

For This I was Appointed
September 21, 2025
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I must start my sermon this morning by letting you know that I will be preaching using an excerpt from the Epistle in today's lectionary and not this juicy gospel lesson

I do not mean to leave you aching for understanding and revelation, but I do mean to preach on a very personal journey I have been undertaking lately and am eager to invite you into

"For this I was appointed" Paul writes in his letter to his friend Timothy, "For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth."

For this I was appointed

It's so clear from Paul's letters that he is someone for whom his vocation and his job align – they didn't always, but in this letter to Timothy, it is so clear that Paul's passion for Christ and his sense of calling to be a herald, a teacher in faith and truth aligns with what he gets to do for a living

And I'm not sure that's true for everyone

I believe that everyone has a calling, but I'm not sure that everyone's job aligns with their calling

It's odd, because we give our jobs the overall umbrella term of "vocation" which comes from the Latin word *vocare* which means "to call" so, in other words, "a calling"

We ask someone "what is/was your vocation?" and often we mean "what is/was your job?"

But I have many friends for whom their job is simply a J-O-B, a means to earn a wage so as to support themselves and their families in their daily life

And for many of these friends, it is so clear to me that their vocation, their calling, is to something other than that J-O-B: their called to parenthood, their called to volunteer and serve their neighbor, they have other deep passions – but their job is not a vehicle of that passion

There are quite a few people I know for whom their calling, their vocation, is not their job – does that resonate with any of you or do you know someone like this?

But, then there are some like Paul, for whom their vocation, their calling, and their job align – it is SO CLEAR that their gifts for their job come from a deeply personal connection and fulfillment in doing the work

This is true for many teachers and even my accountant!

And, it's true for me – I am someone for whom my vocation and my job align

I feel a deep sense of calling to serve God and to serve God specifically by tending to the Body of Christ, to preach the gospel, and to celebrate the sacraments

My mom has always said that she knew I was called to be a pastor because this one time she was actually on the phone with our pastor and I was just incessantly seeking her attention, finally she said “Amanda, would you please leave me in peace!” and I said, “OK, Mommy, the Peace of the Lord be with you.” and walked away!

I can recall playing “Communion” at my grandparents house after church on Sundays. We'd typically buy a dozen donuts and some “regular” coffees at Dunkin Donuts and head over to their house after church to hang out. I

can recall taking out an English muffin from the bread box and going from person to person and saying “The body of Christ given for you”

Somehow, still, becoming a minister wasn't top of mind for me when I went to college – my pastor in high school had recognized in me a calling to ministry and had encouraged me to think about it. I wasn't startled by her recommendation, in fact I liked the church. But, I had also just traveled abroad for the first time and was falling in love with the International Relations field of study...so that was my major in college

I had all these dreams of working for international agencies and having a faithful ministry as part of my work but doing so more in the fields of advocacy and justice

Graduating college in 2007, however, just at the start of the 2008 recession, was not a time when those kinds of organizations were hiring and I ended up living at home for three years and working for a local nonprofit that provided services for survivors of domestic and sexual violence

The work felt like ministry, it felt like we were doing something positive to care for people, but it wasn't something I ever really talked about with my colleagues – it was a secular organization

But, it was during these three years that two important things happened

1 – I came out to my family and friends as queer

I don't know if “struggled” is the right term for me in my journey to discovering my sexuality, but the path to understanding who I was didn't feel very straight forward either

I first came out to myself in college, and what a relief it was to name this possibility of identity – it just helped things make so much sense!

But, it wasn't until I was 24 that I came out to my family and friends

I'm so blessed that I was able to come out to a family, friends, and church who loved me, celebrated me, and cared for me

The second thing that I experienced in those three years at home was a mission trip to Honduras with the New England Synod – the regional expression of the Lutheran Church

While the trip itself was full of impactful moments and learnings, one of the biggest for me was that this trip melded for me acts of service and a public Christian identity

Remember when I said that working for the nonprofit felt like a ministry but I just couldn't talk about it that way with my colleagues – that was totally the opposite on this mission trip

On this trip, we were VERY public that we were there because we were Christian siblings of the community we were there to support

My Christian identity wasn't something to diminish in this instance, it held equal weight....and I LOVED that feeling

I loved being a public Christian!

Over the course of the week, the people on our trip and the community members that we met would say "well, you're a pastor right?" and I would scoff and dismiss the comment at first

But, by the end of the week, my response was "not yet?"

