This summer I have had the opportunity to join three other staff members at a Renton-based non-profit, CryOut!, in empowering nine diverse high school students. These students were selected to engage in the first year of an internship program funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that teaches professional skills and promotes leadership development. The summer culminates in a community concert, featuring young and established artists, as planned and implemented by these interns and staff. My role at CryOut! emerged as I began delegating tasks and encouraging the youth to accomplish the necessary tasks to plan a community event.

My experience as an intern at CryOut! has proved invaluable. I have learned the ins-and-outs of nonprofit work, how to function in an administrative role, how to delegate to a team with various abilities, how to teach profession skills, what it takes to plan a community event, and so much more. I loved getting to enter into the CryOut! community, I admire the directors’ vision and how they set out to accomplish it. My favorite part of my internship was building relationships with the youth; I loved connecting with them through a shared passion for music, despite the disparity in musical preference. I struggled with the ambiguous vision of the concert during the first few weeks, I was lost in a sea of possibilities and did not know how to pick a path and stick to it. I wish I could have spent more time with the youth, because I had to keep a job this summer I was only able to work at the program a few days a week. Because this was the first year of this summer program there were many kinks to work out, this resulted in more work for me but will surely be easier in the future. Overall, this internship stretched me, was very trying, but has left me empowered and enlightened to move boldly forward into the places God calls me.

My contribution to CryOut! as an organization lies in dirty work of concert planning, I have been intentionally keeping a detailed record of all rabbit trails, phone calls, ideas, etc. that
have related to the concert in order to create an easy reference for the future. This internship forced me to refine skills that I tend to avoid and has prepared me to enter a professional environment.

When the director designated me the concert-lead, I have to admit I was a bit petrified. I seriously considered running away because I knew moving forward would force me to face my weaknesses. These weaknesses revolve around those unavoidable details of life and the decisiveness they warrant. I had to face my fears of constant emails, scheduling, phone calls, and decision making that I try so hard to avoid. Though I have learned to muster up the strength to accomplish these tasks, I recognize that I must have a relational counterbalance to fuel my soul as those unavoidable details suck the life out of me. I have grown a lot in my ability to accomplish administrative tasks but need to work on my promptness; I sometimes sit and wait for a wave of inspiration rather than just doing it. I hope I can regenerate my energy at a faster pace as I mature as a professional. On a positive note, my passion for leadership and community development has deepened; I thrived in our group meetings. I am very aware of the energy and attitudes in a room, in the future I would like to feel free to address these and provide input or lead activities to create a positive work environment.

This summer has proven a pivotal moment in discerning my calling. A few weeks ago I decided to take note of the inspirations God had put on my heart in this past year, I ended up with fourteen “nudgings” that collectively contribute to a singular, though multi-faceted, calling. In addition to my time at CryOut! I have spent time as a private nanny for several families this summer. Spending time with young children has affirmed me of two things; one, I am in no rush to be a parent, and two, I feel a strong calling to be a mother though not by traditional means. I have been liberated from the idea that mothering has to look like the American ideal of family. The opportunity to work with youth from all different backgrounds has forced me to look at
family and life through an externally focused lens. This world is so much bigger than the small life I live; it is full of hurt and oppressed people that need to be shown the love of Christ. I believe I have the ability and calling to be such a vessel, I want to love the unlovable and be a mother to all God’s children.

This “calling” as I am beginning to see it has been supported by a few specific nudgings on my heart. First, was a call from Isaiah 63 to “bestow a crown of beauty instead of ashes;” this verse motivated me to spend a year in campus ministry and commit to pursuing a degree in music therapy. Second, during this past winter I was spontaneously drawn to pick up a Marriage and Family Therapy pamphlet from SPU’s program; the thought of continuing education seemed unattainable at the time but now seems undeniable. Concurrently, I had a random desire to have twenty children, not necessarily biologically but as a foster parent. My roles this summer have turned these thoughts into passion, I have spent time with children who need to be fought for and children who need to know the world is bigger than their experience. Regardless of their background, they all need love, they all need freedom, they all need Christ. I was affirmed by Sittser’s charge to pay attention to the small inclinations of heart in discerning our calling, as this was a task I was already attuned to.

As Sittser distinguished between the career and calling, I was empowered to do the same in my own life. As my interest in continuing my education has grown, I found the need to discuss it with my parents. After telling my parents how I felt I received a surprising response, “well before you do this you need to decide if you want to be a mom.” Now this statement may seem shocking to the progressive minds of Seattle but in the context of my family it makes perfect sense. My dad was not asking if I would have children, he was asking if I would choose to be a career focused mom or sacrifice all, as my mom did, to stay at home and raise my children. I did not see pursuing a degree in marriage and family therapy as a means to a career, or by any means
a selfish choice, but a step to fulfilling my calling. God has granted me an academic mind, so why not feed it? I am not seeking a career, I am seeking to live life as the best Meg I can be, I want to abundantly live into the life that has been bestowed within me.

Working as both a licensed music therapist (MT-BC) and marriage and family therapist (LMFT) seems like a beautiful way to fulfill my calling to love the unlovable, fix the broken relationships of this world, and empower self-awareness and confidence. Who knows, I could be a “career” foster parent. I could open my home to children who don’t have one. I could work as a private therapist for well-off families who need support and guidance. I could act as an advocate for inner city youth. I could work in a hospital, helping families cope with illness. I could use music to inspire and restore. I could work in an orphanage. I could be a professor and encourage others to live into who they were created to be. I could start a non-profit like CryOut! I could be a wife who uses my skills to support a vision of my husband. I could have a husband whose calling aligns with mine and together we can fight to be true parents in a parentless world. I could raise children who are culturally aware, who learn to love as Christ loved. I could do all these things and so much more. When I think of my future, I grin with uncontainable enthusiasm. I undoubtedly have a calling, a calling that is uniquely mine, all I must do is daily choose to listen and faithfully step forward.