



*God's callings are all
around us but we don't
always see them*



CREATING A
CULTURE OF
CALLING

Rev. Bill Van Oss
St. Paul's
Episcopal Church



Creating a Culture of Calling

► WHAT IS IT?

► A grant-funded initiative to promote a parish ***culture of calling*** that helps Christians of all ages discover their purpose ***throughout life*** and equips them to ***live their vocation*** in the church community, at home, and in the world.

24 Churches Chosen to Participate

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.

Ascension Catholic Church, Portland, OR
All Saints Anglican, Durham, NC
Central United Methodist Church, Waterford, MI
Church of the Apostles, Fairfield, CT
Church of the Presentation, NJ
First AME Church, Las Vegas, NV
First Presbyterian Church, Allentown, PA
First United Methodist Church, Lakeland, FL
Florence Christian Church, Florence KY
Lord of Life Lutheran, Fairfax VA
Metropolitan AME Church, Washington DC
Palm Harbor UMC, Palm Harbor, FL

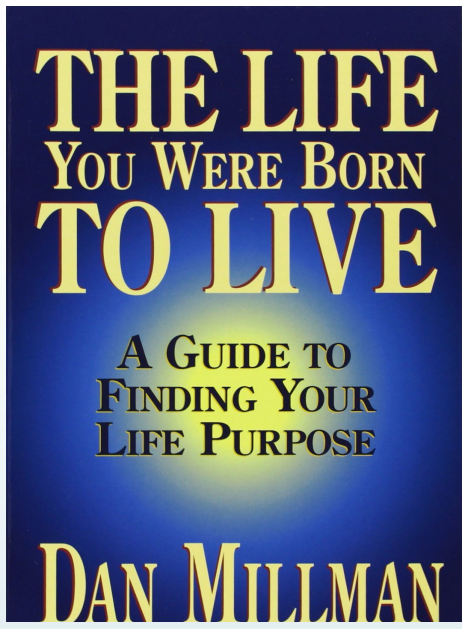
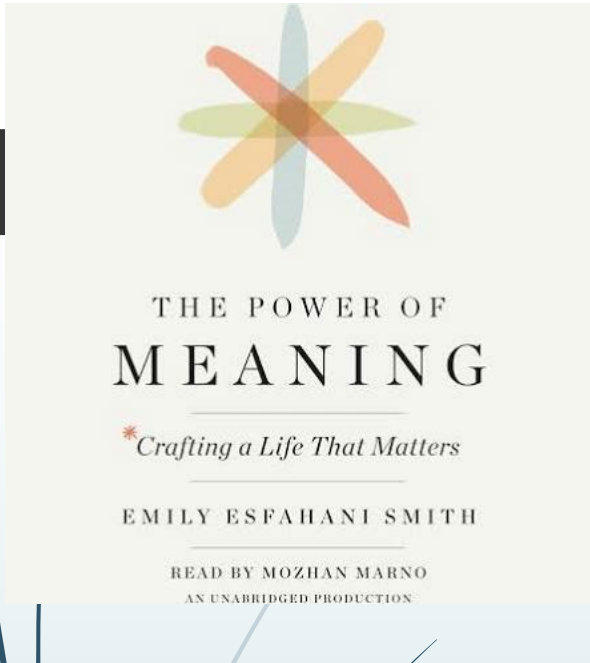
Prince of Peace Lutheran, Burnsville, MN
Reid Temple AME Church, GlenDale, MD
Round Hill Community Church, Greenwich, CT
Sacred Heart Parish, Southbury, CT
St Anthony on the Lake, Pewaukee, WI
St. Charles Catholic Parish, Portland OR
St. Charles Borromeo Church, Skillman, NJ
St. John's Episcopal, Youngstown OH
St. Joseph's Parish, Youngstown, OH
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Duluth, MN
Spirit of Joy Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD
Village Presbyterian Church, Prairie Village, KS

