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|  | Research & Evaluation*Tools and Processes* |

Research and evaluation are essential components of the C3 Initiative. We want to do everything we can to document the development of a culture of calling in the C3 churches and to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, activities, and resources that the C3 Initiative and C3 churches are creating.

### 1. A Congregational Culture of Calling Reflection Tool

Through *Creating a Culture of Calling ,* the C3 Initiative, we seek (1) to promote a congregational culture of vocation that helps Christians of all ages discover their callings and equips them to live their vocations in the church, at home, and in the world; (2) to develop a lifelong approach to discovering callings and nurturing vocation; (3) to infuse formation for vocation into all aspects of church life; and (4) to develop approaches for discovering callings and nurturing vocation with people of diverse religious practice and engagement.

“A Congregational Culture of Calling Reflection Tool” uses 30 characteristics, drawn from theory and research studies, to discern how well a congregation helps people of all ages to discover their calling, equips people to live their calling, and provides support to sustain people their callings. Church staff rate each characteristic from 1–not doing this in our church to 10—a real strength, this permeates our church life. Then a church develops a profile of all the responses for each characteristic to create a picture of your congregational culture of calling by calculating the average rating for each characteristic adding all individual responses and dividing by the number of responses

### 2. God’s Calling in My Life - C3 Project Congregational Research

The “God’s Calling in My Life” survey is a research tool that we are administering when a church begins implementing C3 projects and then again at the conclusion of the C3 Initiative (in late 2020). By doing a before and after survey we are trying to determine growth in people’s understanding and experience of calling through a church’s C3 projects.

**Interpreting the Survey**

The survey has three major sections: Faith Life, Calling Experience, and Church Support for Calling. The results of the survey questions in the Faith Life and Calling sections are reported as percentages of responses. The report includes a basic statistics analysis. You will want to look at the MEAN score. This tells you the score (on a 1-5 scale) of how true that item is for your whole group. Scores above 4 are very strong; 3.5 to 4.0 are strong. The rating scale for the question about the Church's Support for Calling is also on a 1-5 scale. The higher the MEAN score the more people agree with the statement. Again, 4.0 and higher is high agreement; 3.5 to 4.0 is agreement.

### 3. Program-Specific Evaluations

We have created a number of program-specific evaluations that churches can use to evaluate the impact of programming that involves multiple sessions or is an extended time program, such as a full day workshop or retreat experience.

1. **“The Stories We Live” Evaluation Form**: This evaluation is designed around the content of the 8-session program guide. This survey is already online at SurveyMonkey.
2. **Program Evaluation Example**: “Called to Love” – a one-day program evaluation on SurveyMonkey for St. Paul’s Episcopal, Duluth. This is a good example of a program evaluation.
3. **Multi-session Program Evaluation:** We can design evaluation forms for churches doing extended-time program (full day, weekend, retreat, etc.), intergenerational programming for the year on calling or multi-session programs on calling or other multi-session or multi-day programs. John can design a survey for your church’s specific content.

Through the evaluation processes we are trying to determine how people have grown in their understanding and living of God’s calling in their lives. While we cannot do a pre-test and post-test, we are constructing the survey to ask people to recall their experience of calling when the program began and now that the program has concluded. Here are the types of questions we are using. These would be customized to the content of the program.

1. *When you began (program) what did it mean for you to have a calling from God? Indicate from 1 to 5 how strongly you agreed with each statement before your started the program.* (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

* I never thought about having a calling from God.
* I thought a calling from God meant that you had to be a pastor or work for the church.
* I thought calling was about your occupation or profession, like called to be a teacher.
* I thought calling was about using your gifts, talents, and abilities in life.
* I thought calling was about a particular way of life, like called to be a parent.
* I thought calling was about discovering how God wants me to live.
* I thought calling was about discovering what God wants me to do, like work or service to others.
* I thought calling was about serving people, especially those in need.

What else do you think about calling before your began (program)?

