



Send Me: I've Waited So Long

Nadara Jones

In my early years as a member of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, I had a pastor who was a great advocate for missions in our denomination. I grew up dreaming of serving in some area of missions in our church.

I went to college and started teaching school. I know that teaching is a calling, and I felt like it was what I was supposed to do. At that time it was, so I gave my energy and passion to those children. Over the years, my heart kept yearning and God's voice grew louder. Like Samuel, I lacked experience at listening to God, because I wondered why God would keep speaking to **me**. I kept following God in fun ways. I did mission work trips with Rev. John Lovelace, children's home time with Judy Keith and James Gilbert, church camps at Crystal Springs and Ferncliff, Sunday school classes, and Bible school. Was I like Samuel, "listening to the wrong voice," or was the time just not right? I had said "send me," but I was not sure to what or where I was being called.

Then a friend told me that there was a great need for volunteers at our Coalition for Appalachian Ministry (CAM) office and craft shop. The request was for a one-month commitment; I went to see if I could handle it. But then I went again because it was great to spend a month at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains. Was I in for a surprise! It was probably the most enjoyable and spiritually fulfilling time of my life. I met crafters, some of the most spirit filled people I had ever met. I met staff members who guided me into the workings and history of the mission there in Townsend, Tennessee. I spent time tagging beautiful crafts, tending the shop, and meeting customers from all over the world. It was a beautiful experience. Seeing the great need there, I came home knowing that my calling was to this beautiful ministry that the Cumberland Presbyterian denomination sponsored with four other Presbyterian denominations.

As soon as there was a place on the CAM Board, I was asked to serve representing my Presbytery and Murfreesboro Regional CPWM. It has been a wonderful and God-filled experience. I heard God's call and was given the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of some of God's children, citizens of the USA, and devout Christians who live in the Appalachian Region of the U.S.

I had, like Isaiah, found that the call to God's work can be messy, confusing, and sometimes frustrating, and above all, it requires patience. Just to find the "call" that was mine and to understand just what I was to do was a difficult task that took me many years in many places serving in many ways. Now I know that I have a ministry to these people in the Appalachian Region. When this call came along, I listened and said, "Here am I, send me," and I am thankful for the opportunity to serve in this way.

Reflections

1. Read I Samuel 3:4-10. Describe an experience when you were not sure who was speaking to you, but you wondered if it were God. How did you determine whose voice it was?
2. Even though Samuel was called as a child, God's promise did not come true until he was an adult. Discuss how God sometimes needs to prepare us, prune us so to speak, for the task God is calling us to do.
3. Consider the story of Jonah. When have you run from God's call? Share with the group if you feel led to.

Call to Action

1. How might God have actually been preparing Nadara to work in the Appalachian region to help people there? How may God be preparing you even now for a call to ministry you have yet to determine?
2. What events in your life can be used to minister to others? The divorced can minister to someone going through divorce. Those who have grieved can minister to someone who is grieving. Share with the group what you have to offer and pray for opportunities to use painful experiences for good to help others.

Prayer

You see our lives in the context of eternity, O God. Your ways are not our ways. Your time does not coincide with ours. You prune us and prepare us. You allow us to experience life and you call us to use those experiences in ministry. We pray for Nadara and for the people of Appalachia. We pray for people who need us in our communities. We pray to be able to discern your call, and we pray for courage to answer, "Send me." Amen.