

Arvada UMC

## Daring Our Yes

Jan. 22, 2011

Rev. Valerie Oden

Readings: [Mark 1:14-20](#) and “Dare Your Yes” from *The Book of the World*

When I was in middle school I often went with a friend to her house after school to hang out. We would make slice and bake cookies and take them out of the oven before they were done and enjoy the gooey deliciousness of warm raw-ish cookie dough. Don't try this at home.

One day a friend of their family came to the door, sat down with Jayne Ann and me, and began telling us about Jesus. She came back the next week, and the next. At the end of our time with her on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week, she said, “So do you see? If you say yes to Jesus, you can start your new life *right now*. What do you say?” Jayne Ann and I looked at each other, not sure what to say. The woman said, “Well, say yes and be reborn!” That must have sounded kind of cool because we both found ourselves nodding our heads. And then she broke out into a horrible but apparently sincere rendition of Happy Birthday. I

remember saying something like, “But my birthday isn’t for a few months.” And she just laughed and said, “but this is your birthday in Jesus! Now you don’t ever have to worry about anything again! You are sealed for God.”

Some people are fond of naming the very date and time at which they were saved. I’ve never been able to do that. For me it’s more like baby steps, every day.

(Prayer)

We don’t all have the luxury of the fishermen in today’s reading, who are tending their nets on the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus walks right up and says, literally, through his human mouth, “Follow me.” We don’t have Moses’ burning bush with the fire saying “Go and lead my people to freedom.” Most of us haven’t literally been in the belly of a whale like Jonah, wrestled with angels like Jacob, or heard the voice calling our name like Samuel.

Most of us don't have these explicit callings. We are left with doing our best, day by day, moment by moment, to discern the best path and say yes to it. And we have the church, which, through the ages, has done her best to echo the call and give people a way to respond for the betterment of human beings and the world.

We have inspiring individuals who have given their lives for this betterment, people in and out of the church who have said yes to a dangerous adventure. And we have the place inside of us that yearns to make something of our limited years, yearns to find purpose in our days, yearns to live a *good* life.

What is the call of God upon our lives? And what is it that leads us to say "Yes" in any given moment to that call?

I am in awe of the many members of AUMC who seem to have found both a calling and a yes, engaging in a committed way to a certain ministry. What do they give up in doing so? What do they gain?

I asked a few of them. There are dozens of you I could have asked, for our members are engaged in making the call in so many ways. I asked only a few about their calling and response. I asked Carolyn Williams, because of how she lights up when she talks about our local Habitat for Humanity. I asked Bob O'Connell, because he is clearly called by the ministry of Reiki, an energetic healing school. I asked Rebekah Fisher, because she is being smitten, as far as I can tell, by her study group called Just Faith that meets on Sunday afternoons, a 9 month commitment. And I asked Susan Chavez, because she has been a tireless volunteer in our children's ministry for 25 years. I asked these members what their calling was like, how they fell into it, and what they've gained by saying yes.

I want to share with you a little of what they said. Listen for anything that might sound familiar to you, whether it's the growing nature of the call through the years, or the yearning to be of service.

*Habitat just kind of felt like a fit as soon as we heard about it. What sparks my passion is the loaves and*

*fishes aspect. Many, many people share small amounts of their time and money to create a miracle! A home for a family who could never have acquired one without this generosity. We get to offer this opportunity to people to participate in something amazing and also to help give a gift of the opportunity to have a home.*

*During a build and at the end when the home is dedicated, and also during fundraising (especially the pumpkin patch) I have a tremendously strong sensation of God's love at work. So strong a feeling that it's hard to describe. It's pretty wonderful, really. (Carolyn Williams)*

.....

*In the early 90's I was dealing with [personal challenges]. I had 3 wonderful [professionals help me through that]. One was a Psych nurse during the Vietnam era and the other 2 were licensed counselors. I also started martial arts, as my doc thought it may help [...]. In the later 90's I got interested in various energies modalities.*

*In the early 2000's a good friend and my massage therapist was doing some strange things on my back. She said it was called Reiki. I knew that I wanted to learn that modality also.*

*After receiving certification we both were drawn into an organization that did Reiki and Healing touch with cancer patients. I don't like the term "giving back to the community" as it seems trite and overused. I did however reflect on those 3 women who helped me immensely in the 90's.*

