

Statement of Call
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My spiritual director once told me that I should “keep my image of God in a paper cup,” so that it can always be tossed out and replaced with a new image. Throughout my life and in my sense of call, I have found this to be an accurate illustration of my ever-evolving and growing relationship with God.

My earliest God-image took the form of an all-knowing father figure; a stereotypical view of God for many. My faith has always been strong, instilled in me by my parents from a very young age. Though I have always been heavily involved in church life, ministry as a vocation never crossed my mind.

Even so, my involvement in my home church, along with my father image of God, remained consistent until 2010, my sophomore year of college. That spring, the employment of the church’s youth director, a woman who had been instrumental in my faith formation, was unexpectedly terminated. This decision was something I openly questioned, and it caused me to turn my back on the institutional church. I had a difficult time understanding God’s apparent absence in church politics, and my God-image became that of a distant, indifferent bystander for a time.

Upon graduation from college, I landed back at home working as a substitute teacher. The associate pastor of my church at the time and my father, a member of Session, approached me and asked if I would like to work at the church as their Children’s Ministry Coordinator. They needed good educational staff, and I needed the financial means to move out of my parents’ home. I accepted their offer, more out of necessity than desire. I was curious as I began work for the very institution that had broken my trust, and my God-image shifted yet again to that of a knowing teacher. “Just try it,” God seemed to say.

The first time I felt that this part-time job might become something more was during my work directing Vacation Bible School that summer. I was finally able to see God truly at work for the first time, and suddenly my work became more than a job. I spent every day in the office that summer, pouring myself into my work and looking for more to do. I found joy working alongside God, and God became for me a spiritual coworker – a partner in ministry. The children’s ministry program began to thrive, and I saw the potential for ministry as a vocation for the first time.

The next turning point in my journey into ministry came later that summer in the form of a full-time teaching position I had dreamt about. I was surprised to find that when offered the position, I hesitated. I grew angry with God as I struggled with two possible paths, each of which I felt I had been invited to travel, and my image of God transformed briefly into a stubbornly silent challenger. After several days of careful discernment (and shouting matches with my invisible, omnipresent opponent), I responded to the job offer. “I’m sorry, but I think I am being called into ministry.” Even as I wrote the words I did not fully understand them, but it felt right, and God again became my ally.

My part-time job at the church became full-time as my ministerial vocation became clearer and my relationship with the institutional church healed over 6 years of joyful partnership with God. I did not think it possible that I would ever leave the job I loved, so I was surprised when my next call-sense came in 2019. I had grown curious and open to other roles of leadership within the church, moving from education to an interest in pastoral care and worship leadership. God’s gentle nudges coupled with affirmations from my pastors and my family gave me the courage I needed to answer God’s call yet again. This time God took the form of a playful friend, curious and inviting as we journeyed together to seminary. This has remained the steadfast image of God for me over the last two years.

The God who is calling me into ministry is a dynamic, ever-changing presence in my life. My image of God does, indeed, remain in a “paper cup” as the God calling me into ministry has taken myriad forms throughout my journey, each meeting me precisely where I am. Though my image of God shifts, I sense this new call to ministry as an invitation to share God’s unchanging love through Word, practice, and example as I lean into my own growing relationship with God.