

6-1-1995

Theology, News and Notes - Vol. 42, No. 02

Fuller Theological Seminary

Elizabeth L. Patterson

Randall D. Roth

Esther S. Brinkley

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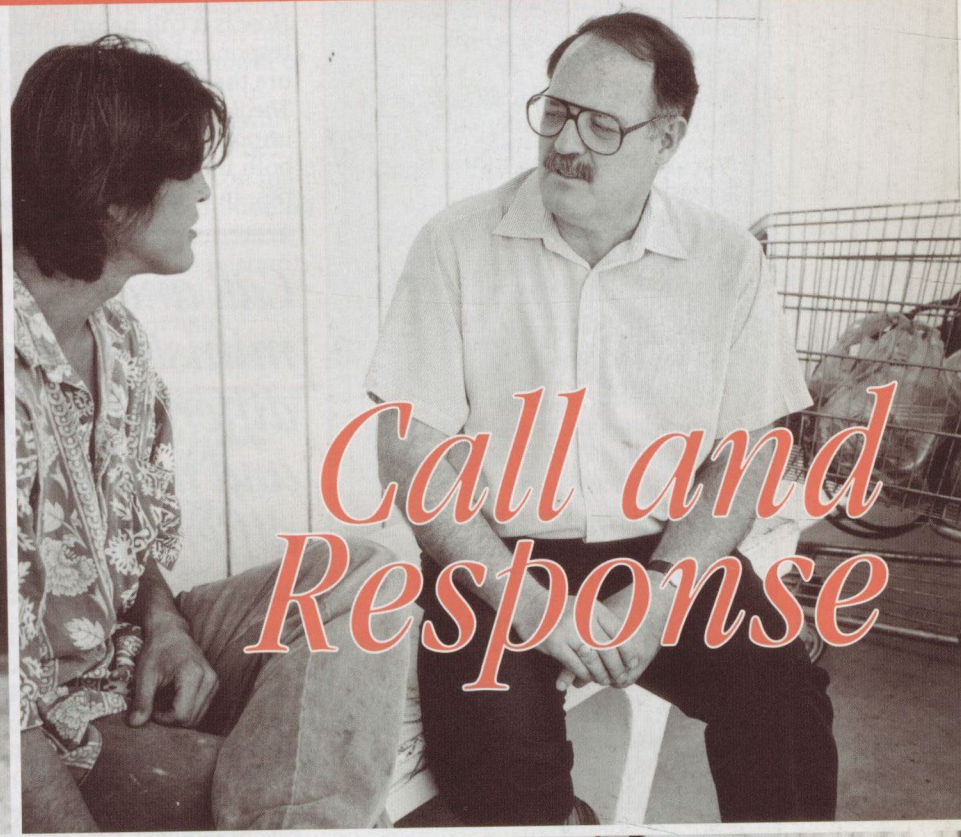
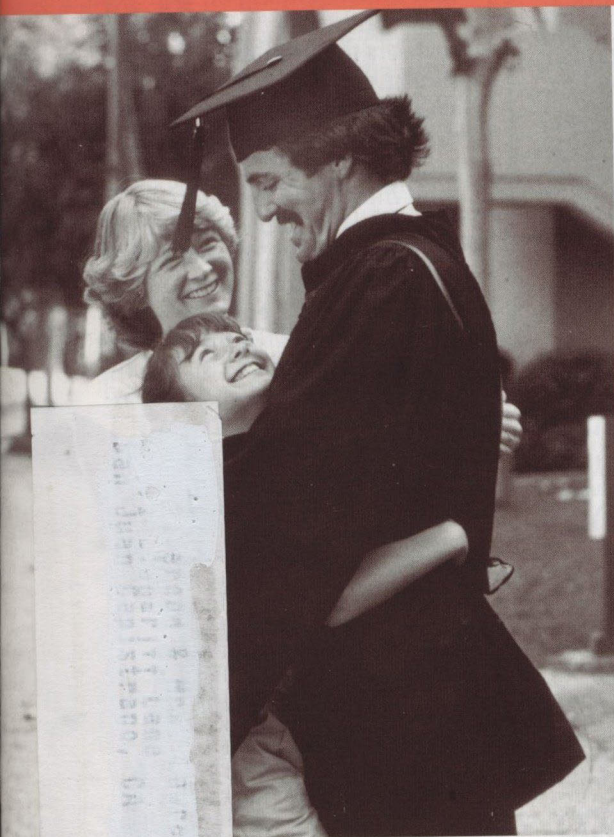
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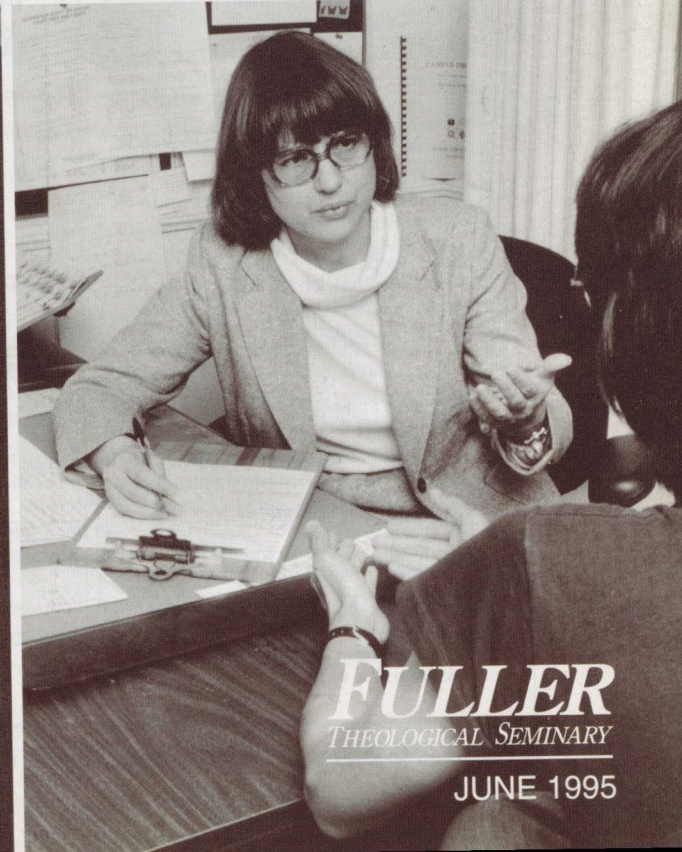
Fuller Theological Seminary; Patterson, Elizabeth L.; Roth, Randall D.; and Brinkley, Esther S., "Theology, News and Notes - Vol. 42, No. 02" (1995). *Theology News & Notes*. 183.
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THEOLOGY, NEWS AND NOTES



Call and Response



FULLER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

JUNE 1995

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Introduction

BY ELIZABETH L. PATTERSON

Why does someone go into the ministry? What, for that matter, do we mean by "the ministry"? How is a call heard, understood, responded to? These questions are the focus of this edition of *Theology, News and Notes*. The importance of other Christians, both individuals and communities, in developing lives of

Call and ministry take different forms and nuances in different eras.

faithful ministry are highlighted in the Roth and the Brinkley articles. Both writers have been deeply impacted by the experience of such lives. My article, and the Blackmon and Thomsen one, highlight sociological and psychological issues which are necessary to deal with, since self-knowledge is a foundational

concern for healthy ministry. The Rohrer article demonstrates the importance of commitment in discerning call.

Five persons have shared their calls and ministries in brief articles. The stories of Stout, Doulos, Perkins, Smith, and the Altons, with their responses to, and understanding of, God's call, may contain the most profound answers to our questions of ministry and call. For it is the unique combination of the particular and the general, the individual story and our common humanity, which so distinguishes God's work through us in the world. Call and ministry take different forms and nuances in different eras. Henrietta Mears' ministry might look very different in the 1990s; the psychological issues facing ministers is a relatively new concept; the contributions of those among whom we minister have not always been recognized. God's story is uniquely lived out in each historical place and time. And God's story has most often been told through the medium of other stories. The common elements of faithfulness, commitment, and response characterize all these stories. And, ultimately, it is that faithful response, rather than the distinctness of the call, which most validates the ministry of a particular life. ■

ELIZABETH L. PATTERSON, Ph.D., is associate dean for ministry development and assistant professor of ministry development in Fuller's School of Theology. She served as assistant provost for three years, and was the first woman member of the Cabinet. She was also the founding director of Fuller's Office of Women's Concerns and the seminary's Office of Career Services. She is in wide demand as a conference and seminar speaker.



Published for the Fuller Theological Seminary Alumni/ae, June 1995
Volume 42 • Number 2 • USPS627220

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A publication of Fuller Theological Seminary, 135 North Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, California 91182. Published four times a year in March, June, October and December. Second-class postage paid at Pasadena, California.

The editorial content of *Theology, News and Notes* reflects the opinions of the various authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the views of Fuller Theological Seminary.

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Postmaster: Send change of address to FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
135 N. Oakland Avenue
Pasadena, CA 91182.

The Church: A Calling and Sending Community

BY RANDALL D. ROTH

Many are called, but few are sent. That was my experience as I look back on my years as a divinity student in the late '60s and early '70s. Many of us had enrolled in seminary in search of significance during turbulent times. More than a few were uncertain as to a direction, uneasy with the church, and ambivalent about the pastorate. It seemed more the exception than the rule to run into a seminary colleague who had a clear-cut sense of having been called into ministry.

Neither do I remember very many students who were sent to seminary by their home churches. Local church recommendations were often a formality, comprised of generalities because the folks back home hadn't seen much of their students who had gone away to college. The pastor was left to comment on the applicant's overall suitability for ministry by harkening back several years to when he or she showed real promise as a youth leader or camp counselor. But the pastor likely wouldn't have much to say about current gifts or call, as those are tested in the context of supervising an apprenticeship. This may be overstating the case but it is, nevertheless, my recollection.

A RADICALLY TRANSFORMED CONCEPT OF CALLING

Midway through my years at Fuller, my view of the church, the role of the pastor, and the concept of calling became radically transformed, thanks in large part to Robert Munger. It was my privilege, from 1968 to 1970, to be a part of his Faith Renewal Team. The principles he taught in the course *Church Renewal and Training the Laity for*

Ministry were inculcated and modeled as he drew us students around him. He cast a fresh and exciting vision for the renewal of the church as he mentored us, taking us with him on renewal missions to local churches and giving us feedback based on up-close observations of our budding gifts and callings.

My personal call to pastoral ministry was affirmed in that relational context of team ministry. It was the experience

Instead of the old paradigm in which the minister ministers and the congregation congregates, there emerged a new paradigm, thoroughly biblical.

with Bob Munger and my fellow Faith Renewal Team members which fueled a vision for the whole church as a team ministry. Instead of the old paradigm in which the minister ministers and the congregation congregates, there emerged a new paradigm,

thoroughly biblical: God's people are called to be ministers. And the Christian community should be the setting in which the believer's unique combination of spiritual gifts, passions, and callings to advance the Kingdom are tried and tested, acknowledged, affirmed, and directed. The church then becomes both the calling and the sending community.