2. *Now as you conclude (program) what do you believe about a calling from God? Indicate from 1 to 5 how strongly you agreed with each statement.* (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

* I believe every person has a calling from God.
* I believe every person is call to serve people, especially those in need.
* I believe a calling from God can give my life meaning and purpose.
* I believe that God’s call can give me direction in how I live my life.
* I believe I have God-given gifts, talents, and abilities that I can use to serve other people.
* I believe that discovering my calling from God will help me find a career or occupation that reflects my gifts and passions.
* I believe that I am called by God to serve people, especially those in need.

What else do you believe about calling now?

3. *In your own words, how would you describe God’s calling in your life today? What is God calling you to do today?*

#### The “Stories We Live” Evaluation Form

**1. When you began *The Stories We Live* program what did calling mean to you? Indicate from 1 to 5 how strongly you agreed with each conviction before your started the program.**

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

1. Calling involves how we find meaning and purpose in the way we spend our days.
2. Calling involves how we live out our multiple commitments to work and relationships?
3. Calling involves leading an authentic, integrated life of faith in the world today.
4. Calling is about who we are called to be—the core of our identity, as created by God and baptized in Christ, and sent forth to serve by the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Calling is about how we are called to live— our commitments of lifestyle and relationships, including marriage, parenting, or the single life.
6. Calling is what we are called to do—the work, service and activities that fill our daily lives, including paid or professional work, volunteering, homemaking, raising children or caregiving

**2. At the conclusion of *The Stories We Live* program what does calling mean to you now? Indicate from 1 to 5 how strongly you agree with each conviction. Remember to believe means to "give one's heart." So this involves head, heart, and hands.** (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Uncertain, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

1. Calling involves how we find meaning and purpose in the way we spend our days.
2. Calling involves how we live out our multiple commitments to work and relationships.
3. Calling involves leading an authentic, integrated life of faith in the world today.
4. Calling is about who we are called to be—the core of our identity, as created by God and baptized in Christ, and sent forth to serve by the power of the Holy Spirit.
5. Calling is about how we are called to live— our commitments of lifestyle and relationships, including marriage, parenting, or the single life.
6. Calling is what we are called to do—the work, service and activities that fill our daily lives, including paid or professional work, volunteering, homemaking, raising children or caregiving.
7. Everyone is called by God, who is the source of our callings, throughout our lives.
8. We are called to follow the way shown by Jesus and taken up by his disciples; this calling we share with each other.
9. We are called as unique persons with a particular history and circumstance.
10. We are called from the losses and grief we suffer over time, so that we can embrace life again.
11. We are called to give our lives for others, not simply for our self- improvement or fulfillment.
12. We are even called in our deepest suffering to carry out God’s purposes in mysterious ways.
13. We are called through the people in our lives, because vocation takes root in community.
14. We are called together to live within God’s loving embrace, both now and in the life to come.

**3. Tell us about your experience of *The Stories We Live* program by indicating how much each session influenced your understanding and practice of calling. Rate the significance of each session from 1-5 (low to high).** (1 = No Influence, 3 = Moderate Influence, 5 = Significant Influence)

Session 1. Called by God in Multiple Ways

Session 2. Called to Be Followers of Christ

Session 3. Called as We Are

Session 4. Called from People, Places, or Situation

Session 5. Called for Service and Work

Session 6. Called through Each Other

Session 7. Called in Suffering

Session 8. Called by the God Within

### 4. C3 On-the-Spot Program Evaluations

**Two-Question File Card Evaluation**

Give everyone a file card (3x5) and ask them to complete two questions – one per side of the card – about what they have learned or how they have benefitted from the program. Here are sample questions to use:

1. *One thing I found most helpful in this program. . .*
2. *One of the biggest benefits from participating in this program was. . .*
3. *One way I can personally use what I learned from my participation is. . .*
4. *One way this program had an impact on my life. . .*
5. *I learned… OR I discovered…*
6. *I was surprised… OR I wonder about...*
7. *I was moved by… OR I felt…*
8. *I need to know more about...*
9. *I’m excited by…*
10. *I’m challenged by… or challenged to…*

