

**Vocation CARE Curriculum
Glossary of Terms**

Call; Calling	The continuing call of God to follow Christ Jesus and join the healing and reconciling work in the world in every place and time.
Christian Vocation	Being fully who God creates us to be so as to join our <i>being</i> with God’s <i>doing</i> in the world; choosing to act so our lives take part in God’s recreating, redeeming activity in the world. “To walk in the purpose of your call.”
The Vocation Question	“Who am I created by God to be and how, then, am I to live my life; what must I do?”
The Vocation Prayer	<p>Dear God, we know you are at work in the world and that you created us in your image. In all that you are up to in the world, what is my part? What is our part together as a church? Amen.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Dear God, our Savior taught us to pray that “Your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.” As you work in the world to bring your kingdom near to us and all creation, help me to know your will and help me to know the part my life can play. Amen.</p>
Vocation care	<p>Vocation care is the ministry of care and accompaniment given by pastors, chaplains and others called to it to members of their congregation, church or ministry setting to notice, name and nurture Christian vocation and the call to ordained ministry among youth and young adults in our midst to join in God’s redeeming work in the world.</p> <p>The story of the beginning of Jesus’ ministry in Luke 4-5 may suggests a pattern: he moves quickly from telling his own call story through the words of the prophet Isaiah in the congregation he grew up in to seeking out friends (a new congregation) to share his ministry. Vocation is never a solo act; not even for the Messiah of God.</p> <p>Vocation care means the many different ways congregations “tend to” one another (intentionally and unintentionally) as we take on questions of call and meaning for our lives and discern faithful choices for living.</p>

	<p>This tending is never-ending; it is a way of life together, for God still calls from the burning bush and, like that fire, it is not consumed (Exodus 3).</p>
<p>Vocation Care with Young People</p>	<p>Vocation care with youth and young adults means “care for emerging vocation... helping youth construct their identity as called ones capable of creating a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world.” (Baker and Mercer, <i>Lives to Offer: Accompanying Youth on their Vocational Quest</i>, p. 47.) The intersection of formation of Christian identity, vocation and congregational life is especially important and fertile for youth and young adults.</p>
<p>Vocation CARE (Practices)</p>	<p>Four practices that care for vocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> C – Create a space to explore vocation A – Ask self-awakening questions R – Reflect theologically on self and community E – Establish ministry opportunities to explore vocation <p>These practices or disciplines are born of the conviction that all Christians are called by God and have a vocation: that is, a way to partner in the reconciling work of God that we know in Christ Jesus. And that Christians learn to live into the vocation of God’s call in the congregation of God’s people out of which some may be called to ordained ministry. For every Samuel there is an Eli and temple community. Vocation is never a solo act.</p>
<p>Christian Practices</p>	<p><i>“Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in the light of and in response to God’s grace to all creation through Christ Jesus.</i></p> <p><i>When we live the practices of Christian faith, we join together with one another, with Jesus, and with the communion of saints across time and space in a way of life that resists death in all its forms - a way of life that is spilling over with the Life of God for creation, for our neighbors, and for ourselves.”</i></p> <p>Craig Dykstra www.practicingourfaith.org/prct_what_are_practices.html</p>
<p>My/Your/Our Story of Vocation and CARE</p>	<p>In VoCARE we learn a structured, practiced method of companioned discernment of God’s call and vocation, or “purpose” in our lives in a story. The story in its different forms serves these distinct purposes:</p>

- To “mark off” a story-space to explore vocation together in “the text” of our own lives (My Story);
- To reflect on vocation together in the story-space by probing and listening together for God’s call and hints of faithful response in action in our own lives (My Story and Your Story; Our Story);
- To tell a story of how God may be calling our congregation now to explore vocation with young people in our church going forward (Our Story Now); and
- To name next steps for faithful response to God’s call.

