



Called to Lives of Meaning & Purpose

News & Notes



Forming

Becoming Your Best Self

What gives your life meaning? What do you choose to believe? What does it look and feel like when you're being your "truest" self? We are constantly forming and reforming throughout life, hoping to live more authentic lives. Knowing and appreciating the complexities that drive our development as individuals moves us towards who we truly are. Our identity stems from the countless interactions we have with our world. We can join others and deepen our commitments with confidence and purpose.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT FORMING](#)

Resources from the Myrtle Collaboration at Louisville Seminary

By Laura Aponte, Project Director

Sometimes we learn from one another in ways that surprise us. When I began my tenure as Program Director for the Myrtle Collaboration, I expected that there were many paths to learning about vocation and calling. And one of the resources that the Myrtle Collaboration planned to give the Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative was a website that helped people find stories about calling expressed in ways that people unfamiliar with the church could understand. Mr. Rogers became our first inspiration in his words, "I like you just the way you are." We wanted the website to tell people that their lives had meaning and purpose just the way they were living. And our hub repeated this in the way we worked with our congregations by telling them that their members and congregations were already answering God's calling and were pursuing their vocations

February 2022

Coordination Calendar

February 28, 2022:
Program reports due

Spring 2022: Discussion
of program reports with
project directors & teams

Summer 2022: Field
research in congregations

August 3-5, 2022:
Meeting of project
directors in Collegeville,
MN

December 5-7, 2022:
Annual meeting in
Indianapolis, IN

The first step in creating the website was to work with a marketing firm. While costly, this helped my work as director in focusing on the basic principles of our hub. Because our team at VIA Studio had little experience working with or attending churches, the challenges of communication became evident. One of the byproducts of our work together was that the creative team at VIA Studio started to think about their own vocations. I needed to be very careful about my expression of the work so that a uninitiated creative group could understand what we believed, and maybe more importantly, did NOT believe. The team tested my resolve to use language and images that did not rely on Christian idioms and stereotypes. They also used design thinking to develop the graphic trajectory of the webpage. All of this helped my work as director in that I needed to understand the foundation of what we believed to be our vocation at the Myrtle Collaboration.

We decided to use video as our main vehicle for telling the stories embedded in our congregations that focused on vocation. The website had already been divided into three groups of ideas around this: forming, relating, and adapting. Forming referred to all the ways we develop our identities, the cornerstone of vocation. Relating encapsulates all the ways we interact with others to develop our vocations. And adapting included how we pivot due to circumstances often beyond our control. As we recorded the stories of our ministry teams, we learned some profound lessons that we may not have known without the video project.

Our website is currently under construction. It can be found at <https://myrtlecollaboration.org/>

- Forming: Let love be the loudest part of what I do: <https://myrtlecollaboration.org/forming/>

This tells the story of how Sarah followed her calling as a photographer and serve people who were being discriminated against in her community.

- Relating: Who he truly was: <https://myrtlecollaboration.org/relating/>

Felipe's father suffered catastrophe and realized his calling through his neighbors.

- Adapting: Didn't know this me was in me: <https://myrtlecollaboration.org/adapting/>

Angela received a call at a time of life she never expected. This video tells some of her story.

The quality of the videos makes a difference in the way they are received. Unfortunately, good work is expensive. We had planned to film our first cohort's projects for our website, but the pandemic intervened, and halted travel as well as activities at churches. In addition, we have lost our cinematographer. So, we hope to do additional work in the final years of our grant period.

While I hesitate to recommend using a professional branding and marketing firm as the first stop in understanding a project, in our case it helped direct how we proceeded and helped with communicating a clear message. The work we did recording, which happened at the beginning of the first cohort's work, helped their ministry teams begin to understand their own callings. And it opened some creative pathways to expressing vocation. We are thankful for the work of everyone involved in this project, and that they lived into their vocations.

Differences in Experiences of Calling By Race

By Jennifer McClure

In 2021, the Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative surveyed attendees whose congregations are participating in one of the initiative’s hubs. Overall, 2,363 attendees participated, representing 71 congregations and 10 hubs.

While we have gathered compelling stories of people’s callings in this Initiative, there is little research that explores the callings of persons of color. In this survey, an interesting finding emerges about the extent to which experiences of calling differ between white attendees and attendees of color. Below, I will explore whether there are differences concerning to what extent attendees have a clear sense of calling and to what extent attendees feel equipped by their church to live out their calling in the following areas of their lives:

- Work or career
- Church involvement
- Volunteer work
- Leisure pursuits or hobbies
- Family life
- Close friendships

The graphs compare the categories of “white” (people who indicated that at least one of their racial/ethnic identities was “white”) and “non-white” (people who do not describe their racial/ethnic identity as “white,” whom I will also refer to as attendees of color). Over 80% of the attendees of color in this survey indicated that at least one of their racial/ethnic identities was “African American.”

In the attendee survey, there are meaningful differences between white attendees and attendees of color in their experience of calling in their work or career, leisure pursuits or hobbies, family life, and close friendships. Compared to white attendees, attendees of color have a clearer sense of calling and feel more equipped by their church to live out their callings in these four areas. These results suggest that, at CLMPI’s congregations, attendees of color may have a more holistic experience of calling than white attendees.

Conclusions

While there is little research yet focusing on calling among people of color, the results resonate with research indicating high levels of religiosity among African American attendees. Have you noticed differences by race in attendees’ experiences of calling in your hub? What do you think accounts for these differences?

