



# Called to Lives of Meaning & Purpose

## News & Notes

July 2022



## Resources from Baptized for Life / Vida en Abundancia of Virginia Theological Seminary

By BFL Core Team Leadership

As we enter the final year of Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose, the Virginia Theological Seminary hub continues to go deeper into relationship with the same 15 faith communities we began our journey with five years ago. Spanning six Episcopal Dioceses, our initiative, Baptized for Life (BFL), continues to discern vocational calling through the lens of baptismal identity. Here we offer resource highlights from our work over the course of the project, beginning with the question of what it means to live into our baptisms, regardless of age, and how the Catechumenate is an important process for formation around baptism.

<https://baptizedforlife.org/>

<https://baptizedforlife.org/catechumenate/>

<https://baptizedforlife.org/video-page/>

## Coordination Calendar

Summer 2022: Field  
research in congregations

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

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

We have learned that building relationships with one another, alongside consistent spiritual practices, makes a critical difference in the ministry of the baptized. We also discovered that healthy relationships require all those involved to be open to others who may think and express their beliefs in different ways. For those interested in building relationships and growing disciples who are confident in their baptismal vocation, we offer a robust “road map” to guide faith communities in both areas – “Christian Life of Faith: Signs and Thresholds Along The Way.

[https://baptizedforlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/00\\_A\\_ChristianLifeOfFaith\\_Booklet\\_FINAL.pdf](https://baptizedforlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/00_A_ChristianLifeOfFaith_Booklet_FINAL.pdf)

During our first residency in 2018, poet and theologian Kathy Staudt, Ph.D., offered deep insight into discernment and its role in helping us understand vocation and calling. We focused on questions like “How is God calling each of us to follow an inner compass?” and “What is mine to do in response to such a calling?” We invite you to explore her website which, has a wealth of resources, including her latest book, *Shaping a faithful life: discernment for young adults*.

<https://kathleenstaudtpoet.com/>

The Rev. Juan Oliver, Ph.D., also provided insight about discipleship and the practice of Bible reflection, especially through small group study, allowing discussion participants to go deeper into scripture passages. His latest book, *A House of Meaning: Christian Worship in Plain Language* (available in English and Spanish) has been a useful resource for some of our faith communities.

<https://baptizedforlife.org/video-page/>

In the winter of 2021, Core Leadership completed a study of congregational consultant Susan Beaumont’s book, “How to Lead When You Don’t Know Where You’re Going: Leading in a Liminal Season.” We recognized that the wider initiative would benefit from a similar study, especially with the changes the pandemic era brought into our lives and churches. 65 participants, representing all orders of ministry, attended a 4-part workshop led by the author across two months in early 2022. Afterwards, several BFL faith communities continued working with the book, immediately incorporating newly gained insight into liminality alongside their evolving understanding and use of discernment in decision-making.

<https://susanbeaumont.com/2019/10/29/how-to-lead-when-you-dont-know-where-youre-going/>  
<https://susanbeaumont.com/>

In his reflections on “The Cloud of Unknowing,” clinical psychologist James Finley teaches that the active life and the contemplative life feed one another and offer a pathway to inner and outer transformation. We encourage our faith communities to live the juncture of active and contemplative life through the daily practices of spiritual guidance and companioning. We began an experiment focused on these practices in late 2020 during Tuesday evening sessions we call “The Well.” It continues to this day. It is a one-hour zoom gathering that builds relationships through the practice of Lectio Divina. We usually begin with a short reading (scripture, poetry...) followed by a question, with an invitation to respond. We then begin the practice of Lectio by reading a scripture passage from the next Sunday’s lectionary, embracing an abundance of silence between each reading, ending the session in communal prayer. Transcending geography and time zones, a regular group of BFL participants have become very close through this weekly time of spiritual nourishment and sharing.

