

Unready, Yet Called

Aug. 25, 2019
Rev. Eva Biederman

This summer marks 10 years since I experienced a significant moment in my life – one that I jokingly refer to as my “quarter life crisis” -a moment that would change me and call me down a different path...

somewhat unready – yet called to do something new

something just for me ...

a path that some would say was out of character

no one saw it coming...including me...

And no – I’m not talking about my call to ministry...that came later on.....

I’m talking about my decision to leave my hometown of Victoria ...

Because 10 years ago something shifted, and

I decided to not buy a house with my fiancé at the time...

I decided to not get married

to not settle down and start a family....

10 years ago after months of confusion, tears, pain and guilt...I ended a long term relationship with the man I thought I’d marry, I quit my job, applied for University, and moved to Calgary ...to start over...

Those close to me at the time, some still with me now, some even in this chapel/sanctuary today, knew that it wasn’t a quick or easy decision...but through it all - one thing was certain – I needed to pay more attention to what I wanted out of life...even if that meant disappointing those around me, and doing something different...

...going down a path that wasn’t expected, or familiar to friends and family....a path that I was ultimately unready for...

So,

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Unready for what I left behind....

And yet Unready for what lay ahead of me...

Unready yet called – off I went!

I started my undergraduate degree with an uncertainty of where my life was going.... or even what degree program I was going to take...

What was I doing?

Where was I going?

And why?

These are questions that all of us ask again and again throughout life....

While we're planning and preparing, dreaming and making decisions....

Throughout it all we are regularly rerouting and creating new paths...

Because things don't always go to plan...plans are unpredictable,

obstacles are abundant...being called to do something or be something does not equal an easy road ahead...

Being unready yet called – is just another mystery in being a part of God's world...

Jeremiah was unready yet called.

In fact, he was so unready that he tried convincing God that he shouldn't be called at all.....

He says, I am only a boy!

Too young to know, to speak, to lead...

Too young to bring the people back to God, to worship Yahweh!

Unready or not, God does not back down and reminds Jeremiah that he was knitted, created, known to do this. He is not too young at all...

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God will speak through him, will help him:

“to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

To get it done – to bring the people back to God and God’s will.....

Jeremiah struggles and strives to answer this call during his 40-year ministry – a 40 year call full of disaster and despair, disappointment and destruction...

He struggles while he delivered bad news, criticizing poor leadership and calling out proud nations, struggling through a call full of confusion and frustration...

Which might be a little extreme when we compare his experience to some of our own...

...Maybe, or maybe not???...

But despite our diversity in calls, we can probably all relate to Jeremiah on a much smaller scale and agree that all calls come with ups and downs, disappointment.... maybe even a little bit of destruction...

So, when you look in on your own life, when have you found yourself unready, yet called?

Each one of us here today are in different stages of life...

Some might not be ready to drop a child off at kindergarten...or high school...

Some might not be ready for a new job, or retirement...

Or to downsize and move into a smaller home...

Maybe it’s moving to a retirement home or an assisted living...

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We all feel unready in some way or another....

And I recognize that in our diverse experiences, not all of us can relate to a big rerouting life event like a quarter or mid life crisis...

But something that we all should be able to relate to is the current state of our denomination... and this big shift - call to be a part of something new....

Perhaps in this context, we all feel a little unready – limited in our understanding of the functionality of the new structures of the church – unready for different leadership, unready for new ways of being church –

Ones in which our buildings are not a central focal point.

Ones that encourage us to focus outside of our church doors into the community

Ones that ask us to be experiential, creative, and daring with our worship, outreach, and mission...

Ready or not, this is one example of a call for all of us to hear today.... A call to be the United Church of Canada in new and risky ways...to trust in the unknown, in the new thing that God is up to....even during the moments of despair and destruction...a call that many of us do not want to say yes to because some calls are easier to say yes to than others...

My own call to ordained ministry was an easy yes! However, more often than not I hear calls to paid accountable ministry from folks who have initially ran from their call.....being a bit like Jeremiah and listing all the reasons why they are not equipped....

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But my call to ordained ministry – was not like that.....it came just after that tough time in life - the one I spoke of earlier...that “quarter life crisis”

It came no more than two years after I received a call to do something different with my life and start a new chapter in Calgary.and surprisingly, no other call had ever felt easier to answer....

Maybe it was because the vocation of ministry made sense to me....all of my searching and research of vocations...will it be teaching, nursing, hospitality, counselling....in some way or another pieces of all of these things came to align under this great big umbrella of ministry...so I felt pretty ready right away!

The unready piece, well that came later....

After I answered my call to ordained ministry I discovered early on that I was not quite ready for the sexism or ageism, or the conflict and pettiness....I was not ready for some of the hard conversations and emotionally draining encounters, the expectations and assumptions...for being an empath and feeling the weight of people’s pain, and the pain of the world....

Unready, yet called...the invitation to say yes continues day after day...

I wonder if some of your calls are like that?

And When you think of your “unready yet called” moment....

Where was God?

Did God show up for you?

Because often, it is in these moments of unreadiness that I have felt closest to God

Have you ever found that?

That in the moments of unreadiness,

God finds you,

puts words to your mouth,

calms the anxiety,

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and guides your actions?

For in the unreadiness of it all there is an enormous amount of grace, forgiveness, and strength.

God's work is like that – gifts freely given

Because God always has a way of showing up.... whether we recognize it or not!

God showed up for Jeremiah in some of the most horrible circumstances, through all the ups and downs, the destruction and despair...

And God shows up for us!

God shows up when we've been called,

shows up when we are unready,

shows up when we've committed and said yes –

and when we are uncertain and afraid, having no idea what to do next...

Like Jeremiah, we'll always have reasons why we can't possibly be called to do this or that...one thing or another...

But God reminds us again and again that we are –

Unready, yet called - Before [God] formed you in the womb [she] knew you,

Unready yet called - before you were born [God] consecrated you;

Unready yet called - God is always with you. In the what if's, the why's, the regrouping and rerouting...

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God is with you. You are never alone. So may we not be afraid, and answer God's calls with here I am lord! – I am ready, and called! Amen.