

May 29, 2020

## **The Call**

Some of you know that my undergraduate degree was in Art Education with a minor in Religion. I trained to be an art teacher and worked as such for a semester, filling in for a woman on maternity leave. When the job ended, I could not find another job, so I enrolled in seminary. The rest, I suppose, is history. One of the questions often asked at seminary was, “When did you receive a call?”

As a woman growing up in a rather conservative Mennonite household, I was under the impression that God did not call women to pastoral ministry. I was just a student with a great deal of curiosity about religion. One of tenets of Mennonite theology is the importance of, and an emphasis on community. In the case of a call, the community’s discernment of a call was stronger than an individual’s experience of a call. During my years at seminary, the community recognized and affirmed my gifts for ministry and, hence, my call. And I had to admit that when I looked back at my life, I could point to moments when I did feel that God had been pushing me toward ministry.

I have known Seth Patterson for almost four years. He came to Plymouth from Rockefeller Chapel in Chicago where he served as a licensed minister. Seth was seeking ordination then, but the wheels of church bureaucracy turned slowly, and this was not accomplished before he came to serve Plymouth. Because of our own church dynamics, his path to ordination was delayed even more.

Seth has gone through all the steps toward ordination—including a master’s degree, internships, an ordination paper and panel, and an ecclesiastical council—all completed with flying colors. Seth has demonstrated his gifts for ministry as a teacher, preacher, theater administrator and advocate for justice. This Sunday, our congregation is calling Seth Patterson as Minister for Spiritual Formation and Theater, a role that he has filled since I became the Acting Senior Minister. The vote becomes the final step of discernment in his own personal call to ministry.

In Plymouth’s governance, all ministers are called ministers, and that is how it should be theologically. A Lead/Senior minister cannot call another minister to ministry, it is only the church community that covenants and calls a minister.

I hope you will participate in this sacred and holy calling this Sunday at noon.

Blessings,

*Paula*