AN EXPERIMENT IN COPASTORAL TEAM MINISTRY

I began ministry with these beliefs, and my first call allowed me to test them out. The small, ten-year-old congregation known as West Hills Covenant Church in Portland, Oregon, took a big risk in calling Ted Nordland and me as copastors. We agreed to share one salary and, together, with our wives, Jeannine and Diane, we lived in the spacious parsonage. Instead of a position-based concept of ministry, we were interested in exploring a gift-based ministry. Ted and I hoped to free each other up to exercise our spiritual gifts, diversify according to our strengths, and cover each other in our weaknesses. The vision was clear. What wasn't so clear was how to implement it. We made a lot of mistakes and a lot of people nervous, including ourselves. The West Hills Covenant community graciously stuck by us, even though they may have sometimes wondered.

For 16 years, the Nordlunds and Roths lived and served together, along with our brothers and sisters who had caught the vision of shared ministry. Building community and releasing the ministry of the laity were our key objectives, which we implemented by forming small groups (house churches) shepherded by lay pastors. It was in the context of the home fellowship group that pastoral gifts were identified and affirmed by the community. Shepherding a home group became a recognized calling at West Hills. Our lay shepherds would come before the congregation in the setting of

a worship service and have hands laid upon them. Affirmed in their call from God, they would be sent by the community to shepherd the flock as members of the pastoral team. Several of our lay shepherds later went on to seminary for further training and today are serving churches as senior pastors.

Meanwhile, people of all ages—ordained and unordained—were being called and sent to serve Christ in a wide variety of other ministries: church planting, teaching, inner-city tutoring, intercessory prayer, drama teams, short-term and career missions, citywide concerts of prayer, community service projects, journalism, outreach to the homeless, counseling, adoption of unreached people groups, and economic development in Third-World countries. In our corporate worship gatherings we would often say, "Some of you won't be here at this time next year." It was our delight to send people off to fulfill their callings. We called those happy departures "holy subtractions."

WHO IS CALLED TO MINISTRY?

There are scores of people in the church today who are ministering anonymously. They are contributing to the Body of Christ; they are functioning as salt and light in the world with their God-given gifts. And yet their contributions are not recognized by the Body. One might ask, Should they be recognized? But the central issue of recognition does not have to do with self-esteem. Recognition of giftedness and calling has more to do with accountability, training, and deployment. If someone has perfect pitch, that person becomes accountable for a musical gift which was given by God. The gifted person can do nothing with it or can take music lessons in order to develop the gift. This process of accountability thus necessitates the community's recognition of the gifts and callings God has chosen to invest in his people. The calling is not something the

community issues, it is something the community recognizes. It is the responsibility of the church as a whole, and especially of its leaders, to recognize and affirm the gifts within its ranks.

THE OAKLAND LEGACY

Both the Nordlunds and the Roths had agreed from the beginning that we would not leave the Portland ministry

It is the responsibility of the church as a whole, and especially of its leaders, to recognize and affirm the gifts within its ranks.

without a sense of being sent. After 16 years, that is just what happened. I received an invitation to my present church. And, after an intense period of wrestling which involved not only both families but the congregation, together we sensed that this indeed was a missionary call.

And so for the past seven years, I have served as the senior pastor of the First Covenant Church in Oakland, California. Throughout its history, this church has translated Jesus' disciple-making mandate into practical reality. I have inherited a rich legacy of "equipping the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:11).

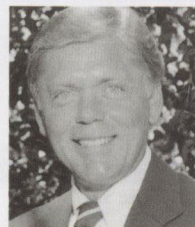
An effective equipping tool at First Covenant is its internship program, which was well-established before I arrived. Every year we receive applications for

internship from people within our congregation and from other churches who want to test out their spiritual gifts under the supervision of a seasoned pastoral staff and lay leadership. We offer year-long internships in middle school, high school, or college ministries, worship and music ministries, inner-city and cross-cultural ministries. The intern must raise half of his or her support. We provide the housing. Some of our interns continue on for a second year, in which case we call it a *residency*. This next step requires the intern to combine ministry experience with theological education. Many of our interns have gone on to seminary and are today serving as youth pastors, missionaries, parachurch staffers, and senior pastors.

Sometimes an internship will lay the foundation for an ongoing and expanding ministry. Six years ago an urban outreach became a birthing ground for our Fruitvale Hispanic Church. The intern worked with a team of youth and adults to reach the children of our inner-city Latino families. It began as a weekly kids club and expanded to daily vacation Bible school, including tutoring and field trips, and then moved from children to adults. Next came a year-long intern from North Park Seminary who began Bible studies for adults and a weekly worship service. Gradually, it became a church fellowship. This outreach

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RANDALL D. ROTH, D.Min., is the senior pastor of the First Covenant Church in Oakland, California. A prayer associate of the Evangelical Covenant Church, he is a member of the Concerts of Prayer International and is on the Steering Committee for East Bay Prayer Summits. He is also the author/compiler of *Prayer Powerpoints* (Victor Books, 1995).



An Instrument of Calling: Henrietta Mears

BY ESTHER S. BRINKLEY

Henrietta C. Mears served as the Christian education director of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood between 1928 and 1963. During those years, her Sunday school grew to be the largest in the world at that time. Her College Department of 600 college-age young people became world-famous. She had a profound influence on several generations of outstanding men and women in Christian leadership today.

She founded Gospel Light Publications and GLINT, its international translation and distribution division—which led to the later book publishing company, Regal Books. She established Forest Home Christian Conference Center in Southern California's San Bernardino Mountains. She was also a founder of the National Sunday School Association. The entertainment industry's Hollywood Christian Group was begun in her home.

When she walked into heaven and into history in 1963, 2,000 people celebrated her life and ministry at her memorial service. At that time it was noted that more than 400 men and women were serving in various fields of ministry around the world as a direct result of her spiritual influence upon their lives.

Henrietta Mears definitely was not sent to "Hollywood Pres" from Central Casting. In no way did this short, stocky spinster with squinty vision and a gravelly voice fit the image of a great leader of youth. And how could "the most significant work among our nation's youth by a woman in the twentieth century"¹ be done in Hollywood, a modern-day Babylon, the sin-city of the world, capital of artificiality, ambition, and avarice? And how could such an astounding ministry be accomplished by a woman in an era when women in leadership were considered out of place? The answer to these questions was deceptively simple: Miss Mears

merely took Psalm 37:5 to heart, making it her life's motto: *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*

Daughter of an affluent banker in Minneapolis, young Henrietta did not have to earn a living. But she loved the academic world and chose to train as an educator. As she was a devout Christian, after much prayer she broke off her relationship with a young banker who had asked her to marry him—for he was of another faith.

While she was teaching high school, the Fidelis Bible Class she taught on Sundays at the Minneapolis First Baptist Church grew to over 500 in attendance.

A visiting preacher from California, Stewart P. MacLennan, was so impressed with her proficiency at teaching the Bible that he invited her to come to Hollywood as director of Christian education at the Presbyterian church he pastored. Miss Mears, however, planned to do postgraduate study at Columbia University. But on a visit to MacLennan's church on the West Coast, the Lord revealed to her that he had a special calling for her. Miss Mears believed God and moved to Hollywood. "After I went through that final door," she later recalled, "life was one great adventure!"²

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

"God does not always choose great people to accomplish what he wishes," she often said, "but he chooses a person who is wholly yielded to him . . . one who will become a channel of the Holy Spirit."³ It is God who

RICHARD C. HALVERSON • *Former Chaplain, United States Senate:*

"In my mind, Henrietta Mears was the giant of Christian education—not only in her generation, but in this century. She was an extraordinary combination of intellect, devotion, and spirituality; an administrative genius, a motivator, an encourager, and a leader. . . . There is simply no way to exaggerate her effectiveness as a teacher, communicator, and inspirer."⁴

WILLIAM R. BRIGHT • *Founder/President, Campus Crusade for Christ:*

"Dr. Henrietta Mears was truly one of the great women of the twentieth century and one of the greatest influences of my life. . . . She directly disciplined hundreds of young men and women whom God led into full-time Christian ministry. Today, no doubt, thousands of additional disciples whom they influenced are, in turn, introducing millions of other people to Christ. Her life was a life of spiritual multiplication."⁵

BILLY GRAHAM • *Evangelist:*

"I doubt if any other woman outside of my wife and mother had such a marked influence on my life. Her gracious spirit, her devotional life, her steadfastness for the simple gospel, and her knowledge of the Bible have been a continual inspiration and amazement to me. Henrietta Mears was one of the greatest Christians I have ever known!"⁶

DAVID ALLAN HUBBARD • *President Emeritus, Fuller Seminary:*

"My memories of Henrietta Mears can prompt a tear or spark a smile. The tears come when I think of the magnificent impact she had on so many lives, including my own. I have never known anyone who called young people to Christian commitment with more integrity and effectiveness. Her ability to spot people with spiritual gifts and groom them for Christian service was utterly uncanny."⁷

converts people," she taught. "We are merely the instruments."

Christ was always at the center of her teaching. She also believed that true leadership begins with commitment to Christ. "No matter how brilliant someone may be, he or she must experience the regenerating power of the resurrected Christ before that person's real potential can be liberated,"⁴ she stressed.

Although Clarence Roddy [former Fuller homiletics professor] called her "the greatest preacher in Southern California,"⁵ among her intimates she liked to be known as "Teacher" or "Miss Mears." She reminded her collegians that "Jesus was a teacher, not a preacher. He taught the disciples; he taught the multitudes." She considered being called *Teacher* the greatest compliment. But, as one student said, "Teacher never got in the way. We always saw Christ."

DEDICATION TO GOD'S WORD

Henrietta Mears believed that God's Word should be the Christian leader's guide. In her daily devotional hour, she opened her Bible with eager anticipation. And out of this personal fellowship with God came unforgettable messages from Scripture.

Because Miss Mears believed that the Bible was the most poorly taught book in the world, she began writing her own Sunday school materials for her church, closely graded to each age-level's needs and interests. "If we present God's Word so that it meets the needs of young and old alike, we will have a successful Christian education program,"⁶ she said. Her driving purpose in life was to get people directly involved in reading the Scriptures. Then she knew the Holy Spirit would work in their lives.

As her Sunday school began growing at a phenomenal rate, she recognized that she needed more teachers and leaders. So she decided to train her own people. Thus, teacher-training

classes became a constant part of the Christian education program at the Hollywood church. People not only needed to be won to Christ, she believed, but trained to serve.

A DYNAMIC PRAYER LIFE

One of the first things that impressed those around her was that Henrietta Mears knew God, and God knew her. They were on speaking terms with each other.⁷ People didn't dare come to Teacher about a problem, unless they were willing to get down on their knees—right then and there. "Let's pray about it, *right now!*" was always her suggestion.