Agenda for our May gatherings

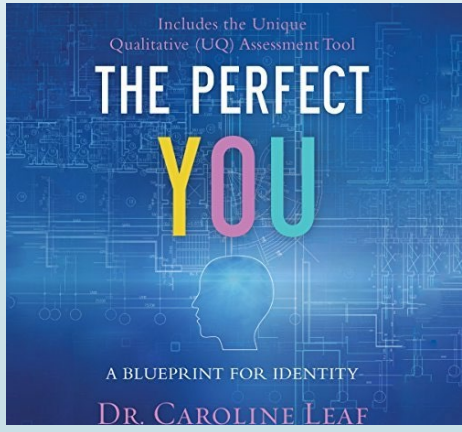
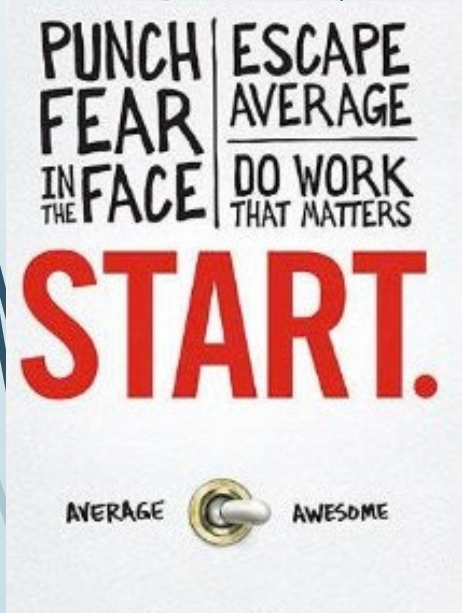
- Review Convocation Experience
 - Theological Understandings of Calling
- Discern Personal Call stories - Lectio
- Discuss *The Stories We Live*
- *Presentation's Commitment to Creating a Culture of Calling*
- Brainstorm Experiences of Calling to Embed in Current Schedule
- Brainstorm any new activities on calling
- Brainstorm Suggestions for additional leaders

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CALLING

- ❖ Our callings in life are a dynamic response to who we are, how we live, and what we give our lives to. Kathleen Cahalan
- ❖ Every human being has a calling, whether they acknowledge it or not.
- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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. God creates, sanctifies, and revels in our differences and our differences are assets.
- ❖ Living a calling is transformational for the person and for the world.



Vocation Discussions in Secular Society



- Meaning
- Purpose
- Calling
- Identity
- Belonging

- *We've lost a sense of God's presence in our daily lives*
- *I am the source of my call*
- This is all about a focus on individualism

We have a
CALLER.

God is the one
who calls us – at
all stages of our
lives



Callings are Both General and Particular



- ▶ GENERAL
 - ▶ By virtue of our Baptism we are called into community – to love God and our neighbor
- ▶ PARTICULAR
 - ▶ God's call can be found in the place that you are!
 - ▶ At a particular time
 - ▶ At a particular place
 - ▶ Gifted with particular abilities, disabilities, experience and associations
- ▶ DISCERNING GOD'S CALL
 - ▶ Is this a source of joy?
 - ▶ Does this tap into your talents and gifts?
 - ▶ Is this role of genuine service to people around you and to society at large?

After receiving his Bachelor's in Business Administration from Boston College, he knew he couldn't spend his time in an office. Wanting to get his hands dirty once again, he started Murray Bros Lawn Care & Landscape Services, specializing in Lawn Care and creating beautiful landscapes for the next generation of "specimen" collectors.



Called to life


- In the midst of life's busyness, we don't always take time to reflect on the deeper meaning of our lives in light of our faith.
- Calling and Vocation are used interchangeably to describe how God works in our lives
- Four practices:
 - Praying
 - Sharing
 - Reflecting
 - Listening

praying

- Prayerful discernment – sifting through all the voices and choices facing us in order to hear and follow the voice of God
- Lectio Divina – slow, quiet and thoughtful encounter with Scripture. Slowly reading and reflecting on the biblical passage three times provides time and space for God's Word to move from our lips, into our minds, and finally into our hearts.
- **ALL: Lord open my heart to reflect on your call in my life and for your world. Amen**

God doesn't call the
qualified; He qualifies
the called.





Deuteronomy

30:11-15, 19-20

Moses said to the people: “Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, “Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?’ No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity...Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

praying



- ALL: Lord open my heart to reflect on your call in my life and for your world. Amen

