



Called to Lives of Meaning & Purpose

News & Notes

April 2022



Resources from Innovation for Vocation at Fuller Theological Seminary

By Scott Cormode, Project Director

The church as we know it is [calibrated for a world that no longer exists](#). And if we want to help our people imagine new ways to embody the never-changing gospel in an ever-changing culture, then we will have to give them a new glimpse of what is possible. To do that, we in our Fuller Seminary project do two things: we help people re-imagine vocation and we give them fresh ways to innovate. Let summarize what we do and provide some links to the resources we use.

Coordination Calendar

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



Shared Story of Future Hope

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ing about the current experience of church was bygone era: the way we worship, the passages of parish, and who we expect to see. The basic contours not changed, even as the world has been the church as we know it is calibrated for a world exists.

is all too well. In 2018, she brought her youth from Florida to Fuller for an “innovation summit.”¹ The summit with a problem she was trying to solve: “We were looking to the church for help, she said, in our way toward hope and joy in a world of suffering.” “The focus of doing church emphasized following rules rather



We start by re-inventing “[The Christian Practice of Vocation](#).” We Christians are not called to a job or to a purpose; we are called to “[the people entrusted to our care](#).”

Vocation is nothing more – and nothing less – than loving my neighbor where God has planted me. And that typically brings a list of questions from our people, including to understand “[Work as Blessing, and Work as Curse](#).” Perhaps the best resource is to use the Oscar-winning Pixar video titled [Tin Toy](#) as a model for the joys and sorrows that come from understanding my vocation as serving the people entrusted to my care.

Once we introduce the idea of vocation, we help people imagine new ways to embody their calling. We do this by inviting them to create a “[shared story of future hope](#).” But there is a problem. We cannot speak up to share this story of hope until we have spent time listening. Otherwise, we treat people as a stereotype. Instead, we have to help people recognize that [leadership begins with listening](#). And that allows them to take the first step in connecting [vocation and leadership](#).



Experiences of Calling and Theology of Calling

By Jennifer McClure

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

Using this, I explored how attenders' experiences of calling relate with their theological views on calling. I looked at three overall experiences of calling:

- Clarity of callings – average clarity of callings in one's work or career, church or parish involvement, volunteer work, leisure pursuits or hobbies, family life, and close friendships (higher values mean a clearer sense of callings)
- Equipped for callings – average feeling of being equipped by one's congregation to live out one's callings in one's work or career, church or parish involvement, volunteer work, leisure pursuits or hobbies, family life, and close friendships (higher values mean feeling more equipped by church to live out callings)
- Congregation's emphasis on calling – average emphasis on calling, meaning, and purpose in congregation's worship, preaching, prayers, adult education, children's ministry, youth ministry, pastoral care, outreach ministries, identification of gifts, private spiritual practices/devotions, and discernment practices (higher values mean greater overall emphasis)

Here are the key takeaways:

- Attenders with a clearer sense of their callings are more likely to agree that: God calls all Christians, each congregation has a communal calling; callings are particular to each person; callings are focused on work, marriage, and family.
- Attenders that feel more equipped by their congregation to live out their callings are more likely to agree that: God calls all Christians, each congregation has a communal calling; callings are particular to each person; callings are pre-planned by God; callings are focused on work, marriage, and family.
- Attenders whose congregation more strongly emphasizes calling, meaning, and purpose are more likely to agree that: God calls all Christians, each congregation has a communal calling; callings are particular to each person; callings are pre-planned by God; callings are focused on work, marriage, and family; callings are primarily discerned in young adulthood.

Questions to Consider

Based on these results, what surprises you, and what makes sense? What views of calling would you like to nurture more intentionally in your congregations?