"God does not always choose great people to accomplish what he wishes."

Then she would encourage the person to keep praying until convinced of God's answer.

When Miss Mears prayed, she spoke to God as someone speaks to a friend. And she was never formal in her prayers. She would say to her partner in prayer: "Now don't waste words on the Lord. Tell him definitely what's on your mind."⁸

Robert B. Munger, professor emeritus at Fuller Seminary and one of Miss Mears' "boys," remembers: "The times of prayer with her through the years . . . are among my fondest memories, because they brought me so close to our Lord."⁹ Louis H. Evans, Jr., and his wife, Colleen, recall how they "learned to do spiritual warfare from a bent-knee position." They remember how Teacher "would grasp the throne of God and give it a good shake!"¹⁰

FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP TRAINING

Miss Mears knew that God had called her to train leaders. From the time she was a young high school teacher in Minnesota, she had felt God's call upon her life. "But only *one* Henrietta could have gone to the mission field,"¹¹ she would later explain. So, instead of sending her, God asked her to multiply herself in the lives of others.

The more people she could involve in Christian education activities at church, the more leadership potential she felt was being developed. "My job is to spot the potential in a person,"¹² she said. It didn't matter whether the person was doing anything worthwhile at the time or not, as long as she saw his or her possibilities.

In her nurturing of potential leaders, she operated on a principle she learned from the Scripture: Jesus taught the multitudes; he disciplined the 12 apostles; but he lived on a daily basis with Peter, James, and John, who he had chosen for leadership. Following Christ's example, Miss Mears was always available to those she was disciplining. And no matter how demanding her schedule became, she would never have an unlisted phone number. "My young people must always be able to reach me," she said.

After she was instrumental in the choice of a young, unknown evangelist named Billy Graham to conduct a tent-meeting campaign in Los Angeles in 1949, Billy often phoned her long distance to talk over problems and share the victories of his future evangelistic campaigns.

Teacher had a God-given ability to spot leadership potential. But she never told a young person that God was calling him or her into Christian service. "People must be called by God,"¹³ she stressed. She merely created an atmosphere in which young people felt close to God, then challenged them with his Word, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. Yet Teacher seemed to

have a hotline to God. She often knew, even before they did, when those she was mentoring were being called into some form of ministry.

And, although it was sometimes difficult for her, she worked within the confines of the social structure of her day, encouraging young men to enter the ministry and young women to enter Christian education or missions. In later years, when it became denominationally acceptable, one of her "girls," Peggy Cantwell, became one of the first women to be accepted into Fuller's Master of Divinity program (*Fuller Focus*, Spring 1994).

Miss Mears had a great capacity to love, and she revealed this Christ-like love for each individual whose life she touched. Believing that God could use anyone totally surrendered to him, she tried to "see what God sees" in every person: "Christ saw a writer in a tax collector, a preacher in a fisherman, a world evangelist in a murderer," she wrote in her own personal "Ten Commandments."

VISION FOR THE WORLD

Miss Mears thought big. When she envisioned the work of the local church, she saw the Church universal. When she thought of her ministry, she thought of the world. She constantly challenged her young people to ask the crucial question that the Apostle Paul asked: "Lord, what will you have me do?" (Acts 9:6). "We need people who will dare to be true to the calling of Christ!" she declared.¹⁴

An inquiring college graduate in her class named Bill Bright later wrote to her: "From the time I heard you challenge us . . . my life began to change. Through your teaching I was encouraged to give my life to Christ and follow his leading. The establishment of Campus Crusade for Christ was the result."¹⁵

So dynamic was her challenge to youth that Dick

Halverson, one of her College Department leaders who would later enter the ministry, said he thought of her as a female Apostle Paul. In fact, he often referred to her as the "Epistle Paul,"¹⁶ because she expounded biblical theology with such authority.

While Miss Mears thought big, she was never impressed by

Jesus taught the multitudes; he disciplined the 12 apostles; but he lived on a daily basis with Peter, James, and John.

mere numbers or crowds. She always saw people as individuals. "God always works through the individual," she said. "One man, Luther, started the Reformation in Germany. One man, Moses, led the children of Israel out of Egypt. One man, Paul, carried the gospel to the Roman Empire."¹⁷

AN EXPENDABLE LIFE

Miss Mears often spoke of being "expendable" for Christ. Those who knew her best say she was personally gifted with three "E's": enthusiasm, energy, and excellence. And she harnessed these gifts to work for the Savior.

Enthusiasm. Her boundless enthusiasm seemed to border on excitement. She radiated an unspeakable joy in God's goodness. Her enthusiastic lust for life was evidenced by her flamboyant hats (a mark of high style in Hedda Hopper's Hollywood). And her enthusiasm was always catching. She frequently talked about "contagious Christianity"—that a true Christian's enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus Christ

should be so exuberant that it will set others on fire. L. David Cowie, another one of Teacher's boys who entered the ministry, said that her enthusiasm soon broke down the resistance of any reticent participants in a program.¹⁸

Energy. Miss Mears seemed to thrive on work. She would exhaust those around her who were half her age. But she never asked people to do what she was not willing to do herself. "The key is in one word: work," she would say. "No ideas work unless you do!"¹⁹ She always seemed to be thrusting forward, as though propelled by some enormous energizing force. Several physical collapses in her lifetime would only slightly slow her pace. There was so much to be done, she would say. She also suffered from degenerating eyesight all her adult life. But she referred to her "thorn in the flesh" as a blessing: "I believe my greatest spiritual asset throughout my entire life has been my failing sight, for it has kept me absolutely dependent upon God."²⁰

Excellence. Miss Mears modeled excellence by example. What she expected of others, she demanded of herself. She was

—Please turn to page 22.

ESTHER S. BRINKLEY, M.A., as manager of editorial relations at Fuller Seminary, is editor of *Theology, News and Notes* and editor/writer of the *FULLER FOCUS*. A product of Henrietta Mears' College Department, upon graduation from college she served for five years as her secretary in the Christian Education Office of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, while also serving under Mears as co-youth director (with her husband, Bill) of the church's High School Department.



How Do You Spell Success?

BY ELIZABETH L. PATTERSON

I have been involved in theological education for almost 20 years. I have met with, advised, counseled, chided, mentored, taught, evaluated, prayed with and for literally hundreds of students during that time. One question I hear consistently is, "How do I know I'm called?" It always means the same thing: "Should I go into the ordained ministry, and how can I know that with certainty?"

I also teach a course in which I ask students to define the word *ministry*. It turns out to be a task which is not as straightforward as one might assume. I have yet to have anyone mention "ordination" in their definition. Most commonly, I get answers such as "service to others in the name of God," "using your skills for the sake of the Kingdom," "being present to others to mediate Jesus to them." These are good answers. They reflect a clear understanding of the New Testament concepts of ministry. The call to each Christian is indeed the call to service, to the *diakonos*, a call which takes as many individual forms as there are Christians, yet remains one call shared by all.

But "call" and "ministry," in that sense, do not require a seminary education. And the rite required is baptism, not ordination. So it is clear that there is something more behind that question. Otherwise, the answer, "Of course you are called, we all are" would be sufficient and should send the questioning student away satisfied.

So what is the problem? The confusion is not always with the student. Rather, it is at least

partially created by the competing paradigms present when one combines the concepts of call to ministry with our culture's beliefs about career.

CAREER AND MINISTRY

A colleague and I have long fantasized about the article we are going to write someday. It will be titled "The Myth of Servant Leadership." We have noticed that the majority of writing on this topic is by persons who have been highly successful in professional careers. Without

Success in this culture is defined by the standards of the marketplace. When one chooses ministry as a career, those standards come into play.

taking anything away from the quality of persons doing this writing, or their vision, a book on servant leadership has yet to be written by the servant. However much the concept of servanthood may be honored in theory, in practice it is not high on anyone's list of things to achieve in a lifetime. Mordred, the "medieval delinquent" of *Camelot*, voices the scorn: "It's not the earth the meek inherit, it's the dirt."

In modern American culture, career implies self-fulfillment, status, an upward path to bigger and better. It involves things like being well paid, getting benefits and vacations, negotiating job

descriptions. Success in this culture is defined by the standards of the marketplace. When one chooses ministry as a career, those standards come into play. There is an inherent conflict between the concept of ministry and the concept of career. This plays out in a variety of double messages. For example, our world attributes status to those who fit the cultural embodiments of success: good appearance, wealth, powerful voice, height, possessions, charismatic personality. Yet Mother Teresa stands as our icon of selfless ministry (and, paradoxically, has become an inadvertent idol). Neither side of the equation is achieved by the average person, but the conflict is available to all.

When the demands of career come in conflict with the concept of call, it puts tremendous pressure on the person who is trying to live out both. This is true for any Christian in any form of work, and it is definitely true for the professional minister. If the conception of ministry is service, then success should be measured by standards of service to the office of ordained ministry. Yet the facts of life seem to dictate that the office must serve the career.

This conflict and the seductions of the world drove the early desert fathers and mothers away from the city to enter into a single-minded struggle for holiness. They desired a life which preferred Christ over any standard of success or achievement. Christianity has long since let go of the misapprehension that it is only those who go to the desert who have the possibility of a holy life. But those monastic standards did offer a clear set of indicators about progress toward success in living the Christian life.¹

Those standards—involving the qualities of obedience, humility, purity, asceticism—seem very strange to modern minds. But without available

measures of lived holiness, within a community endeavoring to meet those standards, secular success offers the most visible measure of achievement. And even if a pastor does embrace these qualities, most congregations are eager to have a minister who can show some signs of being "successful." It is there in the job description: someone who can make the church grow, inspire more giving, attract young families, be a good preacher, an able administrator. While lack of measurable success in these areas is not indicative of spiritual failure (William Carey immediately comes to mind), as Tevye says in *Fiddler on the Roof*, "It's no great honor, either."

How is success in the ministry to be measured? Certainly, ability is a part of the equation. And results of some kind are another. But a central task of the ordained minister is attention to the job of faith. And our world is both uncertain what that looks like and rightfully wary of establishing legalistic standards by which to measure it. Yet if the pastor is not fulfilling this central responsibility, other measures of success will be hollow.

CAREER VERSUS MINISTRY

Career is an isolated, individual term. It focuses on personal choice. But the ministry is communal. *Covenant, commitment, community, and accountability* are words which need to surround the person entering the ministry. In the secular professional world, people choose a career, prepare for it, and hang out their shingle. The ministry, however, involves life with and in a community of faith. Ideally, it is that community which should be the calling body from the beginning of the process. This group should recognize the gifts and qualities of a person and ask that person to become a ministering presence. All should covenant together to support the person, commit to the commu-

nity, and hold one another accountable for their ministries. This process should begin before the person has made any decision for the ordained ministry.

