



# Creating a Culture of Calling

## *Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose*

A Vibrant Faith Initiative  
2018-2021

Vibrant Faith is embarking on a four-year, grant-funded initiative to promote a congregational culture of vocation that helps Christians of all ages discover their callings throughout life and equips them to live their vocation in the church community, at home, and in the world.

Vibrant Faith's *Creating a Culture of Calling* Initiative seeks to:

- + develop a lifelong approach to discovering callings and nurturing vocation with families and people of all ages and generations
- + infuse vocational formation 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
- + develop approaches for discovering callings and nurturing vocation with 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
- + create a variety of project designs and resources that congregations can utilize to guide families, age groups, and the whole community in discovering their callings and learning how to live their vocation in daily life
- + prototype and test new project designs and resources to help families, people of all ages and generations, and the whole community in discovering their callings and learning how to live their vocation in daily life
- + discern the impact of the congregational initiatives, the new approaches and projects, and the new resources and activities upon the lives of individuals at all stages of life, families, and the whole faith community
- + share the results of the *Creating a Culture of Vocation* Project with churches of all denominations across the United States

Vibrant Faith's *Creating a Culture of Calling* Initiative is guided by a vision that is grounded in biblical and theological understandings that place callings and vocation—and the necessity of nurturing callings and vocation—at the center of the Christian life and congregational culture. This vision will guide the education of congregational leaders and the development of project designs and resources to help people of all ages discover their callings and learn how to live their vocation in daily life.

Vibrant Faith is inviting 24 congregations to participate in the four-year *Creating a Culture of Calling* Initiative. Invited congregations reflect a diversity of location, size, denomination, and ethnicity; have demonstrated an ability to provide high quality worship and faith formation for all

ages and generations, and provide a positive, supportive environment to implement new projects and initiatives.

Congregational leadership teams— the pastor, ministry leaders, and faith formation leaders—will be engaged in:

1. Discovering the importance of nurturing callings and vocation in the lives of people across the life span, in aligning congregational ministries and practices to nurture callings and equip people to live their vocation in daily life, and in piloting new vocational approaches and resources.
2. Prototyping and testing new vocation designs and resources to help families, people of all ages and generations, and the whole community in discovering their calling and learning how to live their vocation in daily life.
3. Implementing a multi-year vocation plan for their congregation
4. Discerning the impact of the congregational initiatives, new approaches and projects, and new resources and activities upon the lives of individuals at all stages of life, families, and the whole faith community

Participating congregations will be expected to do the following:

1. Gather a team or task force that reflects the diversity of leadership roles and ministries in the church, and includes the pastor, church staff, ministry leaders, and faith formation leadership with children, youth, young adults, adults, and families.
2. Complete the required reading in preparation for Convocation #1.
3. Select a minimum of three team members, including the pastor, who will participate in the four Convocations.
4. Conduct research on callings and vocation with members of their congregation.
5. Create and implement a two-year vocation plan for their congregation that outlines a lifelong approach and infuses vocational formation 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
6. Adapt, contextualize, and implement new vocational project designs in their congregation.
7. Evaluate the effectiveness of their plan and the individual project designs they implemented.

The *Creating a Culture of Calling* Initiative will provide participating congregations with the following services and resources:

1. *Training* of a congregational leadership team of three people through four national Convocations—two in 2018, one in 2019 and one in 2020—with funding for travel, housing and meals
2. *Coaching* for congregational leaders and teams throughout the three years of design, implementation, and evaluation. Each congregation will have one coach to work with them for three years (2018-2020).
3. *Resourcing* through a website that provides the new *Creating a Culture of Vocation* designs and curates print, audio, video, and digital vocation activities and resources
4. *Networking* of congregations through an online social network that provides a forum for connecting congregations and sharing ideas and solutions

5. *Funding* of \$12,000 to implement the *Creating a Culture of Vocation* Initiative in the congregation. This funding can be spent on implementing new project designs, sending additional leaders to the Convocations (beyond the three people already covered), purchasing resources to implement projects, designing a website for vocation projects, paying speakers/presenters for programming, etc.

