



A Word about Calling: Fleshing Out the Call

Nenette Measels

Associate Campus Minister/BSU Director
Carson-Newman College
Jefferson City, Tennessee

The process of my calling began in high school when I felt led of God to consider career ministry possibilities. In the late 60s the options I was aware of were those of missionary or minister's spouse. I thought how wonderful it would be to marry a minister and fulfill my calling in that role.

I met my husband, Clark, at a BSU picnic at East Central Community (Junior) College in Decatur, Mississippi, which began a 29 year journey together. I must mention Miss Gladys Bryant who served as the BSU Director at ECCC while Clark and I were students there. She was an inspiration to her students and a model of tremendous love for BSU and Christian service.

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My commitment to God has been interwoven with my commitment to Clark through 25 years of marriage. Through college and the first 11 years of marriage, we served together as a ministry team working with several churches in the areas of children, youth, music, and education, while Clark completed three advanced degrees. For all but four of those years, Clark was the paid staff minister and I was a "volunteer." I served in paid positions as Education Director at First Baptist Church, Ellisville, Mississippi, and as Church Pianist at First Baptist Church, Shepherdsville, Kentucky. While Clark was a student at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, I struggled with God's continuing call to pursue a seminary degree in Christian education. My eyes were opened to more possibilities for women in ministry.

Clark accepted a teaching position in the Music Department at Carson-Newman College and we moved to Jefferson City, Tennessee. During our first year there I was very unsettled and struggled to find my "place." I was still dealing with my sense of call, but also with the reality of very limited church ministry opportunities for women in the area. We attended the Tennessee Baptist Convention and it was there that I made a commitment to career Christian service and to go back to Southern Seminary. I didn't know how Clark and I would work that out with his teaching career just beginning at Carson-Newman.

She Said, "Tell them to be our hope when we have none."

I kept asking God to show me where I could find a church position after seminary in the Jefferson City area. The response I received told me to step out in faith not knowing all the answers about the future.

With a year of preparation and strong support from Clark, I began my seminary training in the Fall of 1985. I had a campus apartment and commuted to Jefferson City every 2 weeks. I was licensed to the Gospel ministry in May 1987 by First Baptist Church, Dandridge, Tennessee.

After seminary graduation in May of 1987, I served as Minister of Education/Music at First Baptist Church, Middlesboro, Kentucky for five years, which is 60 miles from Jefferson City. We maintained two homes—one in each place, thus continuing our commuter marriage for a total of seven years. I had a tremendous seminary experience and a very rewarding ministry in Middlesboro, where Clark and I were ordained in June, 1989. However, a commuter marriage is difficult, and I wouldn't recommend it for every couple. God taught us the value of quality time together, as well as many other lessons about life and commitment.

Our ultimate goal of living under the same roof came with the opening of an associate campus minister/BSU director position at Carson-Newman in 1992. I had never considered being a

campus minister; I loved serving in the local church! My eyes were opened to the fact that I was limiting God's use of my life. I re-dreamed my vision of service and Christian education in a college setting. I went for the interview and to my surprise, was offered the job!

I have now completed my seventh year at Carson-Newman and have loved working with college students! Jim Wilson, my campus ministry colleague, shepherded me through the first year helping me to learn the ropes of collegiate ministry. It is thrilling and very rewarding to serve as minister, educator and friend to so many wonderful students! It has truly been a joy and I look forward to many years of service here or wherever God leads.

During the last couple of years I have counseled with female students struggling with eating disorders. This has been one of the most difficult challenges of my ministry, but also one of those "ministry confirmation moments". One day I was preparing a presentation to other BSU directors on eating disorders. I asked a student dealing with anorexia/bulimia, whom I had months earlier taken to the hospital emergency room for a life-threatening drug overdose, what she would like for me to share with other campus ministers working with students with eating disorders. She said, "Tell them to be our hope when we have none." I realized I couldn't solve her problems for her nor have all the answers, but I could fulfill my calling by being Christ's presence of hope for her and others.

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