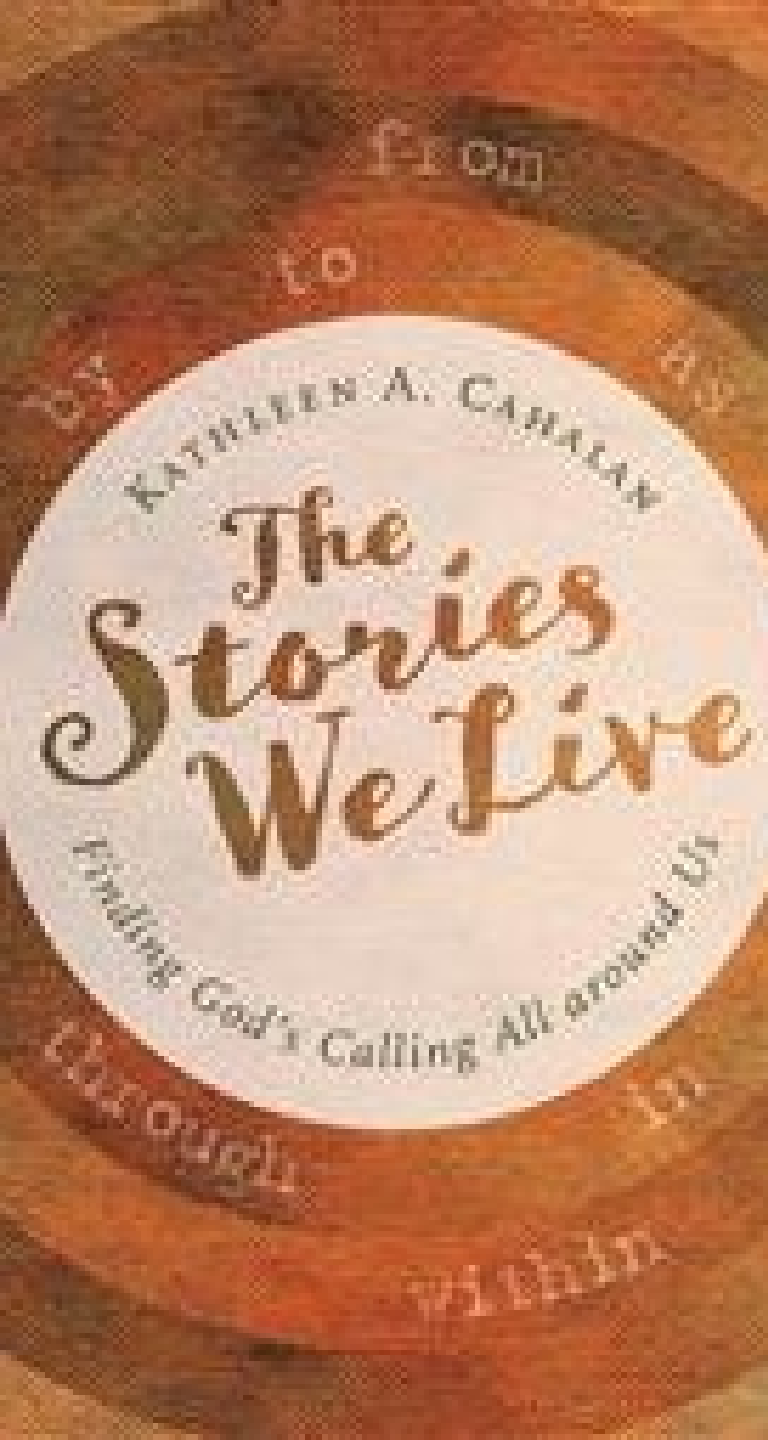
- Listen to first reading of Scripture;
- Choose a word or phrase that strikes you
- Reflect on that word or phrase -**What might God be saying to you?**

- Listen to the second reading of Scripture
- Choose a word or phrase that strikes you
- Reflect on that word or phrase – **How might God be calling you to act through the word or phrase that first struck you? How might you respond?**

- Share with one other person

Lord, open my heart to reflect on your call in my life and for your world. Amen.





Telling Our Stories

The Stories We Live – Finding God's Calling All around us

By Kathleen A Cahalan



We can talk about callings using nouns, verbs and prepositions:

- ▶ Noun: vocation, meaning (static, passive and singular)
- ▶ Verb: Actions of our lives respond to God's callings (whisper, shout, nag, push)
- ▶ Prepositions: connects words to other words; expresses relationships (by, to, from, in, through, with, for)

- ▶ Nouns, verbs, and prepositions are all necessary to storytelling

The Stories We Live

Different Dimensions of Our Callings

Called by God

Called to follow the way shown by Jesus

Called as unique persons with particular history and circumstances

Called from the losses and grief we suffer

Called to give our lives for others

Called in our deepest suffering to carry out God's purposes in mysterious ways

Called through the people in our lives (vocation takes root in community)

Called together to live within God's loving embrace, both now and in the live to come

We find our callings within the stories of our lives.



