

Ministry sucks sometimes

By [Tim Graves](#)

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Ministry sucks sometimes.

Days can be filled with clerical tedium, with the immense needs of others, in meetings in which petty items are discussed ad nauseum, or in pastoral discussions about deep, fundamental questions of human existence. Many days pastors experience all of these. These are exhausting but they don't suck.

The times that wear me out—and suck—are when destruction is wrought on the community by the tsunami waves of the emotionally wounded. These are the times when I feel least capable and depend upon continuous prayer for strength and wisdom to alleviate pain and navigate the wreckage following the storm.

I was reminded one Monday, my sabbath day of rest following a week of turbulence, that it is often in the storm that areas for community growth are revealed most clearly. It is these times when relying upon the divine one that I think about my calling. This is messy business—human beings.

Within our broken world, to expect the church to be some idyllic place of *happy, happy, joy, joy* is naive and foolish. The church is most true to God when we work to include and relate with love to those with whom we'd rather not. But, wow, does it ever suck sometimes! Wow, is it ever exhausting!

When I accepted my call to ministry (which I did reluctantly and in my middle years), I perceived my calling to be one of healing. As I've journeyed with the divine in the early years of my professional ministry, I have learned that my calling is often one of challenging others to accept the cost of discipleship.

Funny then, isn't it? Funny how reflecting upon a week that my initial emotional reaction to the challenges was to resent it. While encouraging my flock to accept the cost of discipleship, I've been reminded that there is a cost to my own discipleship. To challenge others and seek to heal the wounded is to invite the tsunami to come ashore.

It is easy to love those whose wounds are few or hidden. It is so much harder to love those whose wounds create a tsunami of destruction. Alas, when the church follows Jesus' teachings and example most closely is when we go to the edges of safe, dry land to stand in the midst of the storm. On my sabbath, I slept, I cried, and I recognized the divine in so many who helped me navigate the previous week.

It does suck sometimes, though.

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