One church gathers a group of wise congregants for months of prayer and meeting, with the goal of discerning whether or not a particular person is called to the ordained ministry. As often as not, the person and the group come to the conclusion together that the answer is no. Few

When the demands of career come in conflict with the concept of call, it puts tremendous pressure on the person who is trying to live out both.

seminarians today feel they have any resource to call upon for such a discernment process. It should be mandatory.

"I'm afraid to give God my life because I know he'll send me to Africa" is one of the most common misapprehensions of the nervous Christian. God, the Creator, does not create every living thing "according to its own kind" only to tell that creation it must go off and do something for which it is incompetent. This is not only a bizarre notion about God but, on a practical level, it doesn't do anyone else much good either. No one should enter a task for which he or she has neither gifts nor graces.

It is also very fulfilling to be doing those tasks which we do

well. In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell says, "God made me fast, and when I run, I feel his pleasure." In American culture, middle- and upper middle-class citizens have career choice options and the opportunity to choose careers which are fulfilling. Those opportunities are a tremendous privilege—a gift which acknowledges the unique worth of the individual. But the focus on opportunity and self-fulfillment is becoming a god rather than a gift.

The ministry is no different. To enter it primarily for self-fulfillment is to be doomed to failure, because the self is an elusive and ultimately boring target.

The profession of law is an example of a job gone wrong (with apologies to the large number of faithful attorneys who still practice with integrity). The job used to be commonly understood as one who served the law—something beyond the self. But all too often the law has become a means, something to be manipulated for career success. There is something inherently self-defeating about the attempt to use for one's own ends what was meant to be served.

It may be that fulfillment in ministry, however, is not even possible. The modern ministry has become a microcosm of the modern workplace, flooded with a proliferation of tasks and expectations. The values of efficiency and economy compete with those of effectiveness. And effectiveness is often measured by numbers. No one can be everything that is expected of the minister: business manager, president and CEO, entrepreneur, entertainer, communicator, counselor, teacher, arbitrator—and the one who does weddings and funerals, visitations, and is on call for each congregant. There is a level of incompetence almost inherent in the ministry. People who are motivated to the traditional "cure of souls" may not be attracted to the modern

business of Christianity, which is the task of the modern pastor. The job description has become too big to handle. Measures of success which incorporate, let alone prioritize, spiritual depth and growth are hard to come by. They are drowned out by expectations for size and action.

What is the bottom line of ministry? How does one measure success? Pastors would be helped by congregations which took this question seriously and held to central priorities. Congregations would be helped by pastors who have faced these conflicting paradigms. The solutions to these conflicts may never be fully realized. And the answers will vary in different cultural and historical contexts. The struggles toward resolution must be shared equally by the laity and the ordained, and the answers must be lived out by both as well.

One approach toward resolution is the task of definition—the answer to the question which began this article: What is the ministry? and its counterpoint, What is the laity?

MINISTRY BEYOND CAREER

The definition of ministry as service is biblical and challenging. It is also cautious. In the effort to encourage the validity of the ministries of the laity, the idea of ministry becomes a “greedy concept.”² When everyone is a minister, who is not a minister? What is not ministry? The answer does not lie in someone’s uniqueness, nor in his or her “achievement,” nor even holiness—nothing which implies a special status. All Christian believers have the same status: the status of heirs to the Kingdom. That status is lived out in the “variegated roles”³ of life. And one of those roles is that of the ordained ministry. It is a means of serving the Body of Christ, one which has its own

risks as well as its own rewards, like that of other professions.

The pastorate and the laity are vulnerable to flip sides of the same error. On one hand, there is the assumption that the vocation of pastor is codeterminate with the life of faith. On the other is the assumption that faith and work are separate. Neither is correct. No career, including minister of the word and sacrament, can or should contain the entire understanding and living out of one’s relationship to God. The professional ministry may be a visible

No career, including minister of the word and sacrament, can or should contain the entire understanding, experience, and the living out of one's relationship to God.

expression of that call in ways that are not in the job description of other professions. But to confuse the two is a risk.

At the same time, work is not separate from the call to a Christian life. All aspects of life—work, family, community, economics, conversations—are potential expressions of service. And this is true for the professional accountant as much as it is for the professional minister. The error of assuming that one’s work is Christian simply because

it is done in a Christian setting, even for Christian goals, does not *ipso facto* mean that one is exempt from a daily examination of motivation and call. To assume that one’s work is not Christian because it is done in a secular setting is equally erroneous. Christian service is not job dependent.

Should one take vows on entering the pastorate? Definitely. But we should remember that the medical profession vows to uphold the Hippocratic oath and that some other professions enter into vows, or contracts, which guide their beliefs and behaviors. Even the employees of Disneyland make commitments to provide exemplary service. What might be needed is an overall higher commitment to vows and covenants of all kinds, for all roles should serve the Kingdom.

Paul describes himself and Apollos as “servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). That concept of stewardship emphasizes the nonimportance of the steward in and of him- or herself. The steward is the one who makes available and accessible to others the hospitality and the values of the one served. In that role of stewardship, Paul says, the steward is nothing. It is the household served which should receive the honor. The ordained minister serves the office of steward; the laity hold other offices. But all serve the same household and the same Master. And all measures of success must find their standard there. ■

ENDNOTES

¹ The concept of success in holiness would have been offensive to those attempting to live such a life.

² Helen Oppenheimer, *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, ed. Eric James (London: Longman and Todd, 1979), 12. I am indebted to Oppenheimer for her concept of the shared status of all believers.

³ *Ibid.*

Psychological Paths to the Pulpit

BY RICHARD A. BLACKMON AND CALVIN J. THOMSEN

The call to ministry, like the incarnation itself, involves a mysterious mixture of word and flesh. Much discussion of ministerial calling rightly focuses on the divine initiative which leads men and women into Christian service. While most contemporary pastors probably can't tell stories of being blinded by heavenly light or touched by live coals from the Throne Room of God, people who minister take comfort in the fact that they have something in common with Paul or Isaiah. Their decision to enter the ministry wasn't simply the pragmatic outcome of a vocational test. It was a response to God's call.

There is, however, a human element to the ministerial calling as well, a seldom acknowledged collection of "ghosts" that can accompany the pastor into both study and pulpit. These are the ghosts of childhood family roles, of parental expectations, of unresolved family conflicts, and of emotional yearnings crying to be satisfied. These ghosts, clearly faced and rightly managed, can help humanize pastors, create compassion, and give an individual's ministry its own unique shape. But, left unrecognized, they can also cause torment, undermine effectiveness, demoralize, and even sabotage a ministerial career. They are often the silent specters behind pastoral burnout, chronic emotional pain and depression, or the sort of flagrant self-destructive behavior that has toppled many pastors from their pulpits.

From the complementary perspectives of a psychologist and a practicing pastor, we have kept in close contact with issues

that affect pastors. As we have listened to the stories of countless pastors in pain, we have become increasingly aware of the ways in which hidden family forces from the past contribute to difficulties with ministry in the present.

Identified below are some common "paths to the pulpit." These paths embody some of the

A seldom acknowledged collection of "ghosts" . . . can accompany the pastor into both study and pulpit.

psychological and family issues that influence the choice to become a pastor—a choice that, no matter the origin, can be divinely transformed into an avenue for God's service.

THE FAMILY HERO

Dan, a gifted, brilliant overachiever, was deeply stressed by his unsuccessful efforts to bring harmony into the fractious church he pastored. At one particularly painful point of conflict in the church, he became aware that he was reexperiencing the same emotions he felt as a child when his parents fought. He had hoped that his accomplishments and his attempts to reconcile his parents would hold the family together. After his parents divorced,

he felt a deep sense of personal failure. Now he was experiencing the same feelings.

Pastors who played the role of family hero or messiah when they were growing up may have been overachievers who made their parents proud. They may have functioned in the role of family therapist, calming conflicts and unconsciously pulling people together. At some point they may have discovered that ministry was a way to make a career out of the messianic role they played in their families. Both the acclaim and the sense of pressure they experienced in their families carry over into their ministries.

Ministry can become a burden for family heroes. Fickle congregations can withhold adoration, leaving the one-time hero with a sense of desolation. It is a crushing, impossible burden to try to rescue all the hurting people in a congregation. Family heroes often tend to over-function, assuming every possible burden in the church. They feel keenly any lack of appreciation from their congregations and are especially prone to burnout.

THE DRAMATIC CONVERSION

Carl's preconversion life had involved fast cars, fast women, alcohol, and some recreational drugs. At the age of 19 he attended a Billy Graham rally and accepted Christ. The change in his life was dramatic. He joined a local evangelical church, spent many hours reading the Bible, and became very actively involved in witnessing. Convinced that God was calling him to ministry, Carl entered seminary. He wasn't a scholar, but his natural warmth, charisma, and down-to-earth style easily won the hearts of the people in his first two churches. But sometime during his third pastorate, while in his late thirties, he realized that something was missing from his life. Much of what was demanded of him as a minister felt burdensome and artificial.

A dramatic conversion experience often prompts a decision to become a minister. This choice can feel like the

inevitable response to such a momentous, life-changing experience. But pastors who fit this pattern often run into trouble when the magic of the initial conversion experience wears off. They may spend years, or even decades, in pastoral ministry wrestling with a nagging sense of disequilibrium which, at some point, may provoke a crisis in their ministry.

THE SUBSTITUTE FAMILY

Elaine was associate pastor of a congregation in the Northwest that had a history of loving its pastors through thick and thin. She shared openly about her abusive background and the deep feelings of abandonment that had been a part of her life since childhood. At first, the members of her church went out of their way to make Elaine feel loved and included in the life of the church. Their acceptance created feelings of healing the old family wound that had hounded her throughout her life. But after a while she began to notice that people were avoiding her. Her own needs were pushing them away.

People whose families were emotionally desolate may select a pastoral career as a way of fulfilling their deep need to belong to a caring family. It may work for a while, but something usually goes awry. When the church becomes the primary vehicle for experiencing a sense of family, most pastors ultimately do not find the bliss they expected. Instead, they are confronted with an especially painful replication of their most painful childhood feelings of abandonment.

THE SPOTLIT STAGE

Joe entered the ministry after working as a gospel musician. He knew the spotlight well, since he had traveled from church to church as a child singer. Many of those who had listened to him sing had marveled at his wonderful voice, infectious stage presence, and sincere love for the Lord. They often told him that he should become a minister. Later, as a church pastor,

Joe was able to live out the experience of being in the spotlight. He relished the enthusiastic response from his congregation and enjoyed the image he saw reflected in them. But he struggled with depression when enough strokes were not forthcoming.

Pastors who have grown up in the spotlight are often gifted performers and charismatic leaders. Many of them elicit a high level of allegiance from their congregations, and many are effective leaders. But some

An exploration of one's own "pathway ghosts" can provide the keys to . . . finding personal freedom and fulfillment in ministry.

become excessively dependent upon congregational approval and rely more on personal charm than good sense. Others become controlling, manipulative, or even seductive. This path can lead to a narcissistic, power-hungry style. Many of the casualties of pastoral sexual violations within the congregation come from pastors who fit this pattern.

