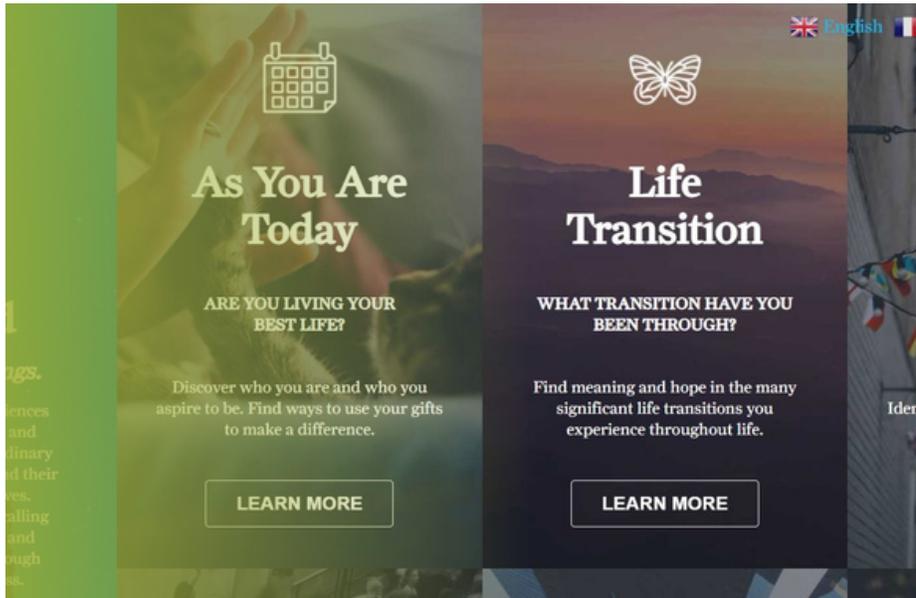




Called to Lives of Meaning & Purpose

News & Notes

May 2022



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

Resources from Creating a Culture of Calling at Vibrant Faith

By Nancy Going, Project Director

Over the course of the three years as Vibrant Faith's Creating a Culture of Calling Grant worked with 24 churches from seven denominations. We began the process of working together teaching the ministry leaders a theology of calling that we derived from the work we did in our planning grant. You can read that Theological Overview of Calling [HERE](#). That small document turned out to be a critical feature for grounding and providing traction for these very "different from one another" churches by providing a joint understanding and in common language for what God does in and through the Christian notion of "calling."

Along the way in our 3 years of work together, the churches asked for resources to engage their people with their callings and God's activity in their lives. These are the resources we created. They can all be found on the [Vibrant Faith Projects Website](#).

Some specific resource examples from the site are:

The Stories We Live Small Group Curriculum

Kathleen Cahalan's book, *The Stories we Live* became a Calling Primer for our churches. The book describes what God does in calling using prepositions. Each preposition is a chapter.

by God
to follow
as I am
from grief
for service
in suffering
through others
within God.

Vibrant Faith developed a [small group curriculum](#) that walks through *The Stories We Live* in 8 sessions. There is a version geared for adults, also a youth version, an online version and a retreat version. While some of the sessions are built around using our Visual Faith Images, we can help you to access those.

Calling Survey

We developed a survey for church use. The first C3 Survey is designed to engage adults and young people in reflecting on their faith life and experience of calling. It is organized into three parts: 1. Personal Faith Life, 2. Personal Experience of God's Calling, and 3. How the Church Supports People's Callings. It was conducted at the beginning of our churches implementation of C3 projects (Fall 2018 and Winter 2019) You can access it [here](#).

Discovering God's Calling in Transition

As we worked with churches to more deeply engage people's callings, we noticed that times of "life transition" are particularly important to discerning new callings. Vibrant Faith created 13 modules designed to help people discover God's calling through major life transitions: married life, single life, becoming a new parent, parent of a child, parent of a teen, parent of a young adult, becoming a grandparent, empty nest family, young adulthood, work, retirement, caregiving, and starting a new home. You can access them [here](#).

Discerning Calling

In addition, the grant leaders created a series of spiritual practice exercises designed to focus people on discerning their callings—both big and small. These include a teaching tool, a handout and a “ways to use” doc. Practices include holy listening, reflective writing, and the Ignatian Examen.

Included in this section on the VF Projects site are a retreat on discerning calling and an curated exercise called “5 Cups of Coffee” designed to help people connect for 5 conversations around calling. You’ll find the Discerning Calling Exercises [here](#).

Along the way, Vibrant Faith realized the power of purpose and meaning as an outreach tool for people of churches to be able to talk with their unchurched and de-churched friends, neighbors and family about what God might be doing through the specific life circumstances that their friends and family might be going through. That insight led us to create two related resources that can also stand alone.

Instruments of Calling

Is a four session training program to help people in churches listen for and engage in “calling conversations”

1. To strengthen your ability to identify callings in yourself and in others
2. To prepare you to identify when people may be open to discussing a calling experience that they are having
3. To empower you to initiate, sustain, and close calling conversations with people who are not affiliated with a church but are open to growing in their relationship with God.

Session 1. What is Calling?

Session 2. Eight Windows for Calling Conversations

Session 3. Enter-Engage-Embrace

Session 4. The Nuts & Bolts of Calling Conversations

There is a facilitated version of the curriculum with leader guide etc, and a self-guided version that people could use individually or in a small group. You can access it [here](#).

