

So what do you do?
Jeremy Peters 6/1/2019

One day you will find yourself flying on a plane
and the woman sitting next to you
a retired nurse on her way to see a friend
will turn to you and say
So what do you do?

And you will say
I am a clergyperson,
and she will say
you don't seem old enough to be a clergyperson
and you will say thank you
but you will wonder when people will stop saying that
and start taking you seriously as a trained
and ordained minister of the gospel.

You will think about growing a beard
so you can look older
and more like Moses.

And then the woman will say
so what does a clergyperson do?
And if you are an elder you will say
my responsibility is to ensure the faithful transmission of the Christian faith
and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation
are adequately provided for
and you will go on like that for fourteen pages
complete with citations from the Book of Discipline
until her eyes glaze over
and she is sorry that she ever asked.

Or if you are a deacon
then you will tell her that you are a deacon
and she will say So what does a deacon do?
and you will be tempted to tell her
that a deacon is somebody
who spends most of their time
explaining to people what a deacon does
but you won't say that,
because she wouldn't understand -
instead you will say that your job is to lean your shoulder
on the door of the church
and push with every fiber of your being
until the people who are loved by God
can find their way inside.

Or if you are an associate member
you will tell her
I do everything everybody else does
but sometimes I don't get to vote on stuff.

And she will say,
I see,
but you will see that she does not.

And then
one day
you will find yourself flying on a plane
and the woman sitting next to you
a woman who designs custom kitchens on her way to meet a client
will turn to you
and say
So what do you do?

And you will say,
I am a clergyperson
and she will nod
as if that makes perfect sense
and you will think about maybe shaving your beard
to look a little younger.

And the woman will ask you
so what does a clergyperson do
and if you are an elder you will say
I spend my life searching for a combination of words
that will make people believe in a God they cannot see
and love the people they can see
with such a reckless and unbreakable love
that the invisible God becomes visible in holy friendship and human flesh.

Or if you are a deacon
then you will tell her that you are a deacon
and she will say oh
I know what a deacon does!
and I know that's not very likely
but it's nice to imagine a world
where deacons don't have to constantly explain
what they do
to everyone they meet.

If you are a deacon you will tell her that your job
is to lean your shoulder on the door of the church
and push with every fiber of your being
until the people who are loved by God
can find their way out into the world.

Or if you are an associate member you will say to her
I do everything nobody else wants to do
in the places they don't want to do it in.

And she will say I see
but you will see that she does not.

And then
one day
you will find yourself standing before the Good Shepherd
who is also the Gate
and the one who is the Good Shepherd and also the Gate
will turn to you and say
So what did you do?
and you will say,
Lord, you know,
you know every thing that I did,
and the one who is Shepherd and also Gate will say, Yes, I do,
and you will see that he does,
and for once
and forever
that will be enough.

Free Store
Celia Peters and Her Dad
6/1/2019

Hey, you.
Yeah you.
You who got stuck with the Sunday shift
waiting on tables
and getting stiffed
by people who think that a decent tip
is to worship at the church with the Methodists
because the pastor there preaches shorter sermons
so they're able to get to the diner first
before they run out of the good desserts,
and then when they're finished they say to the server,
"I just gave Jesus ten percent
so why should you get twenty?"

Hey, you.
Yeah you.
You on your way to the laundromat -
did you just hit a pothole,
is that tire flat?
And now you're doing mental math
and adding up the cash
you don't have
to fix a hundred broken things -
hey, you.

I know a place.
I know a place without price tags.
I know a place where you can fill your bag
without ever having to swipe a Visa.
I know a place where you'll never need to root around

for coupons
while the people behind you
roll their eyes
and tap their toes -
I know a place where you can go
and buy a billion things for free.

You can get pickles without spending a nickel,
and you can get limes without spending a dime,
and milk and honey don't cost any money at all

and clothes,
oh those clothes!
Rows upon rows of sweaters and jeans
without any holes
and all of it clean,
the most glorious clothes that you've ever seen!

They've got gallons of goodness
and liters of kindness
and if you can't find it
just ask for Rashawnda -
she'll show you the place,
she'll take you to the aisle with a smile on her face,
and she may even have you believing in grace,
just go to the free store
and have a taste
of a great big Sunday
without all the nuts.