THE PERFECT ATONEMENT

Michael had struggled with pornography ever since he was an adolescent. He tried in vain to control his perusal of sexually explicit literature. He finally bargained with God, promising to become a pastor if God would give him victory over his problem. The bargain worked for several years, until he was forced to be apart from

his wife for two months due to her mother's illness. Then he gave in to the temptation to indulge in pornography again. The result was terrible shame and a sense of guilt about his call to ministry.

A decision to enter the ministry is sometimes played out against the backdrop of painful personal struggles or even a family disgrace, such as parental infidelity. Entering the ministry is perceived—sometimes unconsciously—as a way of gaining God's favor and power over one's personal shame.

Pastors with this motivation for ministry may seal themselves off from their own weaknesses and become harsh and judgmental toward the sins of others. Some, as their own painful issues continue to fester, struggle with guilt and anger, feeling that God has not honored their bargain.

THE FAMILY MANTLE

Rob was christened by his mother as a minister the moment he was born. Nothing in his childhood or adolescence suggested that he had great ministry potential. But he dutifully completed his seminary training and went into the ministry. He fulfilled his family destiny, even though in his heart he longed to be a golf instructor.

When pastors are asked to draw a family tree, the presence of a designated "holy person," such as a pastor or priest, is often revealed in every generation for which information is available. This happens, of course, with other professions as well. But it can be a special problem for pastors because of the spiritual aura attached to the ministerial mantle. What is presented as God's call may have more to do with family needs and expectations than with the desires and aptitudes of the individual. The mantle conferred on him or her may become a suffocating shroud that chokes out personal and professional vitality.

THE PATH TO FREEDOM

Many pastors, especially those who are struggling with role

conflict, recognize themselves in one or more of these paths to the pulpit. An understanding of family system dynamics and an exploration of one's own "pathway ghosts" can provide the keys to diminishing conflict and finding personal freedom and fulfillment in ministry.

Pastors who seek this type of freedom from family ghosts not only can but must "go home again." Going home, in this case, means understanding how both personal and church families operate and influence each other. It means understanding the ways in which childhood family roles affect adult functioning, personally and pastorally. It means reconnecting with the emotional energy of the family in which one grew up and cultivating a new style of self-management in relation to this family. It may mean making a visit home, writing letters, or spending time with family photo albums and historical records. It may mean mapping out the family tree and paying attention to repeating patterns.

Pastors studying their own families can examine some of the following issues: What roles do people play? In what ways could their call to the ministry fit into the family drama? What factors still pull on their emotions and recreate in them as adults the most significant emotions of childhood? The goal is to help pastors increase their level of self-awareness and become experts in recognizing their own ghosts.

Pathway ghosts thrive on stealth. When a person confronts them directly, feels their full emotional power, and stares them in the face with insight and understanding, these ghosts lose their power to tyrannize and control.

Families of all types are characterized by predictable patterns of emotional interaction which repeat themselves in subsequent generations. These patterns are remarkably resilient. Even the infusion of new blood doesn't change them. The fights,

roles, struggles, failures, and successes play themselves out anew.

A return to the family of origin, perhaps during a reunion, can facilitate learning and give the individual a chance to experiment with a new role. Being nonheroic, allowing somebody else to assume the priestly role, being willing to

Both the "word" and the "flesh" of the pastoral calling can be the occasion for God's work.

share feelings, desires, and convictions that differ from family expectations can all help a pastor shake free from emotional baggage. The goal is to be one's own person while staying connected with the family. Rebelling or cutting off relationships tends to freeze the unresolved issues in place.

The congregation itself is a potent setting for the pastor's development as a clearly defined self. Congregations can replicate his or her most painful conflicts. But they can also provide a setting in which the pastor can learn to be more self-defined and less reactive. The minister who can stay connected with the congregation, while resisting pressures and unrealistic expectations, sets the stage for personal and congregational maturity.

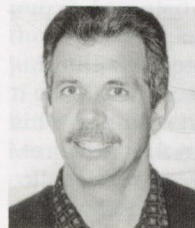
There are many very human reasons for enjoying the ministry. Among them are a desire to work with people, a love of teaching, and a preference for

flexible hours and fluid roles. While it may seem paradoxical, pastors who acknowledge these unspectacular reasons for enjoying ministry often feel a greater sense of spiritual peace and divine calling. Those who can only appeal to a numinous sense of being "called" may be more vulnerable to the devastation of pathway ghosts.

Some pastors who work through issues raised by their pathway ghosts decide that they can never authentically make pastoring their own. But the majority, in our observation, discover a new freedom as they unshackle the mysterious forces that have contaminated their sense of calling.

Both the "word" and the "flesh" of the pastoral calling can be the occasion for God's work. Rightly understood, these components can work together to equip individuals for effective service in sharing the good news of the Kingdom. ■

RICHARD A. BLACKMON, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Pasadena and Westlake Village, California, specializes in clergy and their families. An adjunct professor at Fuller Seminary, he teaches on the personal life of the pastor.



CALVIN J. THOMSEN, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Vallejo Drive Seventh-day Adventist Church in Glendale, California. He also teaches pastoral counseling at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, and is active in training pastors, using family systems concepts to assist congregational life.



Discerning God's Call

BY DAVID A. ROHRER

Last December I said goodbye to a small congregation that I had served as pastor for seven years. I left in order to assume duties as an associate pastor in a large church. Why did I choose to make such a drastic change in the context of my pastoral vocation? This question is not easily answered. I find myself wishing that I could use some of the answers that I have heard others use. Yet I find that none of them work for me.

One of the most common answers is, I moved because God called me to move. While this is true, it doesn't say enough. God *did* call me. Yet I would be dishonest if I said I heard a specific call to leave Pasadena and move to Seattle. It would be more accurate—yet also more complex—to say that I made a choice to move that grew out of God's call in my life to be a pastor.

I might also explain my move by telling inquirers that I had done what I came to do, so it was time for me to move on. This one doesn't work either, because I hadn't. Seven years after my arrival, I left a congregation that was not at all as I had imagined it would be. The bundle of expectations I had brought with me remained pretty much unmet. Doing what I had come to do would have meant leaving with the badge of having "turned things around." That badge was not among the awards I was given.

Or, I suppose I could refer to the line in the gospels about shaking the dust off of one's feet and say I left because the congregation was hard-hearted, sick, or unwilling to grow. To the surprise of no one who has been in ministry, my former congregation didn't always agree with me.

At times they frustrated me. And sometimes they failed to do what I wanted them to do. But I didn't leave because the congregation was pushing me out, and I didn't leave in frustration. They supported me, welcomed my pastoral care and preaching, and were genuinely sorry to see me leave.

So if God hadn't directly told me to leave, if I hadn't done what I came to do, and if I wasn't being pushed out, why did I leave? I am still far too close to the move to be assured that I can state all my motivations clearly and accurately. Yet based on what I know now, I moved for

A funny thing happened on the way to the pulpit: I had to walk through the church in order to get there.

two reasons: God's call to me as a husband and father to seek my family's best, and God's call to me as a disciple of Jesus to be willing to leave the familiar and venture into the unknown.

Four years into my ordination as a minister of word and sacrament I got married. Six years into it we had our first child. Nine years into it we had our second child. When we recessed down the aisle of the church on our wedding day, I could not have even begun to predict how this new relationship (and, eventually, all these new relationships) would impact the course that I had mapped out for myself. What I have learned is

the truth that my family cannot simply be in the business of following along on *my* journey. Over the years of marriage and fatherhood, I have had to learn and relearn the rather jarring truth that we must be about the business of creating something called *our* journey.

Having a family has meant a change in the way I talk about call. I no longer speak simply in terms of *my* call to a particular congregation. There are now three other people in the mix of making this determination of where we will live and the congregation that will be our Christian community. It is no longer a matter of asking my family to come along with me to the new place to which God has called me. Now it is a matter of determining what is the best place for *us*. And in assessing this larger question, it became clear that we needed to consider a move.

There were many issues that we faced as a family in our former home that could be on a "why we moved" list. Yet one issue in particular rises above all others. In seven years as solo pastor of a small church, I learned that I neither desired nor felt qualified to be pastor to my family. It wasn't just that I disliked the reality of living in the proverbial pastoral fishbowl. That our family was on display and the object of the congregation's projections seemed the least of our problems. That reality is a hazard of ministry anywhere and can be coped with. The bigger challenge was that the three members of the congregation who lived with me didn't have a pastor and, at times, I questioned whether or not they even had a church.

My family was caught in the crossfire of two warring realities. The battle was between my call as a pastor and the job that I had in a particular place. My call was to be a pastor, a proclaimer of the Word, a spiritual midwife helping people to give birth to the new life that God had put

within them. Yet my *job* was to lead a struggling congregation into a place of bigger membership and greater financial security. These two realities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Yet neither are they naturally compatible. These realities were often at war within me, and more often than not, the biggest losers in those wars were the members of my family. What they needed was a church and a pastor, and what they often got instead was a part in my job.

Now we find ourselves in a larger congregation, which gives my family a place to be and pastors other than myself with whom to relate. The lines between the job I have and the church they need are clearer and this gives us some of the breathing room that we were needing. For the time being, making this move has relieved some of the pressure. It does not solve the conflict within me, and I am already aware that the larger church is not a safe haven from the issue. For wherever one moves, one always takes oneself along. Yet I know that in this moment of life, our new home and new congregation have been gifts to us, and our life together as a family feels healthier.

This openness to considering my family's needs and the dynamics of our life together in the context of the church opened up another door in me. It opened me up to a whole new examination of my call as a pastor. For in making this move to become an associate pastor on a large multiple staff, I had to let go of the one thing that has given more shape and substance to my call to pastoral ministry than anything else. I had to let go of the expectation that pastoral ministry would center around having my *own pulpit*.

When I left seminary almost 13 years ago, my pastoral self-image was that of a preacher. It was those gifts which had been most affirmed to me. I took my first position in a church believ-

ing that the words *pastor* and *preacher* were synonymous. But a funny thing happened on the way to the pulpit: I had to walk through the church in order to get there. And as I have made that journey again and again, a world much larger than the pulpit has gradually opened up to me. The word *preacher* has become a part of a larger category called *pastor*. And the category of pastor has become central in the way I think about God's call.

