

I can think of at least TWO reasons.

- (1) To be a testimony to yourself and others that God CAN help us when we step out in faith, because now we know that God is ABLE to help us— Schutte’s hymn nudges at our heart as we sing – “is it I, Lord?” and as we admit, “I have heard you calling in the night” God is constantly equipping the called, and calling the equipped. If you don’t feel qualified to help, but feel called...say “Here I am Lord”

Personal story - I used to have a terrible problem with anxiety. I remember feeling moved to sing a solo for church, practice for months, but when it came time, I told them I couldn’t do it. I started to feel horribly sick, then fell asleep and missed service all together. You could say I probably was having a panic attack. The first time I had to give a children’s sermon, I couldn’t sleep at all the night before. But through prayer and stepping out, God has equipped me over time to overcome this barrier.

- (2) To build your faith, knowing that God has the wisdom to KNOW what to do—and God has the POWER to do what needs doing.

Another personal story – when I graduated seminary, maybe some of you know that my dad was dying that year. His lungs had filled with an irreversible and non-treatable condition called pulmonary fibrosis and he was slowly being strangled to death. In 2010 he was told he had 3-5 years to live. Here it was the 5th year, and we needed a miracle, and we went through the phases of grief. The Kübler-Ross model, or the five **stages** of grief, says that a series of emotions are experienced by terminally ill people and their loved ones, wherein the five **stages** are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. You can say we were at the acceptance stage, after 5 years of dealing with the first phases. My faithful, fervent prayer, was to help me to be able to live after my dad’s death. He is the anchor of our family, and our days are surrounded by him. He knows everything, and keeps everything together. My constant plea was to equip me for what was coming ahead, as I was not equipped in the way I thought I would be. God had a better plan... God simply removed the fibers and repaired the crystallized lung cells. This is the power of putting all faith that yes, you can say “Here I am Lord” because yes, God WILL go before you, and God WILL equip you somehow through you or someone else. One day I will have to deal with my dad’s death, and I am sure God will equip me or someone else to handle it, as death is inevitable. It’s the one thing we can all count on, and we will never be ready for. I’m just thankful God didn’t listen to me in this prayer, and did what God wanted to do – which was keep him here for a little while longer. So instead of being a worrier, be a prayer warrior, and say Yes, Lord, Here I Am.

God will help equip you. Let your testimony of prayer, and feeling God’s call, light the fire for others to see, and share this so that they too can pray, and feel a call. Sometimes you are being called to do something, but in that doing, there will be conversation, community, and Christian love which in itself answers more prayer.

Just after Palm Sunday, after Jesus entered Jerusalem, some Greeks came to ask Jesus questions. John records in 12:26 that Jesus told them, “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

August 20, 2017

Here I Am, Lord

Isaiah 6:8, 1 Samuel 3: 1-9, and John 12:26

Maria Wilcox (Director of Children and Youth Ministries)

We have a wide diversity of very talented people. For example—when I have questions about carpentry—I know I can go to the world’s greatest construction expert—our own trustees can build anything. They have great wisdom in that area—which is why we should ask them to train us on construction mission trips! When I need financial wisdom—I can go to Christine Fisher, or the Linda Denby. They really know interest rates and spread sheets! If I want help decorating—I can go to Brandy Francisco. If I need guidance in setting up a fellowship activity I go to Pat Hayward or Ellie Pagulayan. If I need guidance when it comes to personal evangelism, I can go to Mike Abron. Then we have committees that help for different situations. If I need prayer or spiritual guidance, I can go to Pastor Charlie. I could go on and on—because God has indeed showered the members of this church with talents and spiritual gifts—so I know where to go when I need help in pretty much any area. These people have all said yes, “Here I Am, Lord.” And I thank God for them and the example they set for others to also say, “Here, I Am, Lord.”

Today is the second Sunday that we are talking about favorite hymns, so I’d like to share with you my favorite hymn, the one that brought me along my journey, “Here I Am Lord” by Dan Schutte. I started researching information on this author in preparation for today, and here is what I found... He answered the call to work with the church at a young age, entering the Jesuit order right out of high school. While in the order, he used his talent for writing music to change the world. He was a Wisconsin boy, born in 1947, raised in Elm Grove. He helped to found an order that would write meaningful contemporary worship songs in common English based on ancient sacred texts. He received two masters degrees from The Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, he continued to write for worship services, both in Catholic and Protestant settings. Over the years has received three honorary doctoral degrees. And now after writing 10 collections of music, and 11 solo collections, he currently is the Composer-in-Residence at the University of San Francisco. Amy Grant, John Talbot, and other singers have recorded his songs. He set 30 of his most famous songs to meditations that help you to be silent and listen in his book and CD set: Walking the Sacred Path.

Here is a guy, called by God to write music, and now he took it another step further to help people to pray, reflect, and connect to God. He not only said, “Here I am Lord” but he also said “I’m All IN” What talent do you have, after you have said yes to God, have you taken one step further, are you All IN? Makes me want to write a book! Maybe everyone won’t write a book, maybe it would be leading a small group, or starting a small group. What does your All IN look like?

Some familiar songs are:

"City of God" (1981), "Only This I Want" (1981), "Blest Be the Lord" (1976), "You Are Near" (1971), "Though the Mountains May Fall" (1975), "Sing a New Song" (1972), "Glory and Praise to Our God" (1976) "Table of Plenty" (1992) and "These Alone Are Enough" (2004).

