

## **“Echoes of the Heart”**

*Reflections on Life and Community Living*

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**Called.** In the Church, as well as in the Bible, there’s a great emphasis on *calling*. A pastor/ minister is *called* to a particular ministry. For example, in our *United Church of Christ* (my denomination), an ordained clergy person has to have a *call* in order to gain standing (officially be recognized).

In the Bible, Hebrew prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah were *called*, ostensibly by God, to the context of their prophetic activity. In the Christian Scriptures, Jesus *called* his disciples to come and follow him.

As human beings, we’re all called to something—to some vision of possibility, some realm of commitment and service, some utilization of our special gifts.

On the local sports scene, we can only hope that legendary football guru Bill Parcells has a sense of *calling* to lead our faltering Miami Dolphins back up the rung of National Football League prominence. In politics, we rejoice in the uniquely gifted politician who feels a deep-seeded *calling* to a life of public service.

To think that any human person is devoid of talent and gifts, and therein lacks a special *calling*, reveals an absence of imagination. Again, we’re all *called* to do something.

**How do we discern our calling?** To be sure, discernment of our *calling* is never an exact science. For some, it’s immediate and uncomplicated. Over the years, we’ve all known teachers, for example, or doctors or fire-fighters who, early on, had the sense that this was what they were supposed to do with their lives.

For countless others, our *calling* comes over time and over years of sorting ourselves out. Often times, discovering our calling only comes when we’re willing to *risk* trying new things. For example, traveling abroad, learning a new language, taking an interesting class, or attending a challenging seminar can all be springboards to uncovering a special *calling* in life.

Sometimes, simply put, we have to *go for it* and get outside the box enough to begin to see ourselves and our world in new and fresh ways. Certainly, one of the benefits of the New Year is that we are inspired, through our New Year resolve, to do this very thing.

To discern our calling, it’s important to have a sense of how our *calling* resonates with our spirit. Sometimes, for example, it just *feels* right. In the arts, fashion design, sports management, or technology—whatever it is—on a feeling level, it works.

In my own experience, it always *felt* right to be a minister. In every way, it just seemed that this was what I was supposed to do. In fact, contemplating a career of some sort in sports or law (my competing options in my earlier years) simply never *felt* right. Had I

gone one of these other routes, I would have felt off track, as if I were denying something deep in my spirit.

**Changed callings.** Not all *callings* are forever, nor should they be. *Callings* have a life of their own. We've all known people who have made career changes and gone on to be deeply fulfilled in a second or even third career.

*Changed callings* simply recognize the obvious: that change is always a part of our life-situation. We can't totally predict what our world—and therein our life—will be like ten, twenty or forty years from now.

We've all seen people move seamlessly from business to education, for example; and sometimes the reverse as well. In the ministry, second career divinity students are all the rage in recent decades, comprising the majority of enrollees in many of our nation's seminaries.

All the time, our sense of *calling* is evolving and unfolding. It's an affirmation that our lives are never static. It's also good news and a message of hope that we can all move towards new goals and an evolving sense of *life-purpose*.

Our *callings* are unique opportunities for each one of us. Each calling has the potential to give direction and purpose to our lives and, therein, to lift our spirit and encourage us along the pathway of a more meaningful and joyful life.