This shift in my thinking took place in subtle ways. It took

I began to realize that what I loved and felt called to was not necessarily a preaching ministry, but a ministry of proclamation of God's Word.

place as I began to realize that what I loved and felt called to was not necessarily a preaching ministry, but a ministry of proclamation of God's Word, of which preaching was a part. As I walked through the church, it became clear to me that almost every pastoral encounter was an opportunity to proclaim the Word of God. In hospital rooms and living rooms, in committee meetings and worship services, in coffee shops and in my study, there were opportunities to come alongside people and proclaim the good news of a God who is there. It took me a while, but I began to realize that I did not need a piece of liturgical furni-

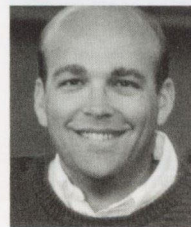
ture to do my work. Once I saw this, I began to see that God's call was not to a piece of furniture, but to the joyous work that is done in it. And once I let go of that piece of furniture, I became open to a variety of options as to the kind of church positions I would consider.

The image of letting go of and giving up my pulpit has been an important one for me in this move. In many ways, I believe that God was calling me to be willing to do just this. For God often calls us away from the familiar that we might know more about how he is our God in the unfamiliar places as well. In my years of pastoral ministry, the pulpit gave me a knowable, defined world from which to operate. Yet also, at times, it became a kind of ministerial security blanket for me. It was the place where I was affirmed most for what I do as a pastor. It was the place where my natural talents were most operative. It was a relatively safe place from which to proclaim the Word, for the recipients of the proclamation rarely talked back. Thus, I've always been a bit reticent to give it up. If I were going to let go of a pulpit, I wanted to be sure that there was another one within jumping distance.

This time, however, I didn't have another one to jump to. Many of my family, friends, and colleagues expressed concern for me as I prepared to take the leap.

—Please turn to page 22.

DAVID A. ROHRER, M.Div., has accepted the position of associate pastor of adult ministries at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington. A recipient of the Roddy Preaching Award while at Fuller, he is the previous pastor of the Michillinda Presbyterian Church in Pasadena, California.



To Seek and Serve Christ

BY WILLIAM LANE DOULOS

A few weeks ago, I noticed a man clipping a front yard hedge. It was a bright Saturday morning—a good day for walking, clipping, and pleasant conversation. So I asked, “Your name’s Frank,* isn’t it?” “Yes,” he answered, “how did you know?” “Don’t you remember me?” I asked. “Oh yes, you’re Bill. You’ve put on some weight, haven’t you?” (That was an unnecessary reminder.)

Frank and I got to know each other about 20 years ago, just after I graduated from Fuller armed with a Master of Divinity degree and a desire to work with the poor. A drop-in hospitality center called “Union Station” had just opened beside the local All Saints Episcopal Church. This largely volunteer group was doing exactly what I was motivated to do. So I joined their staff, and eventually their church, and spent most of the next two decades building a community-based, ecumenical outreach to the poorest of the poor in Pasadena.

The people who come through our doors are the homeless, the disabled, the unemployed, the addicted, and the mentally ill. Over the years, there have been thousands of them. And we have grown as an agency to meet the challenges that their lives present to us. From our modest beginning in a storefront on Union Street in Old Town, we now have a staff of 20, a volunteer corps of 450, and a new facility that opened in 1989.

We’ve come a long way since I first met Frank. He was one of Old Town’s alleyway citizens, a hardcore alcoholic with a host of

friends who followed the same lifestyle. As together we recalled the names of the people he once shared bottles with, we realized that most of them had died, a few were still on the streets, and many had simply dropped from sight. But Frank and one or two others had become the first Union Station “graduates.”

Frank reminded me of a large part of my reason for working with the poor in the name of Christ in the first place: the gratification that comes from having even a relatively few success stories.

Twenty years ago, my friend Elizabeth Collins, who ran a small employment office, found Frank a part-time, entry-level job. Today, Frank told me, he has the same basic job, but it’s been upgraded to full-time, includes more responsibilities, and the use of an apartment. Frank hasn’t had a drink for 20 years.

I wish all my contacts with people in need were as heart-warming as my friendship with Frank. A few of these stories would be enough motivation for a lifetime of devotion to the poor.

My initial attraction to this ministry was more intellectual and theological than personal. I knew when I was growing up in a white, upper middle-class community that there was more to life than what I was experiencing. I also knew, from my early reading of the Gospels, that the poor were the focus of the ministry of Jesus.

The church in those days was largely retreating from the urban center of our society. If the poor were removed from the life and ministry of Jesus, not much would remain. But I sensed that if the poor were removed from the life of the church as I knew it, things would go on pretty much as usual.

I wanted to change all that—and I still do. I believe the twenty-first-century church in the United States will be deeply intertwined with the lives of the outcast and the economically disenfranchised. And the affluent, with whom I have also

become friends, will also become liberated in the process.

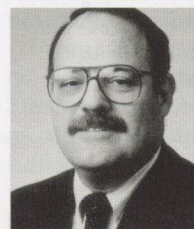
I have discovered one other profound motivation for my work besides my theological understanding of the core of Jesus’ ministry as “good news to the poor.” This additional motivation now easily overwhelms the quest for gratification through success stories.

When I first began my work at Union Station, I wanted to redeem Skid Row America and transform it into an oasis of prosperity and devotion to God. Somewhere in this process, I came into contact with the Spirit of Christ in the midst of a broken world. I had recited the phrase on many Sunday mornings: “to seek and serve Christ in all persons.” I thought I knew what it meant to “serve” Christ in the poor. But, as my successes were outweighed by my inadequacies, limitations, and outright failures over the years, I began to realize that even Christ passed by most of the needs he encountered in first-century Palestine. He didn’t heal every leper or feed all the hungry. Even Lazarus died again. And the disciples abandoned their Master.

As I encountered the destitute of my own neighborhood, I found Christ in the midst of my sense of powerlessness. And this

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WILLIAM LANE DOULOS, M.Div., is executive director of Affordable Housing Services in Pasadena, California, director emeritus and staff member of the Union Station Foundation, and associate for urban ministry at All Saints Episcopal Church in Pasadena. An adjunct instructor at Fuller Seminary, he has received numerous awards for his successful programs to aid the urban poor and homeless.



A MINISTRY OF SOCIAL ACTION

God's Will and God's Call

BY JOHN M. PERKINS

Over the years many people have asked me, "How do I find God's will for my life?" Or, "How do I know when or whether or not I've been called by God?" To me these questions are central to understanding God's movement in the world today. I could never have survived the ministry we've had in Mississippi and California without the knowledge of God's will and the confidence of his call upon my life. I am convinced that God's specific summoning to service in our world involves two steps: learning God's will and hearing his call upon our lives.

LEARNING GOD'S WILL

God's will is in his Word, the Bible. The first step for me was seeing that I was lost and in sin. Then I had to trust Christ as God's atonement for that sin. As I began to read the Word of God and as he started the process of transforming my mind, I recognized two major areas that concern God: his hate for idolatry, and his concern for the poor and oppressed. It is God's will that men and women love him in a way that leaves no room for idols. We must love him with all that we are. When that happens, we will not love *things* as much as we love God.

God's next largest concern is that we love our neighbors with the same love that we have for ourselves. And if we practice this principle, then we will not damage other precious people that God has created. We will love others in a way that liberates us from poverty's oppres-

sion, both physical and spiritual. It was not until I learned these principles, by putting them into practice in my own life, that I really began to *know* the will of God.

HEARING GOD'S CALL

God's call exists whether or not I respond to it. But God's call is where my feelings, my talents, my very "gut response" to God will make a difference, because it is a summons to a special place or situation in which I can do God's will with the unique equipment he has provided me with. So, for three years after my conversion, God drew me away from seeing my needs as merely economic—which is the way I saw them up to that time.

During that period, God gave me the desire to return to Mississippi. So, in 1960, my family and I relocated. We began working in rural Mendenhall, learning as we went along. For eight years or so, I taught the gospel to young children in public schools all across central Mississippi and began a youth ministry and church in the small town of Mendenhall.

In the beginning, at the height of the civil rights movement, we experienced ruthless poverty, vile hatred, and hardened injustice. It was this intense desire to throw off the oppression of our community, combined with my biblical understanding of justice, that led to an unbelievable night of torture in 1970. I was beaten almost to death by white policemen, the local sheriff, and highway patrolmen. God mercifully allowed me to survive. I am now convinced that through the circumstances of my life, God was preparing me for a specific type of leadership. God has given me a passion for justice that will forever be imprinted upon my soul. He also showed me that justice must go hand in hand with reconciliation. The pains and scars on my body are a constant reminder, lest I forget my mission. What was meant for evil, God used for

good. For the past 35 years, our ministry has had a specific purpose: justice and reconciliation.

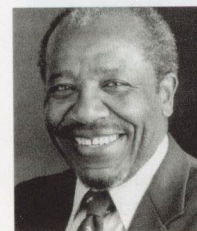
After spending 12 years serving in Mendenhall and raising up young leaders so we could leave the ministry in their hands, we then relocated to Jackson, Mississippi, where we spent 10 years implementing all we had learned as we built the Voice of Calvary Ministries. As the ministry matured, we again saw the need to turn the leadership over to the upcoming generation. Then, in 1982, along with my wife, Vera Mae, and son, Derek, I returned to California expecting to retire, write, and travel.

Shortly after arriving in Pasadena, it became clear to me that the area of northwest Pasadena was one of the highest daytime crime/drug areas in California. Out of our desire to minister to the social, economic, and spiritual needs of the neighborhood, Harambee Christian Family Center was founded. Over the last 13 years, we have seen the center grow into an exciting and valuable outreach to the people in that community.

I have learned over the years that the following four elements play a necessary and valuable

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JOHN M. PERKINS, L.H.D., is the founder/president of the Harambee Christian Family Center, the John M. Perkins Foundation, and the Christian Community Development Association, in Pasadena, California. An ordained Baptist minister, he also founded the Voice of Calvary Ministries in Mississippi, and is the founder/publisher of *Urban Family Magazine*.



The Evolving Call

BY BARBARA M. STOUT

My motivation for ministry has been a long evolutionary process which began in my early childhood and has continued for the past 60 years. I grew up at the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, and I didn't fit the mold. Henrietta Mears was the mentor for many young people who gave their lives to Christ—some through life-changing experiences. Most of those who planned to enter the ministry were young men, known as "Miss Mears' boys." And, obviously, I was a girl.

My father was an elder. Consequently, faith in God, Christian nurture, and worship were always a part of my life. My model for ministry was the worship: the preaching of Louis H. Evans, Sr., and the choir directed by Charles Hirt were, to me, instruments of praise to God.

I vividly remember the day I told my father I wanted to take communion. He told me I couldn't, because I wasn't a communicant member. "Okay then, how can I become one?" I asked. With his blessing, I went before the Session, professed my faith in Jesus Christ, and was received as a communicant member at age nine.