***I felt there was something I could offer*** to people suffering from cancer.

*It didn't require having a "degree" in nursing, counseling or other specialties.*

*All that was required was a desire to be of service to someone who was in pain.*

*I have been with that organization for 8 years and find the work very rewarding and also humbling.*

*(Bob O'Connell)*

~~~~~

**Everything is a calling if you look at it the right way:** the morning news, the person on the street corner with a sign for help, the children in your household wanting you to read a book, the meal you have to prepare later in the day, the latest outreach activity in the church bulletin. It's just a matter of if we are paying attention and of asking ourselves if/how we are going to respond.

Both Social Concerns Committee and Just Faith have blessed my life greatly, caused me to grow in my faith, my understanding of Jesus and his ministry, and my purpose here and now. They have allowed me to use my gifts, to work with other wonderful people, and to make a difference at our church, in our community, and in our world. They've opened my eyes to my community and my world and to myself. **How could I not say Yes?** (Rebekah Fisher)

~~~~~

I was first asked to teach Sunday School in 1986. My first class was pre-school. I had never been a teacher, but I just enjoyed being with the kids. When

*Godly Play was introduced, I immediately saw how this curriculum is so great teaching kids the stories of the Bible.*

*I think the more time kids have with caring adults, especially one on one, the more they can absorb and the better people they can become. Being a teacher is a very special kind of relationship, for both the adult and the child. I learn so much from the kids. I appreciate a different way of seeing the world. We all need to play a little more, to laugh more, and to hug more.*

*So, I guess you could say, I saw the need children have for special caring adults in their lives. And somehow, I have a need inside me to fulfill that. Yes, I need to be with kids. They rock my world.*

*So, I **guess I would define a calling as something that I need that needs me back.***

*And I got to thinking about that and I realized that when Jesus asks the disciples to “follow me”, he wasn’t just offering to be a tour guide to the City of*

*Eternal Life. He was asking them to follow him, to join him, because he needed them. To complete the mission. And he is still asking us today. (Susan Chavez)*

~~~~~

I hear a thread in these AUMC members' thoughts about calling. None of them describes a lightning bolt experience where they woke up one day and knew clearly how this day would be different. Rather, it was a gradual process of being open, listening, being willing, and responding.

And I hear how they *want* to give, and how their own lives are nourished by doing so.

Saying yes may start in the quiet recesses of our hearts where we hear a stirring: perhaps a stirring to make a difference, or walk in goodness; perhaps as a stirring to serve, or to change the world; for some it might be a stirring sense inside that there's more to life than what our culture tells us.

Saying yes is what we do when we come to church on a Sunday morning. In this hour, we're saying yes to setting aside some time out of our week to ground

ourselves in the journey, to remind ourselves of our purpose as human beings, to connect with others intentionally, and to remember the call.

Our calling at AUMC might well be to raise the light of what Christianity can mean as an inclusive community of people committed to lifting each other up, supporting each other, welcoming all, not proclaiming that we have the only way or the only savior, and being out in the world making it a little better.

Our calling at AUMC might be to hold the ground that says, Christianity is not just what the media portrays. We have a different voice, an important voice, one that affirms other expressions of faith, one that proclaims the call of Jesus that says love one another, no matter what.

Dr. Kirbey Godsey puts the call this way:

*Jesus' faith was close to the street, and on those streets he bumped into the learned, the blind, and the beggars. He crossed paths with the rich and powerful, with outcasts and adulterers. He*

*socialized with young friends and a whole crowd of people who were willing to sit on a hillside to hear what he had to say. The fact is that Jesus was not very discriminating. He embraced tax collectors, Samaritans, and thieves. The word from God which Jesus taught and lived on the streets of Nazareth and Damascus and Jerusalem was this: We are called to relate as God relates to us, to forgive, to become makers of peace, to be instruments of grace, in short, to embrace a new way of living together in the world, including living with those who are committed to diverse religious traditions. -*

*-Dr, Kirbey Godsey, ["Redeeming Our Religion"](#)*

It's not a lightning bolt to ask ourselves at the end of a day, did I live as a better human being today than yesterday? Did I lift someone up? Did I support goodness? Did I love another? When we can say "yes" to that, then day by day, moment by moment, we are saying Yes to the call of God; and we're not so different from the fishermen by the lakeshore, tending our nets when Jesus walks up and says, Follow me.

Responsive Hymn: “The Summons”, *The Faith We Sing* # 2130