Story of Self/Us/Now or Public Narrative

In the leadership season of preparation, congregation teams use this structured, practiced way to tell a story of self/us/now for these purposes:

- To clarify what call you and others who lead this effort to care for vocation with others—why are you here?;
- To grow capacity to organize and give leadership to a congregational initiative by building deepened (storied) relationships in the congregation; and
- To grow interest in and support for VoCARE in the congregation and insure good participation (“turn out”) for the 6-week exploration of vocation care.

Definitions for Vocation and Discernment

VOCATION

A life lived pursuing the questions who am I created by God to be, and what am I called to do (by God).

NNN: A Season of Vocation CARE

It's what you do that always makes more of you.

A High School Senior

Vocation means finding a purpose for one's life that is part of the purposes of God.

James W. Fowler

We make a living from what we get. We make a life from what we give. What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world is immortal.

George Eliot

We serve God; we love God; we serve and love our neighbors in *commune per vocatione*—in community through vocation.

Martin Luther

Vocation is where the world's great need and a person's greatest joy meet.

Frederick Buechner (paraphrased)

Insist on yourself: never imitate.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

There is something in every one of us that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.

Howard Thurman

Vocation is making our lives available in love for the Other's use in the world—the thing we can't not do; that without which you struggle to live.

John Shibley

Tell me, what do you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver

In all that God is doing in the world, there is something for you to do.

James Forbes

DISCERNMENT

Some faith communities have traditionally used the term *discernment* to describe the process by which we notice, ponder and interpret our experience in the light of faith. In spiritual discernment, we perceive sacred significance in the current moment and in the winding path by which we have arrived. We listen for the still small voice that beckons us onward, quietly revealing what we are here on earth to do and to become.

Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations
Gil Rendle and Alice Mann

By discernment I mean figuring out what to do, all together as a church, with the help of God's Spirit.

"Little Moves Against Destructiveness" by Nancy E. Bedford
Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life
Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, Editors

Discernment is the intentional practice by which a community or individual seeks, recognizes and intentionally takes part in the activity of God in concrete situations.

"Discernment" by Frank Rogers Jr.
Practicing Our Faith, Dorothy Bass, Editor
The Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of People in Faith

...we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God.

Colossians 1:9-10

Teens face many choices, and the path to a wise choice is not necessarily easy and straightforward. The Christian practice of discernment—a process of deliberate decision-making within a community that supports us as we explore our lives in the presence of God—can help us to choose wisely. Slow down, ask questions, pay attention to yourself and to God, find traveling companions, take time for reflection and then act.

Way To Live Leaders Guide: Ideas for Growing in Christian Practices with Teens
Dorothy C. Bass and Don C. Richter, with Lani Wright and Susan Briehl
See also: www.waytolive.org

Discernment is the process of listening for the voice of God. For Christians, discernment refers to "testing the spirits"—the process of seeking and discovering what is of God and what is not (1 John 4:1ff). Discernment is an art, a skill and a gift. It requires the desire not only to know God's call, but to follow God's leading... Discernment is not a one-time event, but an ongoing practice.

Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus
Mark Yaconelli

Discernment isn't like Mapquest or a similar service on the Internet, where we can punch in where we are and enter our destination to receive directions between the two points; it's more like a scavenger hunt, in which what we find at each step along the journey tells us more about the direction of our next step, the quickest way to get lost is to race for what we think is the finish line, and the least fun you can have is by staying in one place until you think you know where the journey ends.

“What Is(n't) Discernment?” by S. Dylan Breuer
www.episcopalchurch.org

All people have a vocation, or vocations that they are called to by God. The meaning of each of these vocations can only be understood in the context of their fulfilling our primary vocation as Christians begun at our Baptism... The process or path to finding and responding to a call from God is called discernment. Through prayer, self-examination, discussions with trusted friends, confidants, pastors and communities, we struggle to find out where God asks us to go... a lifelong process.

Noah H. Evans
www.episcopalchurch.org