By the time I was 18, I sensed a definite call from God, while I was working one summer at Mount Hermon Conference Center and teaching Vacation Bible School. But it never entered my mind to think of the ordained ministry. In those days, that wasn't an option for women. But work as a Christian educator attracted me and seemed to fit my gifts and interests. So I

studied at Whitworth College and majored in Christian Education. For one of my courses I read Horace Bushnell's classic, *Christian Nurture*. Reading that book was an "Aha!" experience for me. Bushnell's thesis was that the normal Christian experience should be for a child to be brought up in the faith in such a way that he or she would never know anything else but life with God and faith in Jesus. That validated my own experience. The idea of helping parents and their children live in such a way that God and Jesus were always a part of life motivated me for the next 21 years of ministry as a director of Christian education.

In the back of my mind, however, I never forgot a desire and a promise to God to one day attend seminary. Meanwhile, I was busy with my own family and my church work. But one day I read a notice about a master's degree being offered by San Francisco Seminary in the Los Angeles area. I applied, was accepted, and began attending evening and weekend classes.

About halfway through my degree program, one of my professors challenged me: "Barbara, have you ever preached a sermon?" "Heaven's no!" I replied. "I recruit and train Sunday school teachers and youth leaders, I lead youth groups, and I teach classes, but preach!" With a penetrating look, he said, "I think you should." That brought back the call I'd felt years before, and my promise to God about being willing to serve wherever God called me. I went to my pastor and, subsequently, to the Session and the Candidates' Committee of our presbytery. With their support and approval, I undertook the studies for ministry which led to my ordination in 1977.

My first ordained position was as an assistant pastor. This was followed by two stated supply and interim positions, before I received another nudge to pursue more than I had ever

considered doing.

A young Methodist minister with whom I'd worked in Claremont said to me one day, "Barbara, I think you owe it to the Presbyterian church to be open to serving in a church of your own." "Oh, I don't know if I could ever do that!" I replied. But I did agree to apply to a church. As a result, the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Pasadena, California, called me to be its pastor in December 1980. I have been there ever since, in a rich and fulfilling ministry.

One of the joys of my ministry has been the parade of Fuller interns who have worked with me at Trinity. They are now serving all over the United States, as pastors in Ohio, Oklahoma, Missouri, Oregon, New Mexico, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Northern and Southern California—and one is a professor of church history at my alma mater. I also worked closely with a couple who pastored in Scotland.

My experience of God's call has been that it often comes naturally, slowly, in many ways, and for the long haul. God is constantly calling us into the future. If we listen and are open, God will supply us with the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love that it takes to be ministers of God's grace—for life. ■

BARBARA M. STOUT, M.Div., has been the pastor of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Pasadena, California, for the past 15 years. Before entering seminary to study for the ministry, she spent 20 years serving as director of Christian education at Presbyterian churches in Pomona and Claremont, California.



THE MINISTRY OF PSYCHOTHERAPY

Healing Mind and Spirit

BY CATHERINE S. SMITH

Because my work as a clinical psychologist is work that I love, work that I feel lucky to be able to do, I forget to think of it in other terms. I don't often think of the work that I do as a ministry. (Ministry describes the work my physician brother does when he spends 16 months in Africa providing the only medical care some people receive.) I am more aware of my own personal satisfaction in being able to care for, encourage, and give guidance to people.

My faith offers unique challenges that make my work rich, vibrant, and directed. First, I am passionately committed to providing high quality psychotherapy, which demands that I must continually grow personally and professionally. I wanted to be a psychologist ever since I was in junior high school. I wanted to do something about the pain and suffering I saw in the world. I wanted to be involved with people—to know who they were on the inside. I wanted to know their personal story and, perhaps, become involved with creating a new ending to that story.

In order to understand those who come to me for therapy, first I have to look inside myself and understand that I am fundamentally no different than those I am trying to serve. I have fears, struggles, and self-illusions which I use to protect myself. Pretending that I have it all together is an easy protective defense to distance myself from those to whom I minister. This is a natural coping strategy against

the pain, suffering, and woundedness I encounter daily. But it also could blind me and separate me from my respect and appreciation of my clients as unique individuals.

Second, my faith challenges me to wrestle with the problems of power and powerlessness. In the therapy session, it is critical to be aware of the potent power the therapist has and its potential to do harm if misused. The nightly news is full of examples of the abuse of power and serves as a reminder that anyone in a helping profession can be vulnerable to the abuse of power.

Perhaps even more challenging than grappling with one's power is facing and tolerating one's powerlessness. Ultimately, I am finite and limited. In spite of my professional skills, I may fail to achieve the goals I've set.

Failure to recognize the potential dangers of power and powerlessness leads to burnout. On one hand, the therapist believes the messianic illusion that, of course, he or she can make a difference. This prompts the therapist to blame the client when feeling powerless or helpless. I've heard myself and others offer some version of "They don't want to get better" or "They are resistant to change" when faced with our own powerlessness to effect change.

But the other extreme is equally wrong. To lose faith in power is to lose faith in the help and hope that is genuinely available to me and my clients. To struggle honestly with power and powerlessness is a self-correcting balancing act, one that ultimately directs me back to my faith, reminding me that there is another force at work beyond my own efforts.

Third, I am challenged by the belief that to truly make an impact on human suffering, I must be an agent of change on many levels. I believe that social change goes hand in hand with the need to respond to individual human pain and suffering. It is important, therefore, to try to

change what is destructive in an environment, as well as to help individuals after they have been damaged by that environment.

A significant portion of my practice is dedicated to those who could not otherwise afford individualized psychotherapy. I also train and supervise lay counselors who make a remarkable difference in the lives of others. Not only do they provide a needed service at an affordable cost, this type of ministry transforms the lay counselors themselves.

Another way I express this commitment is by teaching the courses *Women and Psychotherapy* and the *Psychology of Gender* in Fuller's School of Psychology. My perspective is that it is not enough for clinicians or psychotherapists simply to understand the treatment of depression, eating disorders, anxiety, or the effects of incest—conditions in which women are disproportionately represented. It is critical to understand the social factors which lead to the *creation* of these debilitating disorders.

Not only does my faith challenge me in these ways, it also sustains and comforts me. My faith gives me courage to walk a difficult road with a client, one that I may be personally afraid to take. Recently, I

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CATHERINE S. SMITH, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice at Associate Psychological Services in Pasadena, California. An adjunct assistant professor in Fuller's School of Psychology, she is also the director of the Arcadia Presbyterian Church Counseling Center and an adviser for Fuller's Office of Women's Concerns.



MISSION PRESENCE IN MEXICO

A Call to Community

BY JUDY AND FRANK ALTON

How do Christians hear God's call? Over the years, we have discovered there are almost as many answers to that question as there are people. We have observed that both the question and the response are experienced differently in different cultures and social classes. Christians in the United States, especially the young, experience the question as a variation on the theme, "What will I do when I grow up?" This view emerges out of a cultural pressure to do something meaningful in life and to "discover God's will for my life."

Among most Latin-American Christians we have met, the question is asked differently, or not at all. Many have never heard that kind of call, yet work to bring justice on earth and glory to God. It is not a difference of commitment level, but of options, and how God's general call in Scripture is heard in their world. The needs that so clearly surround them in society make it relatively straightforward to decide how to get involved. These differences have affected the way we come to the question.

A VARIETY OF MOMENTS

In our own lives, God's call has come in a variety of ways at different moments. Ten years ago we responded to God's call to leave a pastorate in Los Angeles and move to Mexico, a call which emerged out of a sabbatical spent working with squatters in Lima, Peru. There we realized that we had more to learn from the poor and that we wanted to offer that kind of learning to other American Christians. So our call was to live among the

urban poor in Mexico in order to learn with them about God, the world, and life—and to invite other Christians from the United States to live these lives for brief periods of time.

The actual decision to leave the physical comforts and vocational guarantees we had in Los Angeles did not come easily. After months of struggling, God finally broke through. In a moment of reading the Scripture together, God's presence was so clear to both of us that when we stopped reading, we knew what we had to do. We never turned back from that moment on, although, at times, we certainly had our doubts.

THE MEANS OF TRANSFORMATION

Reflecting back on those years in Mexico, it is satisfying to realize that we found what we were looking for. Oh, we could have been much more open to transformation and, therefore, been more deeply changed. But something significant happened: an experience of "mutual transformation" by which both we, as outsiders, and the neighborhood in which we immersed ourselves became agents of each other's transformation.

Perhaps an appropriate way to describe our mission is to say we awakened a fragile, elusive quality of life in community among our neighbors and in ourselves. Through affirming people, applauding efforts, encouraging dreams, offering support when the dream seemed too hard, and celebrating when the dream was fulfilled, community began to break through the hard soil of urban life like a crocus bulb lying dormant underground through winter. What emerged was always fragile, no matter how beautiful. It always appeared at risk of falling apart.

COMPANIONS ALONG THE WAY

Our experience of call has been accompanied by many inner companions. First, it came with a knowing. We had to go ahead

with what we felt called to, even though we knew neither confidence nor outcome. The call to Mexico emerged out of knowing that the economically poor were the forgotten teachers in the church and that their voice needed to be heard. This knowing had grown in both of us, along different paths, and culminated in our move.

Fear also accompanied call for us—not necessarily fear of God, but fear of ourselves and our own inadequacies. Judy feared finding rats everywhere in Mexico City, while Frank feared disappearing professionally. Feeling unprepared for the call was another constant, even though we eventually realized that our life experiences had deeply prepared us.

One grows into a call, and God is faithful in providing for those who are called. Yet, in the midst of that provision, we had to work very hard, cry a lot of tears, and sometimes wonder if we had heard him correctly—because the road was so difficult.

One of God's provisions was to have people available to walk with us wherever we were called. We learned that it was best to share our lives with these people and allow them to walk with us—for they were faithful and also longed for community and for the Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. We learned that hope is born when there is no hope, when it looks like we can't really do the job. And we learned that the Kingdom will come, whether or not we participate in it. But the joy of seeing it is far greater than the hardships.

A CHANGING EXPERIENCE

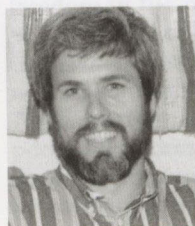
At this moment we are preparing to leave our barrio in Mexico and follow what we believe is God's call for Frank to pastor a downtown church in Los Angeles. Our inner companions are still with us in different ways. This time the call has different forms of knowing than it had ten years ago. Family needs entered into

the timing. And the initiative was taken by the church that called us. Part of the motivation was a sense of knowing that Frank's professional life in Mexico City was at least temporarily finished.

We have fears that our adopted Mexican children may learn they are not very welcome in Southern California. We fear that materialism might consume us. And we fear the atmosphere of violence that exists in urban Los Angeles. Yet we trust the same God who called us before, who promises to comfort, teach, and challenge us. Again, we do not feel prepared. Yet we have learned that we are prepared in ways we cannot see.