<https://cac.org/podcast/turning-to-the-mystics/>

<https://baptizedforlife.org/community/bfl-well/>

<https://shalem.org/programs/nurturing-the-call-spiritual-guidance-program/>

We are mindful of the importance of finishing well. With the third and final residency scheduled for October 2022, we are exploring how our lives of meaning and purpose over the life of the project have changed us inwardly and outwardly. We have been significantly impacted by both the pandemic and social unrest. World problems and tensions in our communities are often overwhelming. Along with regular rendezvous with The Divine through worship, prayer practices and vocational calling, we have identified two resources to help us acknowledge the end of the initiative while remaining open to The Spirit’s next invitation. The first is “Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change,” by William Bridges. It provides insight for organizations and individuals navigating the disruption and opportunity that change invites. The second resource is a model that provides a technique for closure. It is known by the acronym RAFT, which stands for reconciliation, affirmation, farewell, and think destination. Both of these resources are shaping “the why and the how” of finishing well, as we embrace change, let go, and prepare for new beginnings.

<https://wmbridges.com/>

<https://communicatingacrossboundariesblog.com/2014/06/12/transition-building-a-raft/>

## **Congregations' Motivations for Participating in a Hub Program, Part 1**

By Jennifer McClure

In 2021, the Called to Lives of Meaning and Purpose Initiative surveyed leadership team whose congregations are participating in one of the initiative's hubs. Leadership team members include ordained clergy, other congregational staff members, and lay leaders who are guiding the congregation's initiative related to calling, meaning, and purpose. Overall, 426 leadership team participated, representing 85 congregations and 11 hubs.

Leadership team members have been motivated by a variety of factors to participate in their hub's program when it began a few years ago. Common motivations include: focus on Christian calling, meaning, and purpose; opportunities to work with other churches; learning about innovation; looking for new programming material; financial support for a project; importance of calling, meaning, and purpose for our members; expanding outreach, community service, and social justice; building a communal sense of calling, meaning, and purpose for our congregation. In the 2021 CLMPI leadership team survey, we let leadership team members choose their top three motivations.

Below I explore how these initial motivations relate with how well leadership team members think their congregation is focusing on calling, meaning, and purpose in different areas of ministry at this point. There are five key results, which compare leadership team members who chose a particular motivation to leadership team members that did not choose that motivation:

- 1.) Leadership team members who were motivated to participate in their hub program because of its focus on Christian calling, meaning, and purpose think that their congregation has a stronger focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in its outreach ministries.
- 2.) Leadership team members who were motivated to participate in their hub program because of the opportunity to work with other churches think that their congregation has a stronger focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in its adult education.
- 3.) Leadership team members who were motivated to participate in their hub program to receive financial support for a project think that their congregation has a weaker focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in its children's ministry, youth ministry, and outreach ministries.
- 4.) Leadership team members who were motivated to participate in their hub program because of the importance of calling, meaning, and purpose for their members think that their congregation has a stronger focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in its outreach ministries.

5). Leadership team members who were motivated to participate in their hub program to expand their outreach, community service, and social justice activities think that their congregation has a stronger focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in its corporate, pastoral, or congregational prayers and in its pastoral care.

### Conclusions

Here's some guidance for how not to interpret these results, using the second result as an example. An incorrect way to interpret the second result is that congregations who participated in their hub program for the opportunity to work with other churches were able to strengthen the emphasis on calling, meaning, and purpose in adult education from the beginning of the initiative until 2021. This interpretation is incorrect because we don't have data from the beginning of the initiative for comparison.

To me, some of the connections between the motivations and ministry areas that focus on calling, meaning, and purpose are unclear. Why do congregations that were motivated to participate in their hub's program to expand their community engagement have a stronger focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in their pastoral care? What connects community engagement and pastoral care in these congregations? Maybe you can help us to figure this out.

I'd also like to comment about the results concerning the motivation of seeking financial support for a project. The majority of the congregations participating in CLMPI have received or will receive financial support for a project during the initiative. For 15% of leadership team members, financial support was one of their top three motivations for participating in their hub's project. We cannot say for sure with the survey data, but perhaps these leadership team members' congregations have fewer financial resources available to them. Congregations with fewer financial resources may not be able to invest as much in children's ministry, youth ministry, and outreach ministries, and they may rate their focus on calling, meaning, and purpose in these ministries lower for this reason.

Based on these results, what surprises you, and what makes sense? What motivations for participating in your hub's program have you noticed among your congregations? In what areas of your congregations' ministries has your hub had the greatest impact?