

SEARCHING FOR THE CALL by Warren Lynn

I envision a middle-aged minister who sits at her desk as the sun rises in the east. From now until evening's shadows dissolve into complete darkness, time has been set aside. A space has been made. During this Sabbath of discernment, she is in full anticipation of the surprising way God's breath will fill her life. To honor, even welcome, this divine presence a candle is lit. It will be a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence surrounding and inspiring her life.

Fertile, thoughtful silence. Breathing in calmness and exhaling distraction. Receptive prayer in which the ears of the soul are exercised more than the voice of the mind. Well asked questions become more important in this time than any answer ever could be. This is not yet a time for answers. Answers are for later; this is a time for asking, and allowing the silence of God to be enough. It is a time for listening, and making room for God's love to carry her beyond the possibilities of her own anxious limitations. Indeed, the well asked questions are enough, maybe even more than enough. Certainly they would be too much if God were not present to reshape the chaos of so many unknowns into a new creation of care and purpose. And so, trust becomes a torch for this faithful witness, and mindful intention becomes her pathway as she seeks to meet up with God in the dancing light along the way.



The day goes on; too quickly and too long. The hours come as an exquisite gift of restful joy, but are also exhausting. Finally, when her head finds its place upon a pillow for the night, rest comes quickly; reward for a well exercised spirit.

As intended, only after such a wonder filled pilgrimage will she continue her spiritual endeavor on the very next day by crafting careful answers for her next Search and Call profile.

The time comes in the life of every Disciples minister, often several times, when new forms must be filled out and references secured in order to enter the process of seeking a new position in ministry.

As I have known in my own life, however, and witnessed in the lives of some very dear colleagues, this effort is occasionally made within an unfortunate mixture of secular pragmatism and naive sense of privilege; we sometimes think it is only or mostly about wanting or needing another job. Maybe there were times when we even thought it was the church's responsibility to provide one for us.

In reference to the latter, we all need the occasional reminder that possibilities for new and appropriate positions of ministry do not fall at our feet simply because of education level, number of years in ministry, attitudes of deserved recognition, or anything else. Profiles that are not well crafted, sensitively written, and combed over to eliminate every possible typographical error and grammatical misstep can undo the intentions of even those who are most gifted. Those of us who have not nurtured a healthy relationship with our regional minister or made strategic selections of referents do ourselves a great disservice in the effort to seek a new position of ministry.

At the same time it is important to understand the deeper, spiritual issues connected with Search and Call. This process (however imperfect) is offered to ministers and congregations alike as a tool to facilitate our best efforts of spiritual discernment. Seeking clarity about whom God is calling into service as pastors of particular congregations and spiritual communities, and which community of faith God is calling a particular minister to serve, are some of the most important contexts we apply to this process of Search and Call.

As our congregations and pastors continue participating in the Search and Call process, I pray significant efforts of spiritual discernment will increasingly be manifest as the founding touchstones of our experience. For all we seek to manage when it comes to establishing new relationships between pastors and congregations, the best work we can do is seek God's lead in intentional ways and then mindfully follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit wherever we are led.

Additional Information

- To learn more about the Search and Call process, check out the Web site: <http://www.discipleshomeissions.org/SearchAndCall>
- For more information, you may also contact [The Rev. Warren Lynn](#), Director of Search and Call in the Office of Christian Vocation, Division of Homeland Ministries.
- A great source to help strengthen spiritual practice in the midst of life and ministry can be found at: <http://www.practicingourfaith.org>.

Warren Lynn is director of Search and Call in the Office of Christian Vocations at Disciples Home Missions. Lynn, an ordained Disciples pastor from the northwestern part of the United States, has over 20 years of vocational ministry experience, and holds a deep passion for the spiritual formation of Christian leaders. His personal interests include: Celtic spirituality, fly fishing, sea kayaking, mindfulness practice, and cooking.