AllCalled Website

An online portal for introducing people who are not connected to a church to the idea of a God who calls throughout a lifetime. There is 8 calling “windows” or life circumstances through which people often experience God calling in new ways—whether they are practicing Christians or not. Then there is content curated behind each of the windows for people to be able to explore calling through that window or life circumstance. The entire site is also translated into Spanish. www.allcalled.org

Experiences of Calling and Spiritual Growth

By Jennifer McClure

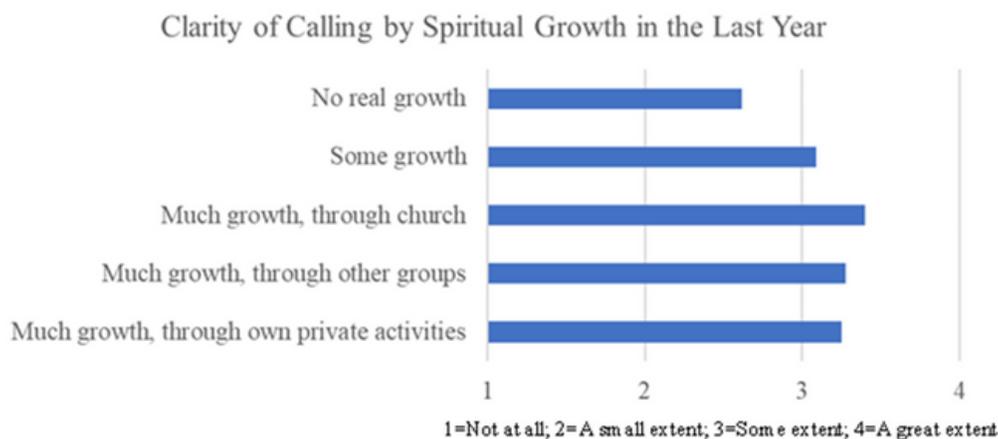
In 2021, the Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative surveyed attenders whose congregations are participating in one of the initiative's hubs. Overall, 2,363 attenders participated, representing 71 congregations and 10 hubs.

There was significant disruption in many congregations' ministries and in many of the CLMPI congregations' initiatives during 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. How do attenders' experiences of calling relate with their spiritual growth during this period?

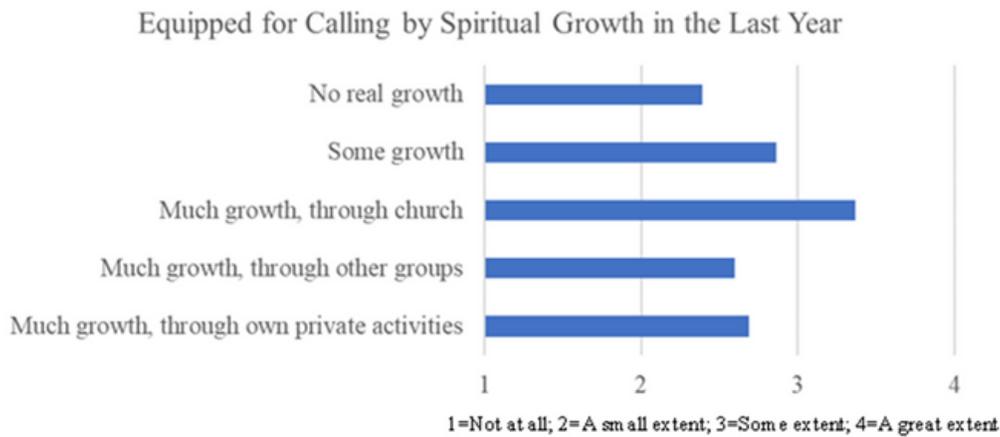
I have been able to measure three overall experiences of calling:

- 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 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)

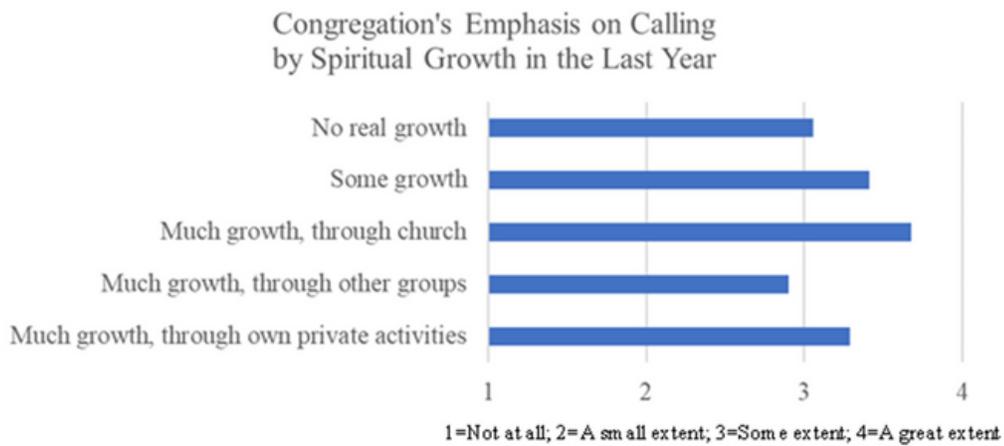
There are three key findings. First, attenders who reported more spiritual growth from 2020 to 2021 also have a clearer sense of their callings.



Second, attenders who reported much growth in their faith, particularly through their local congregation, felt more equipped to live out their callings.



Third, attenders who reported much growth in their faith, particularly through their local congregation, rate their congregation as having a stronger emphasis on calling, meaning, and purpose.



Conclusions

It is important to note that we cannot tell if these associations are causal. In other words, we cannot conclude, for example, that a congregation's emphasis on calling, meaning, and purpose causes its attenders to grow more spiritually. However, there does seem to be a connection between each of these experiences of calling and experiencing much spiritual growth through one's church from 2020 to 2021, even in the midst of all of the disruption we've experienced.

What have you noticed about the connection between spiritual growth and a sense of calling in your hub's congregations? How have your congregations encouraged spiritual growth during the pandemic?