Called to be followers of Christ in community with other disciples

- ▶ Jesus does the calling – “Come Follow Me!”
- ▶ Worshiper – heart is filled with adoration and love for the source of life (in what way do I worship Jesus)
 - ▶ Our worship is the recognition of the goodness and power of divine blessing in our lives – we rejoice, falling on our knees and singing God’s praises.
- ▶ Witness – to tell the truth about what God is doing in your life
 - ▶ How has God called, nurtured, converted or healed you?
- ▶ Neighbor – one who dwells nearby; caring for others beyond one’s family/tribe; the poor, the outcast, and those we despise
- ▶ Forgiver – forgive those who harm us and seek forgiveness when we harm others
- ▶ Prophet – to declare what is wrong with our neighborhoods and call our neighborhoods back to right relationship through justice and mercy – When have you felt called to be prophetic? Did you embrace the call readily or cringe at the prospect
- ▶ Steward – one who cares for the household of God’s creation, accepting it as a gift, not as something we own and control





Multiplicity of callings as disciples

Living a Centered Life – faithful to God in each moment (A life centered in the triune God gives identity and a place to stand in a chaotic and compartmentalized world. The Creator God is present in all I do.)

With God at the center of my life, I know whose I am and can begin to discover who I am.


God's call can be found in each part of your life, which eventually gives direction, meaning, and purpose to the whole of your life.

- Relationship: (spouse, parent, daughter, friend)
- Specific Roles (coworker, teacher, volunteer, boss)
- Ways of Being (loyal, encouraging, compassionate)
- Particular Gifts or Abilities (connector, thinker, provider, problem solver, blood donor)

Hearing God's voice (truth, authenticity, integrity)

- ▶ God's voice is within each of us as a source of divine wisdom, mysteriously both beyond and within ourselves.
- ▶ God uses the inclinations of our true self, the promptings of conscience, to help guide and call us through decision big and small toward the goal or purpose for which we were created.





The goal of vocation is to find and live out of god's truth

A truth that takes on particularity in your life
the truth of who you are and how you live.



Search for true self vs. false self

True Self

- ▶ There is something you know you cannot NOT do
- ▶ Give your life as a witness to the truth about who you are
- ▶ Lose our life in loving service

False Self

- ▶ Our lives become mired in sin
- ▶ Selfishness and Self destructive ways
- ▶ Seeks its own good, making 'me' important



God calls us in the particularities of our life context shapes our calling

- ▶ All people want to be valued for who they are, not just for what they do. For most, it is a lifelong journey to discover who they are.
- ▶ Vocation is God's call to your life's particularities: gender, family, ethnicity, time in history, education, opportunities, relationships, culture.
- ▶ God calls each of us by name, not in a generic way but specific to your time in life and place in the history of the world.
- ▶ God creates each of us to be children of God, but we can only live out our callings within our time and place.