The vision of God and life we gained in Mexico led us to accept that the way of faith, hope, and love has few guarantees. Perhaps one day we will be blessed with another clear call. Meanwhile, we move by faith, not by sight, by hope in what is not seen, and by love for the Kingdom of God, even when it is only a seed. ■

JUDY AND FRANK ALTON, D.Min., served in Mexico for nine years for the Mexican Association for Rural and Urban Transformation. They also founded Partners in Hope, to establish partnerships between American churches and Mexican communities. Recently, they returned to the United States so Frank could assume a pastorate at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles.



The Church: A Calling and Sending Community

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has provided training for youth and adults in cross-cultural ministry.

INVESTMENT COUNSELING

When I'm traveling and become engaged in conversation with the person sitting next to me in an airplane, inevitably the question will arise: "So what do you do for a living?" Often I will say, "investment counseling." That response will usually prompt other questions, such as, "What stocks do you recommend?"

"Who are your clients?" (I have a lot of fun with that.) But investment counseling is what I'm about as a pastor. My clients are my parishioners, each of whom has an investment portfolio of God-given assets. My job is to help them discern their portfolio and invest their assets to bring maximum glory to God. There's nothing more satisfying for me as a pastor than to help a member of our congregation discover his or her unique endowments and the strategic sphere of influence most appropriate for bringing a profitable return for Christ's Kingdom.

We say to our people, First you are called to Christ, then Christ calls you. Not a single individual is spared from serving Christ. You are valuable. You are called. We expose people to ministry options, urge them to test them out, to step out in faith. We observe them, give them feedback and support, keeping the vision before them, urging them to stick with it. Jesus said, "Come with me. . . . Come watch. . . . Go and do it."

One woman in our church works as a school nurse at Highland Elementary School in East Oakland. Many of the students, she discovered, had mixed feelings about going home on the weekends. At school they could get a wholesome breakfast and lunch. Not so on the week-

ends at home. Either their parents or guardians were poor, or they were squandering their food money on drugs. Our school nurse was moved by compassion. With full support from the school administration, she sent out an SOS to our congregation and the result was the birthing of "Oakland Food Basket." Every Friday afternoon hundreds of bags of nutritious foods are delivered to Highland and discreetly given to the children most at risk, to help tide them over until Monday. The food ministry quickly expanded to include a tutoring program. It's been three years since Oakland Food Basket was launched by a layperson who fulfilled her calling as a peacemaker. Today the ministry has expanded to eight schools in Oakland, each one adopted by a local church. What began as a simple, Christ-like response to a need in the community has resulted in a multicultural ministry partnership of sister churches and neighborhood schools, in the name of Jesus.

In his new book, *The Living Body*, Richard C. Halverson states that "whenever a believer enters into his or her daily task, the work of the Church is being done. The believer is fulfilling the divine call, his or her sacred vocation, not by taking time out of the daily routine to do something religious, but by faithfully doing his or her secular work, performing the task as a servant of Jesus Christ to the glory of God."

NO LONE RANGERS

There's no room in the Body of Christ for the self-appointed. Too often we hear, "God told me. . . . So who are you to ask me any questions?" Indeed it is God who calls, but it is the Christian community that affirms. Nowhere in the New Testament do we see lone rangers running unattached and unaccountable. Even the apostles were "sent ones." Remember that it was the community, specifically the

church at Antioch, which heard the Holy Spirit say, "'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' And after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off" (Acts 13:2-3). May all of our churches, like the church at Antioch, be calling and sending communities. ■

An Instrument of Calling: Henrietta Mears

—From page 7

firmly convinced that high standards were "Christ-honoring." Believing that Christ deserved one's best, she always tried to get her young people to strive for higher goals. Professor and missionary Dale Bruner, one-time president of her College Department, remembers her "all-consuming passion for excellence" as his most vivid impression of her.²¹

On the walls of this writer's office hang two roughly carved teakwood heads, brought back from a trip through Africa. "I know they're very primitive," apologized Teacher when she presented the gift, "but they were the carver's best work." That's what Miss Mears always expected of everyone.

Perhaps nothing better summarizes Henrietta Mears' calling ministry than a portion of a letter written to her in 1961 from Harold J. Ockenga, the first president of Fuller Seminary, after he had requested that she consider becoming professor of Christian education at Fuller:

What a work you have done! There is no young people's or Sunday school work in this nation equal to yours. When I think of the tens of thousands of people who have studied the Bible under your leadership, of the thousands of young people who have faced the claims of Christ and made a commitment to him, of the hundreds of young men who have gone

*into the ministry, and other young people into Christian service, I cannot help but stand back in amazement. Your vision, your faith, and your courage have been unequalled, and only heaven can measure the fruit of your labors.*²²

Miss Mears declined the invitation to teach at Fuller. Although she strongly believed in seminary education for ministry, she felt that her specific gift was to motivate young people who had *not yet* made decisions about their calling in life.

In 1983, at an anniversary celebration of Miss Mears' life and ministry, Cyrus Nelson, then board chairman of Gospel Light, said of her global influence: "The sun never sets on the work Christ called Dr. Mears to do."²³ Today, succeeding generations of her spiritual family extend throughout the world, not only in the ministry, but also in the professions and in the marketplace. The "spiritual multiplication" that Bill Bright described is still happening today, as the legacy of leadership that Miss Mears created continues to multiply.

Teacher often said that if Christ could be lifted up in Hollywood . . . in an era of apostasy and materialism . . . and this could be accomplished by her . . . then God could do a great and mighty work through anyone, anywhere.

There was no secret formula to Miss Mears' success as a motivator for ministry. This gifted person simply committed her life to God, trusted in his leading, and allowed him to work through her. Yet whenever someone asked her what she would do differently if she were beginning life all over again, she always answered: "I would trust God more." ■

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Ethel May Baldwin and David V. Benson, *Henrietta Mears and How She Did It!* (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1966), cover.
- ² Earl O. Roe, editor, *Dream Big: The Henrietta Mears Story*. (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990), 82.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 201.
- ⁴ B. and B., *How She Did It!*, 158.

- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.
- ⁶ Roe, *Dream Big*, 129.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.
- ⁸ B. and B., *How She Did It!*, 174.
- ⁹ *Faces and Facets in the Life of Henrietta C. Mears, L.H.D.* (Los Angeles, California: First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, 1961, 1963), 8.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9; and Roe, *Dream Big*, 21.
- ¹¹ Barbara Hudson Powers, *The Henrietta Mears Story*. (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1957), 125.
- ¹² B. and B., *How She Did It!*, 162.
- ¹³ Roe, *Dream Big*, 336.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ¹⁵ *Faces and Facets*, 8.
- ¹⁶ Roe, *Dream Big*, 4.
- ¹⁷ B. and B., *How She Did It!*, 220.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.
- ¹⁹ Roe, *Dream Big*, 116.
- ²⁰ B. and B., *How She Did It!*, 37.
- ²¹ *Faces and Facets*, 7.
- ²² Roe, *Dream Big*, 199.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 340.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ²⁶ Powers, *Mears Story*, Introduction.
- ²⁷ Roe, *Dream Big*, 8.

Discerning God's Call

—From page 15

To some of them it seemed like I was doing something foolish. How could I give up the very thing that was at the heart of my initial motivations for ministry? How could a winner of the preaching award—a disciple of Ian Pitt-Watson—even think about a position in a church that did not also include a pulpit? I've asked these questions as well. Where I find my answer is in reflection on the story of the encounter between Jesus and Peter in Matthew 14, in which Peter answers the call of his Master to come to him on the water.

I look at this move as a move out of the knowable world of the boat and into that unfamiliar space of water. I'm stepping out of another kind of boat, and I am doing it because I want to walk toward the one who

calls me, rather than simply remain in the safety of the boat. I am moving into a new realm of pastoral ministry, and I both welcome and fear the move. I welcome the opportunity to trust Christ, yet I don't relish the unsteadiness I'll feel as the waves slap at my feet.

There's a rather glaring irony in this move. It is a move to a safer place for my family and yet one that is less safe for me. As I embark on this new part of my pastoral vocation, I wish I could say I am making the move with an absolute certainty. But it isn't true. What I do have is a sense that I understand better than ever what God is calling me to as a pastor. And I welcome the opportunity and challenge of living out this call in a new place. ■

To Seek and Serve Christ

—From page 16

Christ became a life-giving and healing Christ for me. I began intentionally to seek Christ in the poor.

The power of Christ in the midst of the world is the power that is captured in Bonhoeffer's phrase: "to stand with God in God's hour of grieving." I am not motivated by martyrdom or self-deprecation. But I understand better the reservoir of blessing and life that is spoken about in the Beatitudes. A unique happiness comes to those who are poor in spirit, hungry, sorrowful, and in a desperate quest themselves for God's mercy.

This is also a unique liberation. If we can find perfect freedom in the midst of our own poverty, in the midst of our own emptying of self, then we are the most free of all God's creation. The liberation of both rich and poor is the same liberation. The desire to be of service is now beyond being a duty. It is also a quest for my own salvation. ■

* "Frank" is a pseudonym for a real person.

Healing Mind and Spirit

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worked with a young man diagnosed with cancer. He had to face the prognosis that he would probably die within two years. I had to ask myself, Can I walk with him into his future, even if that future is his death? It would have been easier to cut myself off from him in order to manage my own sense of tragedy.

I draw strength from a faith which teaches that there is no promised outcome. We do not know whether there will be healing. We cannot expect that all of life's tragedies will be averted. But we are promised that we will neither be alone nor abandoned. I try to offer the same assurance of God's presence to my clients that I have received through my relationship with God.

Along with courage, my faith gives me hope. This hope transcends a belief in my techniques, skills, and experience. Each moment of success or failure is not the final word. I believe that God is constantly inviting my clients and me to engage in a healing process, and is providing the resources to make that happen. This gives me hope beyond moments of seeming hopelessness. When problems seem beyond my skills and overwhelming to my client, I know and trust that there are more forces at work than I can see. I believe that my prayer, "God help me and my client," does not go unanswered. ■

God's Will and God's Call

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part in finding God's will and working it out in our lives:

■ *God's will is plain.* We are to love him. And we are to love people in the same way. To love people means to spend our energy and resources and time to serve them.

■ *God's will has objectives.* One of God's main objectives is liberation—to liberate the oppressed, to offer them a new and more abundant life.

■ *God's will works from the inside out.* When we love God with all our heart, then we can outwardly express our love toward others. This means that if we have not dealt with God's will practically in our lives, we cannot be used as a vessel for his love to others.

■ *God's will is to work through broken vessels.* I have always marveled at the way God has committed himself to injecting his power into and revealing himself through human beings. One of the really great things about God is he arranges the broken fragments of our lives together to form a beautiful mosaic that exhibits his glory. It is God's will to work through us. That's good news!

I firmly believe that once God has called us to do some things and we become his person for the task, he will complete his work. God will glorify himself through us, even though we are sometimes unwilling. The call is just the beginning, a taste of the grace that will be sustaining us as the foundation is laid for the work we are to do for him. ■



HENRIETTA MEARS
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