**Reflection Questions Form**

Create and print an evaluation form for participants that includes questions like the following:

*To reflect on what you have learned, identify the insights you have gained and the application to your life.*

* *Insights (What I’ve Learned)*
* *­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Applications (How I’ll Use What I’ve Learned)*
* *Questions (What I Need to Learn or Explore Further)*

**Four-Quadrant Evaluation**

Make a copy of the four-quadrant grid below on newsprint to capture people’s feedback in four different areas. Draw a plus in the upper left quadrant, a triangle in the upper right quadrant, a question mark in the lower left quadrant, and a light bulb in the lower right quadrant. You can use Post-It Notes for individuals to write their comments and then ask them to place them on the newsprint.

1. The upper left quadrant is for things people liked or found notable.
2. The upper right quadrant is for constructive criticism—what would you improve.
3. The lower left quadrant is for questions that the experience raised in the lives of the people.
4. The lower right quadrant is for ideas that the experiences spurred.

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To create you evaluation report: cluster similar ideas, identify major themes in the evaluation, and develop a summary report.

### 5. Team Reflection and Analysis

To debrief a program and discuss the evaluation results with your team use questions like the one’s below. Develop a summary of the team’s reflections.

1. What have we done (practices, processes, procedures) that has effectively moved us ahead with the planning and implementation of our project?
2. What revisions have we made in our project design?
3. What indicators do we have that our project is working?
4. What are we discovering that is not working effectively?
5. What do we still need to learn in order to effectively implement our project?

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|  | *A Congregational Culture of Calling Reflection Tool*Vibrant Faith Ministries |

### Understanding Congregational Culture

A dictionary would define culture as the sum of attitudes, customs, and beliefs that distinguish one group of people from another. Its root meaning is shared with the word agriculture, referring to the soil that has been tilled and by extension a set of traits that have been plowed into a group’s way of life. Culture is transmitted from one generation to the next through language, material objects, ritual, institutions, and art.

In *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*, Robert Lewis and Wayne Cordeiro write, “The idea of church culture is often ignored, in part because so little material is available about it. Yet *we believe culture is to the church what a soul is to the human body*. It is an overall life force that the Holy Spirit uses to give energy, personality, and uniqueness to everything a body of believers says and does” (xxi). Church culture influences everything you do. It colors the way you choose and introduce programs. It shapes how you select and train leaders. “Your culture is the lens through which you view your life. If you change the lens, you change your outlook. Change the culture, and everything else changes, including the future” (xxi).

Nancy T. Ammerman, professor of sociology at Boston University, has researched and written extensively about American congregations and the role of congregational culture. In her essay “Culture and Identity in the Congregation,” she explains what a congregational culture is:

*Culture is who we are and the world we have created to live in. It is the predictable patterns of who does what and habitual strategies for telling the world about the things held most dear. A culture includes the congregation’s history and stories of its heroes. It includes its symbols, rituals, and worldview. It is shaped by the cultures in which its members live (represented by their demographic characteristics), but it takes on its own unique identity and character when those members come together. Understanding a congregation requires understanding that it is a unique gathering of people with a cultural identity all its own.*

*Congregations draw their culture and identity from their specific religious tradition. What each congregation cooks up, then, is always a mix of local creativity and larger tradition. What we see in a given locale is that group’s selective retrieval of their own theological heritage, along with the local inventions that have been necessary to make sense of life in that place. . .*

*A congregational culture is constructed out of theological and denominational traditions, expectations from the larger culture, patterns of social class and ethnicity, and the like. All those things are carried into the congregation by its members and leaders. Whenever any of those elements changes, the congregational culture will inevitably change as well. . .*

*Congregational culture is more than the sum of what people bring with them and more than a mirror image of the theological tradition they represent. It is a unique creation, constructed out of their interaction together over time.* (78-82)

The dynamics of congregational culture at work can be seen in this analysis of the genius of black congregations by Robert Michael Franklin in his essay “The Safest Place on Earth: The Culture of Black Congregations.”

