you need is a tiny piece of hope to remind you that you are made in the image of God. Our Gospel lesson starts off with a parable of the mustard seed. If you’ve seen a mustard seed you know that it’s extremely small, and you would find it hard to believe that a seed so small could grow into a tree big enough to have birds within its branches. There is a beautiful juxtaposition between what is expected and reality and how is it that something so fragile will eventually grow into something grand. This parable does that for us.

This is a **call**, to be an active part of serving in ministry. This is what interning this summer has been about. It has been about discerning a call to ministry. When I started the process of looking at internships for the summer, I had originally applied to work at a nonprofit that a friend of mine runs. I had worked in the church world before and I wanted to explore the nonprofit side of ministry. As life would have it, my application was denied by the office that handles internships at Wesley, a week before the final deadline for the summer.

In a full panic I called my mom in tears because I thought that I wasn’t going to be able to finish my degree this year; and I didn’t want to pay a full year’s tuition for one class. After talking me down she suggested that I call Jessie. She was right, as usual. It took about fifteen minutes to get all the initial details sorted out and we were off and running. When Jessie and I met for coffee at the beginning of March, we had set out all these ideas on what I can do this summer to explore my call more and then as we all know COVID hit. Which after some careful consideration turned out to be a weird blessing in disguise. Due to the restrictions of the summer, I have had my own mustard seed/ kingdom of heaven moment without even realizing it.

How many times have you answered a question without paying attention to what is being asked of you or an even better example is do you actually read all the terms and conditions when you sign up for things? For all we know by simply agreeing we have just given some major company the right to send us a fruit basket in the mail if they want to. My point is that when Jesus asks the disciples in our Gospel lesson “have you understood all of this” and they answer yes, I thought to myself are they saying yes because they truly understand what the parables meant or are they simply agreeing because Jesus had told them five different parables in a short amount of time and they just want him to finish?

Has their response to being asked to go out into the world and grow the kingdom of God become a half-hearted routine? The better question is, “do we do this?” Do we pursue the kingdom of God halfway? I’ll be the first to admit that I have. I’ve heard and seen opportunities to go and share about God’s kingdom and I’ve skirted around that opportunity. There’s been a few times where I’ve run past it hoping that no one will see that I just passed up a chance to be a part of someone’s growth. I did this when I pulled out of Wesley. I had every intention of not returning to school and when my summer placement was almost taken away from me; I had one foot out the door ready to run.

I’ve passed my share of judgments with the mindset, “oh someone else will go and talk to that person.” I have and still do revert to my comfort zone. Closing myself off to the people around me with the idea that someone else will do it. Comfort zones provide just that comfort. They are a place where we feel safe and secure in our own little world where we do not necessarily have to look at the world around us. But we are called to break those boundaries and go and cast our nets deep and wide to reach the people in the world and to plant that mustard seed.

We have to allow ourselves enough space to grow in the kingdom of God with others and have enough space to say I need time to recharge; and it’s completely okay for you to enter into a time of seclusion we just can’t stay there. We must go to an outreach event or embrace our new normal during a time of a pandemic. We need to move away from the safe and be a part of the kingdom of God.

There is always a place for someone to serve in many capacities in the Church, and in the community. God intends for us to fully participate in the growth of the kingdom both here and eternally. This summer has shown me that I am not called to serve in my corporate position forever. I have a passion for teaching children, and I can’t let the fear of what happened in the past, hinder my call to serve. This summer, you have planted a seed hope in my heart. Although it might be larger than mustard seed you were here with open arms, open minds, and open hearts to nurture the growth of my call; and for that I thank you. Together we can embody the words of Jesus, “your kingdom come. Your will be done, on Earth as it is in heaven.”

Endnotes:

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=978](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=978)

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2071](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2071)

<https://www.theologyofwork.org/oldtestament/genesis>

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1079](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1079)