I feel like both of these events needed to happen for me to recognize my calling in life – I needed to come out (God was like "oh good, you know who you are, now I can use you!") and I needed to experience this public Christian identity

For this I was appointed: a queer, public Christian!

Those events were the catalyst for me applying to seminary and going through the process with the Lutheran Church to become a minister and earlier this year we celebrated that I have been living out this faithful calling professionally for 10 years

I am someone for whom my vocation and my job align – I tell people I meet that I have the best job in the world, I love what I do and I feel so called to it

My calling to serve God and to serve God specifically by tending to the Body of Christ, preaching the gospel, and celebrating the sacraments is a deeply centering and grounding identity for me

And, the way in which I do that, I am learning, is dynamic and not static

Four years ago, I started conversations with a congregation that was outside my tradition but inside the radius of space in which I was hoping to find a new call

The Lutheran-Episcopal Call to Common Mission had been around for more than 20 years and I studied in an ecumenical setting in seminary, but this would still be something new for me and for them, for you

When I met with your search committee, I was asked how I would help the community maintain its connection and roots in the Episcopal tradition and I knew it was something that I'd need to make intentional space for and seek not only the guidance of experts in the field but also the experts in this room – those of you who have lived the tradition day by day

And so by the grace of God and the good humor of the Holy Spirit we entered into this contract of pastoral relationship and have been co-creating our expression of the Christian faith ever since

And, seeds were planted in my heart – seeds of discernment that I didn't fully realize were there until this past winter they started to blossom and I had to take notice of them

Seeds of assurance and care – as I began serving here and connecting with the Diocese, I began to see how the Episcopal Church cares for their clergy in both spiritual and tangible ways

Seeds of wisdom and expression – in this setting, in my preaching and teaching and praying, I have found an openness to possibility and a willingness to journey together to grow in faithful understanding which has, in return, inspired that preaching and teaching and praying in a way that feels liberating and Spirit-filled

Seeds of fulfillment and calling – there are aspects of my dual citizenship that not only have been fun to recognize, but are starting to feel more and more like they help to give shape to my edges and are helping me to further become the minister I am called to be

When I surveyed the blossoms that grew from these seeds and their beauty, it became apparent to me that I was in a process of discernment, and I am so pleased to share with you today that that process has led to me making the decision to become an Episcopal Priest

When Bishop Brown comes for his visitation at the end of October, I will make an oath with him and with all of you, and as of November 1st I will be a priest in the Episcopal Church

While this discernment has brought so much richness to my life, I must be honest with you that there is also grief

Like with any major change, there is a saying “good bye” to something as much as there is a saying “hello” in making this decision

To become an Episcopal priest, I need to resign being a Lutheran pastor, and I grieve this loss

Like so many of you who have grown up in a tradition, or who have an ethnic identity that you hold onto, or another affiliation, I have struggled in this discernment to know if changing my affiliation changed also those ways in which I have identified myself

And what I have come to realize is what Paul proclaims in his letter this morning: for this I have been appointed

For this I have been called: to tend to the Body of Christ, to preach the gospel, and to celebrate the sacraments

That is the calling that God placed on my heart a number of years ago and I have been following the windy paths set before me striving always to honor that calling with authenticity and joy

I will never not be Lutheran, just as I will never not be Amanda – the one who left her mother in peace; played communion with English muffins; figured out that God wanted her to be a queer, public Christian; formed and ordained in the Lutheran tradition like her great uncles and cousins before her; and dual citizen in the Call to Common Mission

And I will be Amanda, Episcopal Priest with all those things within me

And you, wonderful community of St. Bart's, you have been the fertilizer and the sunshine and the water that have provided those seeds in my heart the nutrients and safety to grow and I thank you

I wanted to close my sermon this morning with a prayer from the Lutheran service book that has meant a lot to me and when I googled to find the text of the prayer (rather than getting up to find my hymnal) I found an article that told a little bit of the history of the prayer and wouldn't you know that it

was originally written by Eric Milner-White, dean of the chapel at King's College, in Cambridge¹ in the early 1900's

He titled it "The Call of Abraham" and it first made its way into the Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal in 1958

So, to close, a prayer that also lives this beautiful Luther-palian spirituality, let us pray:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

¹ <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2022/05/a-prayer-for-guidance/>