*In order to understand the genius of black congregations, it is important to understand how the congregation’s entire culture does the work of empowering parishioners for mission. Central to that cultural work is the pivotal role of pastoral leadership in its manifestation of theological convictions, rhetorical skills, and practical wisdom. Most portraits of black congregations emphasize the role of clergy. This is understandable, given the elevated office of ministry in most black communities. A more careful examination of black congregational culture, however, requires attention to the array of practices that are sustained by the laity—style of worship, singing, ecstatic rituals (shouting, altar prayer), and politically relevant religious education. Effective congregational mission actually flows from the dynamic interaction between qualified, gifted leadership and an empowering congregational culture. Black clergy are, in the first instance, servants called to nurture and maintain a healthy congregational culture. Once progress in this task has been demonstrated, then they may be authorized in the public arena.* (258)

The characteristics of black congregational culture according to Franklin include: (1) full engagement of the senses in worship, (2) intimate prayer, (3) cathartic shouting, (4) triumphant singing, (5) politically relevant religious education, and (6) prophetic, imaginative preaching. Franklin concludes his analysis with these insights:

*The entire culture of the black church thus works to create the sensibilities necessary for public mission. Black church culture is a rich and vibrant ensemble of practices that offer praise to God and hope to oppressed humanity. Clergy are expected first to maintain and then to mobilize this culture for Christ’s mission in the world. Maintenance and mobilization are dialectically related.*

*Preaching is the ecclesial practice most central to the sacred oral culture of African Americans and most essential for mobilizing and sustaining people for public action. Good black social preaching names and frames crises creatively, analyzes them in biblical perspective, describes solutions using indigenous symbols and images, prescribes specific plans, and offers hope via celebration.*

**Works Cited**

Ammerman, Nancy. “Culture and Identity in the Congregation” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*. Edited by Nancy Ammerman. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998.

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Lewis, Robert and Wayne Cordeiro, *Culture Shift: Transforming Your Church from the Inside Out*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005.

### Creating a Culture of Calling

Through *Creating a Culture of Calling* –the C3 Initiative – we seek (1) to promote a congregational culture of vocation that helps Christians of all ages discover their callings and equips them to live their vocations in the church, at home, and in the world; (2) to develop a lifelong approach to discovering callings and nurturing vocation; (3) to infuse formation for vocation into all aspects of church life; and (4) to develop approaches for discovering callings and nurturing vocation with people of diverse religious practice and engagement.

A congregation culture of vocation has at least three key characteristics:

1. The formation for calling is infused into all aspects of church life, especially Sunday worship, the seasons of the church year, faith formation for all ages, the prayer life of the community, and service ministries and projects. We should see evidence of:

* Calling permeating the life of the community, its ministries, and relationships among people
* People participating in calling formation experiences and engaging in storytelling in age group and intergenerational settings
* People describing who they are (identity) and how they live in terms of God’s callings in their lives.

1. There is a lifelong approach to discovering and nurturing callings. We should see evidence of:

* Calling formation programs designed around the development needs and life situations at each stage of life
* People of all ages engaged in a variety of formation programs—at church, at home, and online—discovering their calling and being equipped to live their calling in daily life
* Families engaged in a variety of formation programs—at church, at home, and online—discovering their callings and being equipped to live their calling in daily life.

1. People of diverse religious practice and engagement—those actively engaged in living their faith and participating in the faith community *and* those who are spiritual but not religious (not involved in a faith community) and those who are unaffiliated religiously—are engaged in discovering their callings and being equipped to live their calling in daily life. We should see evidence of:

* Projects and activities that locate formation for calling in the wider community and online
* Relationships being created with the uninvolved and unaffiliated
* Settings and activities in the community and online that nurture callings through storytelling.

