

Calling Congregations Practices that Notice, Name & Nurture Vocation- Revised

Christian practices are not activities we do to make something spiritual happen in our lives. Nor are they duties we undertake to be obedient to God. Rather, they are patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy, and presence of God may be made known to us. They are places where the power of God is experienced. In the end, these are not ultimately our practices but forms of participation in the practice of God¹

Craig Dykstra

Week after week, in many different ways, your congregation calls people to faith. But within your congregation, young people – and even those who are not so young – want to know that what they do with their lives matters. They want to know that their faith bears on the choices they make and that, as people of faith, they can make a difference in the world. In short, they need congregations who will prepare them to hear and respond to God’s call in their lives whatever it may be.

These types of congregations, calling congregations, engage in communal practices that build their capacity to notice, name and nurture Christian vocations and the call to ordained ministry. They understand that a robust culture of call – shared practices and habits developed over time – insures that the church has the leadership it needs with gifted men and women serving in church professions now and in the future.

What are the communal practices of congregations that nurture vocation and call? We want to suggest that congregations, across traditions and geography, engage in at least four practices that notice, name and nurture vocation and call. These practices are:

1. **Creating Space to Explore Vocation**
2. **Asking Self-Awakening Questions**
3. **Reflecting Theologically About Self and Community**
4. **Establishing Vocation Enriched Opportunities**

These communal practices grow out of three disciplines—learning, discerning and acting together—that are foundational to a congregation’s way of life. We believe these practices and disciplines are fundamental among congregations committed to creating a robust vocation enriched environment—a culture of call. And when congregations continuously engage in these *CARE* practices over time, they shape the identity of their leaders in particular ways and their own communal sense of vocation. They become communities that nurture well Christian vocations and call.

What’s at stake here is that congregations care about their future. They care about the quality of leadership that will lead the church into its future. They care about unleashing young women and men into the world to live a life that truly matters and contributes to God’s healing in the world. Ultimately, our hope is that congregations care about their unique calling to notice, name and nurture well leadership for the church and the world for generations to come.

¹ From Practicing Our Faith