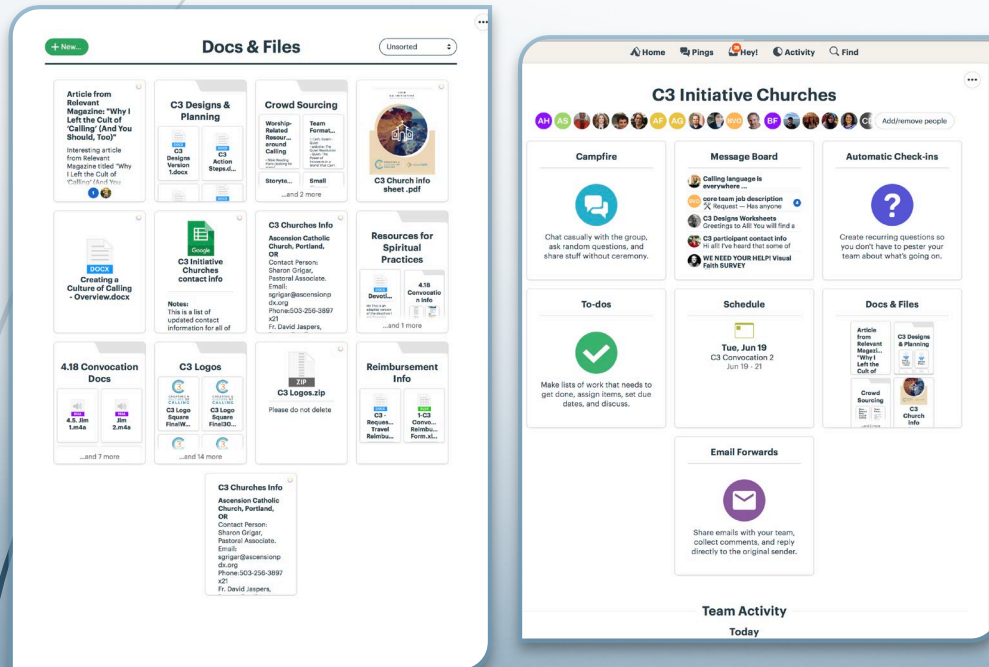
Take two minutes to write the answers

- ▶ Have you experienced being called by God? When did you feel God's presence, nudge, or invitation?
- ▶ Have you ever seen God's hand at work by looking back at your life?
 - ▶ The Plan – God as Divine Planner – is there only one way to get it right for each person?
 - ▶ God's plan for all of us is to live and work for the sake of God's mission in the world
 - ▶ The Pilgrimage – the Journey or even an exile
 - ▶ Pilgrims experience a call to follow a particular way and trust in God's companionship, no matter what happens along the way
 - ▶ The surprising "aha!" moment – being awakened to a gift or develop a passion
- ▶ How did you discern that calling?

Core Team Commitment:

- **Recruit team** members to infuse the theological theme of Calling throughout the ministries of the church for the calendar years 2018-2020
- Work in a **covenantal relationship with our coach**, Melissa Cooper
- **Innovate with calling activities** across the various ages of the parish, starting with embedding calling into what we already do
- Pilot a **new design with at least five groups**: children, adolescents, young adults, adults (midlife-mature) and the whole family + one project/design with the unaffiliated/uninvolved.

Vibrant Faith's Commitment to Us



- ▶ Training the parish leadership team at two Convocations in 2018, one in 2019 and one in 2020
- ▶ Each parish will have one coach to work with them for three years.
- ▶ Resources through web portal (Base Camp and website) that provides and allows for parish development of print, audio, video and digital vocation activities and resources
- ▶ Network of parishes online
- ▶ \$12,000 over 3 years

Vocation is about the whole of your life, Your whole life long!

- Infants called to gaze and behold
- Children called to create, imagine, invent, and delight in
- Youth called to begin exploring identity, developing a sense of self
- Young adulthood called to ask big questions and discover worthy dreams
- Adulthood called to love and work – gaps between dreams and reality
- Midlife called through disillusionment to explore how to serve with greater integrity and service
- Retirement called to reevaluate where I live, who I love, how I serve and what I'll do
- Elder years called to live with ambiguity, uncertainty and the need for care marked by the need to give and to let go



Called from something, someone or somewhere - transitions

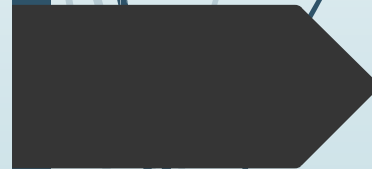
- Being called from entails moving away, an ending, before a new beginning
- Need to trust that moving away is the right path, a calling, even though you do not know the destination
 - Graduation
 - Wedding
 - New Job
 - Retirement
 - Loss – object, relationship, role, function or a community

2018

2019



Brainstorm experiences of calling to embed in 2018 - 2019 schedule



Whole Community Idea starter

► Sunday Worship

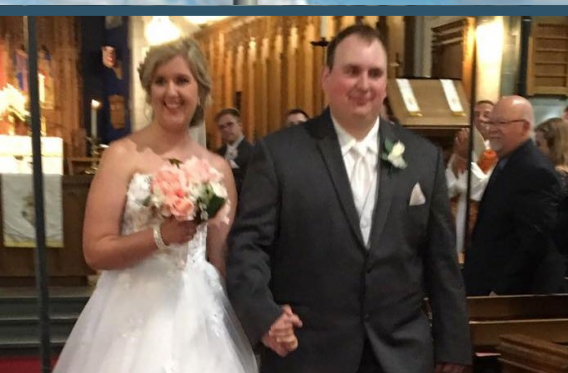
- Sermons
- Music
- Ritual Action
- Adult Forum at 9am

► Interview Project (modeled on Story Corps) – Church-wide “Stories of Call” – like Humans of Duluth-now Humans of St. Paul’s

- Photo exhibit
- Film Festival on callings and vocation, show stories
- Educate on milestone kits- highlight in newsletter/bulletin
- Highlight calling and resources on website; access to 24/7 formation

► Intergenerational Programs on Calling using eight Core Calling Themes

- Called by God
- Called to Follow Christ
- Called as We Are
- Called from People, Places or Situations
- Called for Service and Work
- Called through Each Other
- Called in Suffering
- Called by the God Within



