



Can You Hear?

June 26, 2019

Rachel Yates

She preached her last sermon on Sunday. The message was solid as always, but the music told the real story. As Rev. Beth Patton dissolved her call with North Shore Presbyterian Church, we sang “God Is Calling through the Whisper” (GTG 410) from the tree-shaded patio.

*God is calling through the whisper of the Spirit’s deepest sighs,
Through the thrill of sudden beauties that can catch us by surprise.
Flash of lightning, crash of thunder; hush of stillness, rush of wonder:
God is calling – can you hear? God is calling – can you hear?*

*God is calling through the voices of our neighbors’ urgent prayers,
Through their longing for redemption and for rescue from despair.
Place of hurt or face of needing; strident cry or silent pleading:
God is calling – can you hear? God is calling – can you hear?*

Beth has heard that calling, and she is daring to follow a call that is not yet fully formed. The “whisper of the Spirit’s deepest sighs” and the “voices of neighbors’ urgent prayers” will not let her go. She is preparing to walk into the places of hurt in our communities and to reach those in need, not just with charity but with advocacy and opportunity for lasting change. The congregation has witnessed her passion for social justice for the last 4½ years. In the time of celebration on Sunday, her ministry was affirmed by the congregation: “You have made us better, and you have made a difference.”



When we are faithful to God’s calling, that happens. It begins by listening and observing what stirs your soul. We test the message of call by prayer and in conversation with others who are good sounding boards. If you’re like me, you resist the call for a while until it refuses to go away. We begin to notice when the pieces of an opportunity fall into place, so that our excuses disappear.

Then, we dare to step into places of hurt or to respond to the urgent prayers of our neighbors. Accepting God’s call, we can no longer rest on goodwill sentiments alone, but instead we are called into action. We don’t always know where God’s call will lead, and sometimes we’ll be dumbfounded by where the journey takes us. Yet, we follow. God willing, we will make a difference and make those around us better through our faithful Christian witness.

The hymn asks the question, “Can you hear? God is calling – can you hear?” In the final verse, we are encouraged to answer the question – to accept God’s invitation – with these words:

God is calling – and we hear! God is calling – and we hear!”