

**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.