I'll tell you a bit about my saying yes, "Here I am Lord." This song writer and author was called to tell the Christian story set to music in our common language based on sacred texts. Similarly, I was called to share the Christian story in our common language, but through the gift of story telling in Christian Education, through actions in Mission, and through calling people into leadership so that they, too, can tell the Christian story.

I knew I was called to the ministry at the age of eight. But my life got kicked into action after hearing this song, "Here I Am Lord" one day when I was contemplating accepting a promotion at the church I was working at. My son was only two years old, and my daughter was six, and I said, "not me, Lord" I have too much on my plate as it is. But when I was in church that day, and heard this song for the first time, the words were a jumbled mess as I cried my way through. I felt that it must be the Holy Spirit telling me it was ok, that the Lord of the wind and sky would handle all the details, and it was ok to say yes, "Here I am Lord." This started my road to investigate the details of becoming a Deacon. And the Lord took care of every detail from then until now.

So when I researched why Mr. Schutte wrote this song, "Here I Am, Lord" I found this interview online. He said: "When I was a young Jesuit, studying theology in Berkeley, California, a friend came to me one day asked me for a favor. "Dan, I know this is late notice, but I'm planning the ceremony for the ordination of Deacons. I need a piece of music set to the text of Isaiah chapter 6." He saw the look of shock on my face knowing I was well aware that the ceremony was only three days away... I had always loved the particular Scripture passage (Isaiah 6) where God calls Isaiah to be his servant and messenger to the people and Isaiah responds with both hesitation and doubt, but also with a humble willingness to surrender to God. If it was going to work, it would have to be God's power and grace making it happen. Much like Isaiah I was not very sure that I could meet the request my friend had made, but I was willing to try...I remember being very unsure of myself, but hoping that it would be what he had wanted for the ordination... For me, the story of "Here I Am, Lord" tells of the God who overshadows us, giving power to our stumbling words and the simple works of our hands, and making them into something that can be a grace for people. The power God gives is far beyond what we could have planned or created."

Now— I feel God working through this Faithful Church, through God and me as I am also working toward my ordination as a Deacon. I am left feeling filled with joy as I can tell you today, my favorite Hymn, "Here I Am, Lord"

Knowing all this, the question I want us to deal with today is... what is God calling you to do? As you think about your call... I will mention 5 talents I have seen at Faith Church over the years. I first started noticing after studying a book from Bishop Schnase called Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations. See if you have one of these abilities that can be expanded:

1) Radical Hospitality: The radical friendly and radical generous reception of guests, visitors, or strangers.
synonyms: [friendliness](#), hospitableness, warm

reception, [welcome](#), helpfulness, neighborliness, [warmth](#), [kindness](#), congeniality, [geniality](#), cordiality, [courtesy](#), amenability, [generosity](#), [entertainment](#), catering, [food](#)

2) Passionate Worship: I've seen this in two ways.

a) Passionate about the details of the noun worship: the acts or rites that make up a formal expression of reverence for God. Maybe this is helping set up worship service, or calling people to help in the worship service. Perhaps ordering flowers, buying flowers, or making banners or putting up banners, or helping to organize or plan special services or ceremonies

b) Passionate about the verb of worship in action: showing reverence and adoration for God. Showing authentically that worship is important – perhaps by bringing friends, dressing up, showing respect, not playing on phones, sitting up front – however in your special way – that you acknowledge the worth of gathering once a week for something so special that you can't get anywhere else – this connection with other people as we all worship God.

3) Intentional Faith Development: ensuring that the people of the church, community, or world are working in a positive direction on developing their faith over their lifetime. This could be inviting people to church, Bible study, events we host, or sharing messages of God's love on Facebook, instagram, or letters. It could be helping plan for religious education in the church, or helping to call people to teach. It could be sitting next to a family with little children, helping to keep them occupied with silent activities so that the parents can worship more authentically. It could be holding a child in the nursery, or welcoming people as they come, in order that they feel comfortable to stay. All of this works on their and our faith development.

4) Risk-Taking Mission and Service: the act or fact of doing something that helps a mission which involves some sort of **risk** in order to achieve the goal of the mission work. This could mean helping to donate money to a mission, or helping to communicate an upcoming mission, or helping to invite people to go on a mission, or helping to organize or implement a mission. All of this takes stepping out of your comfort zone and taking a risk.

5) Extravagant Generosity: this I've seen in two ways:

a) in personality of people: the quality of being extravagantly kind and generous towards someone. This could be a generous action as in taking care of someone or sitting and reading to someone sick, or knitting a large project for someone needing prayer.

synonyms: [liberality](#), lavishness, [magnanimity](#), [munificence](#), openhandedness, free-handedness, unselfishness; [More](#)

b) in the action of giving something that was in a plentiful measure. This could be time, or money, or something given plentifully. the quality or fact of being plentiful or large, perhaps in giving a generous portion of something.

synonyms: [abundance](#), plentifulness, copiousness, lavishness, [liberality](#), largeness

You have said yes, "Here I Am Lord" to many things. Is there something else that God is working on? Something which you say, no not me, Lord! But it leaves a thought, or a spark, which might grow with more faith? Let's go over why we should say, yes, "Here I am Lord" ...