



Dear Friends in Christ,

What causes someone to go to seminary and enter full-time Christian ministry as a vocation? It isn't the job for everybody. Many pastors graduate from college and seminary with a heavy burden of student debt that limits their availability to serve in some settings. Most pastors admit feeling unprepared for what they face in ministry. Surveys show that many pastors are overworked and depressed.

And yet, people still answer the call to ministry. Why? Because they believe God is calling them. I believe that call most often comes through congregations that faithfully, graciously, and joyfully serve the world. People see the Church making a difference in the world and they want to be part of that. Most people who go to seminary come from healthy, mission-focused congregations.

The Church needs pastors. Of course, the work of ministry is the responsibility of the whole Body of Christ, the whole Church. However, you know what happens when something is everybody's job. The job often remains undone. Everybody assumes somebody else more qualified will get the job done. So through the Church God calls pastors to lead the Church in faithfully carrying out its ministry.

And who does God call? Some churches believe that God calls only men into ministry. However, there are clear Biblical examples of God calling women into ministry. In the Old Testament there was Deborah and Huldah. In the New Testament there was Mary Magdalene

(who delivered the first Easter message to the apostles) and Priscilla (who trained Apollos to preach more accurately). Jesus praised Mary of Bethany for choosing to sit at his feet as a disciple even though others criticized her because they thought she belonged only in the kitchen.

In 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul refers to women prophesying and praying. In other contexts Paul did prohibit women from speaking or teaching in church. However, Paul seemed to base those prohibitions more on the customs of first century churches and his own personal policy rather than on any eternal commands from God.

We don't ordain women into ministry as a matter of equal rights. No one has any personal right to be ordained by the Church. In LCMC we ordain both men and women as a matter of the freedom that we believe is granted to us in the Gospel of Jesus.

LCMC has a good number of students at several different seminaries preparing for a calling to ministry. Here at Peace we can celebrate that another one of our own is entering seminary this fall. Stacey Duensing is enrolled as a student at Western Theological Seminary in Michigan. She doesn't yet know what kind of Christian ministry she is called to, but her seminary education will prepare her to serve the Church in whatever way she is called.

Stacey will be in Deshler on the Sunday of the County Fair to share a message at the County Fair worship service in the grandstand. The Church Council invites the congregation to make a special gift this fall to help pay tuition for Stacey's first year of seminary. If you would like to help, please put your gift in the Sunday offering marking it "seminary fund".

I hope that our support for Stacey will not only encourage her in her future ministry, but I hope it will also encourage other people to see the value Peace Lutheran places on the call to full-time vocational ministry in the Church. Our support of Stacey is an investment in the future of the Church.

Yours in Christ, *Phil Nielsen*