

This season of ministry

By [Melissa Florer-Bixler](#)

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“So, what’s your plan? You going to keep working your way up to bigger and better churches and church leadership positions?”

This was the end of a conversation I had with one of my parishioners at the church where I am the newly minted minister to children. Over the past few weeks it has become clear how difficult it is for most people to get their heads around my recent change in ministry roles. About a month ago I went from being a full-time associate at a slightly smaller church to my current part-time role in children’s ministry. There were many reasons for this change, among them that my husband will soon be going back to graduate school so a ministry call closer to home with fewer hours makes sense for our family. This church is in the town where I live so no more long commute. And the pay is good.

Before all of that I actually feel a call to ministry with children and to their families. I’m still coming to grips with the reality that children’s ministry isn’t a hallowed position in the church. It’s not a call that most churches feel requires any particular accreditation or theological training. Children’s ministers work primarily with a population that has very little influence in church leadership, produces no revenue for the church, and usually makes worship more complicated and uncomfortable for the people who do hold power—the adults.

I wonder if that’s why this is a good place for me to be right now. I like power. When I overhear through an open door our lead pastor talking with our minister of adult discipleship about overarching church visioning, coming up with mission and stewardship statements, or delving into church/city relations I feel this pull, this desire to be back at the center of church life. Sometimes I feel sad. And then I remember that Jesus surrounded himself with people who didn’t have credentials or education. Jesus put himself in the way of children, and children found their way to him. On days when I desperately want to sit at the “adult table,” when my office is inundated with color sheets and children’s storybook Bibles, I remember that this is probably the church office that Jesus would choose.

My parishoner isn't alone. I think most of us think of church ministry as something that happens in stages. We leave behind youth or children for associate or adult discipleship. After a few years this leads to a rural or solo pastorate. After a few wins at this level we may move on to a smaller staff, then finally on to a large multi-staff church.

Now in my second call I find myself drawn from the metaphor of stages to that of seasons. This is a good season for me to be in children's ministry. Right now I think about children theologically but also from my experience because I have young children. I'm also learning to notice children more, to think about how they see and experience our worship space, how they encounter Scripture and liturgy. I think about the gifts they bring our congregation. And I see them where I didn't before—in our church, on the street, in grocery stores.

Today I told my parishoner that I am called to this church in this ministry in this season. And I like to think that one day, even after a solo pastorate or a multi-staff parish, that I might find my way back to children's ministry again.

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