Life Stage Idea starters

- ▶ Milestone and transitions
- ▶ -highlight the milestone kits – each month, week in newsletter and bulletin
- ▶ Gathered milestones
 - ▶ Resources for Baptism parents – on Belonging/Calling
 - ▶ Godparenting and grandparenting
 - ▶ Marriage prep/weddings
 - ▶ Retirement – dinner for retirees?
 - ▶ Birthday blessings, milestone birthdays
 - ▶ Prayer Partner Breakfast
 - ▶ Bible Presentation
 - ▶ Pet Blessing
 - ▶ Funerals



Family Idea starters

- ▶ Family-centered programs at church using the eight core Calling themes
- ▶ Family at-home friendly activities
- ▶ Parent formation on discovering and living the call to be parents
- ▶ Faith at home video clips to put on website



Children idea starters

- Formation sessions on Call stories in the Bible
- Lenten series on Call – Spiritual Explorers
- Children and parent sessions at gathering
- VBS- stories of calling
- Summer Sundays- incorporate calling

Retreat experience designed around the eight core Calling themes- fall retreat and spring Confirmation retreat

Senior High once a month gatherings focused on each of the eight core Calling themes

Confirmation program incorporating the eight core Calling themes

Lenten series on Call

Calling in Adolescence through "Sparks" discovery experiences

Apprenticeships in the community to explore Callings

11-12th grade discernment program/retreat on discovering and living your call as a young adult

Adolescents idea starters



Young adults starter ideas

- Include calling reflection in care packages
- Video young adult talks at music camp
- Introductory programs on discovering one's calling/vocation
- 4-session video program: "Vocation: How does God call us to live our faith?"
- Retreat experience on discerning and living one's call as a young adult
- Book study: The Stories We Live
- Online course: The Stories We Live
- Mentoring relationship with older members of the faith community
- Online discernment tool and one-to-one discussion
- Developing a personal call statement
- Bible reading plans on Calling
- Career mentoring/workshops for the community



I hope everything is going well. Also make sure your grades are good. And you don't get in trouble. Debbinethy.



Adults idea starters

- Barb book study- use Stories We Live book
- Wednesday night formation series on calling, reflections by people, recording stories
- Introductory programs on discovering one's calling/vocation throughout life
- video program: "Vocation: How does God call us to live our faith?"
- Retreat experience on discerning and living one's call – couples retreat with Bishop Prior and Stacey Prior
- Online course: The Stories We Live
- Online discernment tool and one-to-one discussion
- Developing a personal call statement
- Bible reading plans on Calling
- Career mentoring/workshops for the community



Seniors starter ideas

- Retirement and Calling Retreat or Workshop
- Barb book study- use Stories We Live book
- Wednesday night formation series on calling, reflections by people, recording stories
- Introductory programs on discovering one's calling/vocation throughout life
- video program: "Vocation: How does God call us to live our faith?"
- Online course: The Stories We Live
- Online discernment tool and one-to-one discussion
- Developing a personal call statement
- Bible reading plans on Calling
- Career mentoring/workshops for the community

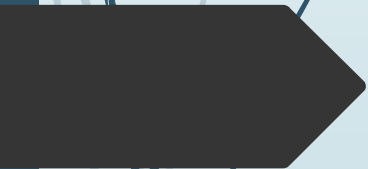
Core and Leadership Teams

1. Core Team – reflect a diversity of roles and ministries
 - Rector
 - Director of Faith Formation
 - 4-5 members of congregation of varying backgrounds, church experiences, gender, age
2. Brainstorming Leadership Team
 - Active participants in the mission and ministries of the parish
 - Positive, proactive, prayerful, team players who possess a growth mindset
 - Accessible by phone and email and provide timely responses to questions between meetings
 - Track record of following through on commitments and responsibilities
 - Strong network of relationships at and beyond the church
 - Respectful of the church's history and traditions yet open to finding better ways to fulfill its mission & vision
 - Can realistically make the time commitment called for in initiative

What part will you play?

Visual Faith Experience

“Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.” Revelation 3:20, 22





“When you reach out to follow your calling, the universe supports you with a world of possibilities.”
~Diane Dreher

- WHAT'S NEXT?
- May 9, Core Team Meeting
- May 15 Presentation to Vestry
- May 22 Presentation to Staff
- May 23 Zoom Meeting with Melissa Cooper
- May 30 Core Team Meeting, 7 pm – Core Team First Meeting
- June 19-21 – Convocation #2
- Sept. 9 Rally Day Launch- We are Called by Name