### Reflection Tool: Congregational Culture & Calling

*Use the following characteristics to discern how well your congregation helps people of all ages to discover their calling, equips people to live their calling, and provides support to sustain people their callings. Use the continuum below to identify how well you congregation is implementing each characteristic. Rate each characteristic from 1–not doing this in our church to 10—a real strength, this permeates our church life. Then, develop a profile of all the responses for each characteristic to create a picture of your congregational culture of calling by calculating the average rating for each characteristic adding all individual responses and dividing by the number of responses*

**1** (not doing this now)---------------------------------**10** (a real strength, permeates our church life)

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| **Congregational Characteristics** | **Your Rating** | **Group Rating** |
| 1. The mission of our church explicitly includes helping people discover and live their callings. |  |  |
| 1. Our church is committed to helping people of all ages discover their call to follow Jesus and live as disciples in daily life. |  |  |
| 1. Church leadership regularly reflects on how God is calling them and the joys and struggles of living one’s calling in daily life. |  |  |
| 1. Sunday worship inspires and challenges people to discover and live their callings. |  |  |
| 1. The Sunday sermon or homily inspires and challenges people to discover and live their callings. |  |  |
| 1. People in our church regularly share stories of calling with the others in the community. |  |  |
| 1. Our church celebrates people’s callings as a whole community. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps people of all ages to express who they are (identity) and how they live in terms of God’s callings in their lives. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **children** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at school, and in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **youth** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at school, and in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **young** **adults** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at work, in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **midlife adults** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at work, in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **mature adults** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at work, in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **older adults** discover their God-given callings and equip them to live their callings in life—at home, at work, in the community and world. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **parents and grandparents** discover their God-given callings and equips them to live their callings with their children and grandchildren. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps **adults** reflect on how they live God’s callings through the work they do. |  |  |
| 1. Our church invites, equips, and affirms **people of all ages** for leadership in church ministries. |  |  |
| 1. Our church helps people to see that everyone is called to serve those in need and work for social justice, locally and globally. |  |  |
| 1. Our church sustains people in their callings through prayer and spiritual practices. |  |  |
| 1. Our church provides a supportive community for people to discover their callings, share their stories of callings, and live out their callings. |  |  |
| 1. Our church creates settings where people who are not involved in a religious community can discover their callings and be equipped to live their calling in daily life. |  |  |
| 1. Our church displays images, artwork, and other material objects that inspire members and others to reflect on callings. |  |  |
| 1. Our church library, website, bulletin, newsletter and other publications have ample resources associated with the theology and spirituality of calling. |  |  |
| 1. Our church promotes the belief that God calls us through our daily relationships at home, at work, and in social settings. |  |  |
| 1. Our church promotes the belief that God calls us through our daily experiences at home, at work, and in social settings. |  |  |
| 1. Our church promotes the belief that our callings shift and change as we age. |  |  |
| 1. Our church promotes the belief that our callings are related to our unique gifts and talents. |  |  |
| 1. Our church promotes the belief that we are called in the midst of suffering. |  |  |
| 1. Our church partners with community organizations as a strategy to meet needs in the local community. |  |  |
| 1. Our church listens and learns before engaging in service projects. |  |  |

#### Interpreting the Results

You can use the results of the “Congregational Culture & Calling” assessment to identify areas of strength in your church and areas to grow or improve. The scoring continuum can be viewed in four categories that provide a good way to discuss the results of the self-assessment. Remember the assessment is not a “normative” tool; it is descriptive of the culture.

**1-3** These are areas that are weak in the culture of the congregation. Ask: Does this characteristic apply to us? How important is this to us? Should we target this area for growth and improvement?

**4-6** These are areas that show moderate levels of strength. Ask: How important is this in our congregation? Should we devote time and energy in improving this?

**7-8** These areas of strength. When people describe their church, these are the characteristics they often use. They areas could be strengthened or expanded, but they represent real strengths. Ask: What do we need to expand or strengthen?

**9-10** These are areas of excellence. This is what the church is "known" for. These areas drive the culture and mission of church, and the energy of the church community.