The timeline for the *Creating a Culture of Calling* is as follows:

Winter 2018	Congregational teams preparation for Convocation #1
Spring 2018	Design and launch of the Initiative website (Leadership Team)
Spring 2018	Convocation #1 – April 3-6, 2018 (Baltimore, MD)
Spring 2018	Congregational teams research with families and age groups
Spring 2018	Design of new vocation projects for piloting (Leadership Team)
Summer 2018	Convocation #2 – June 19-22, 2018 (Baltimore, MD)
Fall 2018	Implementation of Year One of congregational projects (with coaching, networking, and resourcing from Vibrant Faith)
Summer 2019	Convocation #3 (Date and site to be determined)
Fall 2019	Implementation of Year Two of congregational projects (with coaching, networking, and resourcing from Vibrant Faith)
Spring 2020	Evaluation of congregational projects
Summer 2020	Convocation #4 (Date and site to be determined)
Spring-Fall 2021	Dissemination of <i>Creating a Culture of Vocation</i> results and projects

## Outcomes of the Creating a Culture of Calling Initiative

Through the *Creating a Culture of Vocation* Initiative, Vibrant Faith and the 24 participating congregations are working together to produce three major outcomes.

1. Congregations will create a congregational culture where formation for vocation 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 1) vocation permeating the life of the community, its ministries, and relationships among people, 2) people participating in vocational formation experiences and engaging in vocational storytelling in age group and intergenerational settings, and 3) people describing who they are (identity) and how they live in vocational terms.
2. Congregations will develop a lifelong approach to discovering callings and nurturing vocation. We should see evidence of 1) vocational formation programs designed around the development needs and life situations at each stage of life, 2) people of all ages engaged in a variety of formation programs—at church, at home, and online—discovering their calling and equipping them to live their vocation in daily life, and 3) families engaged in a variety of formation programs—at church, at home, and online—discovering their callings and equipping them to live their vocation in daily life.
3. Congregations will nurture calling and vocation with 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. We should see evidence of 1) projects and activities that locate vocation formation in the wider community and online relationships being created with the uninvolved and unaffiliated, and 2) settings and activities in the community and online that nurture callings and vocation through storytelling.

## Vibrant Leadership Team

### Project Team

Dr. Nancy Going, Executive Director, Vibrant Faith  
John Roberto, Leadership Team, Vibrant Faith  
Jim Ladoux, Leadership Team, Vibrant Faith  
Dr. Roland Martinson, Theological Consultant

### Coaches

Rev. Dr. Von Clemans  
Rev. Melissa Cooper  
Shonda Nicole Gladden  
Jim Merhaut  
Rev. Eric Samuelson

## Theological Understandings of Calling

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- We believe our callings in life are a dynamic response to who we are, how we live, and what we give our lives to. (Kathleen Cahalan, *Calling All Years Good*)
- We believe every human being has a calling, whether they acknowledge it or not.
- We believe God in Christ is calling us into relationship, a life of discipleship, and that our response to God's calling is a life expressed through our life of faith.
- We believe callings are discerned through relationships—God calls us through each other and our calling is for each other. We believe that the discernment of callings throughout life is a practice of the faith community.
- We believe all callings are guided by love—loving God with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.
- We believe callings are lifelong. They evolve over time. They are multiple and changing over a lifetime. They are dependent on the capacities of the body as we grow and age.
- We believe that our response to callings throughout life is our participation in God's activity in the world today, and that God sustains creation through the living out of our calling.
- We believe our callings are animated by God's spirit active in our lives through a diversity of gifts and charisms, through what we love and are passionate about. We believe God creates, sanctifies, and revels in our differences and that our differences are assets.
- We believe our callings are for all life—family, church, community, world; and not only what we do in our work life.
- We believe the call to church ministry is one type of calling; and that this calling is to nurture all callings and lead the community of disciples to live their vocation in the world.
- We believe people discover their calling and experience their calling in diverse ways based on their life situation and context; and that factors such as poverty, violence, and discrimination have an impact.
- We believe people experiences times of struggle, darkness, and brokenness in living our calling and being faithful to it. We believe God brings life out of struggle, darkness, and brokenness; and that the faith community has a special role to support and encourage people during these times.
- We believe living a calling is transformational for the person and for the world.