



Notice  
Name  
Nurture

In the United Methodist Church we have experienced a decline in the number of young people who are listening to and answering the call to ordained ministry. However, as people of faith, we know that God is still calling. If young people do not listen to and answer God's call, then we are faced with the questions: who will serve our churches tomorrow? And who will carry forward God's mission redemption and hope?

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## Words of advice for the pastor/guide

It was late one night when Samuel was awakened by God's call. Of course, having never heard God's voice before, Samuel simply brushed it off as the voice of his mentor, Eli. And who can blame him? Certainly, it would seem more realistic than the voice of the Living God! But the fact of it all is that God *was* calling. Though Samuel lacked the experience, training, and insight to recognize His voice, God had spoken. Yet, it took Eli's guidance to help Samuel identify and respond to the call.

This is where you come in. If you are serving in the ministry of the church – either as a pastor or a youth minister – you are in an excellent position to help a young person hear and accept the call to ministry. Having answered the call in your own life, you have experienced the intricacies of discerning and wrestling with God's call. Therefore, you are in a unique position.

You are, in effect, Eli! The same God who called you still calls people today. The problem is that the people, even if they are listening for God, are not recognizing God's call. Your congregation, however, has the potential to be a place where young people hear the call to ordained ministry, embrace it as their ultimate passion, and are empowered to move toward being the men and women God created them to be. For this reason, we are suggesting that in your church and in your relationships with young people you use the pattern of *Notice, Name and Nurture*.

*Noticing* the young person in your congregation who may be called to ordained ministry will require you to be in intentional relationship with your young people. *Noticing* is simply looking for the signs of God's grace at work in the life of a young person. Obviously, the youth minister/youth worker is in the ideal position for this. If you are the Senior Minister, you may feel that youth and young adult ministry is something you have "hired out" or delegated, but that does not remove the responsibility to notice the young people who are experiencing God's call. Your ministry

is the vision that will either invite or dissuade many young people in answering the call.

*Naming* is also an important part of this process. When we have *noticed* God's hand at work in the life of a young person, and we feel that they may be called to ministry, the next step is to begin to pray for that person, specifically for their receptivity to God's call. Then we should *Name* for them this great possibility. Talking to the young person about the possibility that God's plan for their life may include serving God's church through ordained ministry.

Noticing and Naming are important steps in the process of creating a culture of call within your congregation, however, the final step is perhaps most important: *Nurturing*. More than merely getting them to say a prayer of commitment or fill out an information sheet, *Nurturing* involves mentorship as a person continues to struggle with the issues of calling. Necessarily, this person must become a priority in your ministry. This means that you will need to create a line of communication that makes you open and available to answer questions and offer advice. Additionally, we invite you to take time to go through this study with young people and then walk alongside them as they begin the journey of answering God's call for their life.

The call of God will sometimes come as quietly and simply as the voice calling to young Samuel as he slept, or as dramatically as the blinding experience that changed Saul into Paul. In whatever way the call comes, it is the responsibility of those of us who have heard and answered God's call to be in a relationship with youth and young adults and *Notice, Name and Nurture* when God's call comes again.

What are the next steps to reach God's goal for your life?

*For the Guide:* End this session with a discussion of the steps toward Candidacy and put the student in contact with the Board of Ordained Ministry of the North Alabama Conference.

**Deacons:** “From among the baptized, deacons are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership...Deacons give leadership in the Church’s life: in the teaching and proclamation of the Word; in worship, and in assisting the elders in the administration of the sacraments of baptism and holy communion; in forming and nurturing disciples; in conducting marriages and burying the dead; in the congregations’ mission to the world; and in leading the congregation in interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world...Deacons lead the congregation in its servant ministry and equip and support all baptized Christians in their ministry.” ¶328 2004 Book of Discipline

**Elder:** “An elder is authorized to give spiritual and temporal servant leadership in the Church...Elders have a four-fold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. Elders are to preach the Word of God, lead in worship, read and teach the Scriptures, and engage people in study and witness...to administer the sacraments of baptism and the Supper of the Lord according to Christ’s ordinance... to be the administrative officer of the local church and to assure that the organizational concerns of the congregation are adequately provided for...to embody the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries and servant leadership.” ¶340ff 2004 Book of Discipline

Where do you feel called to serve: in the servant ministry of the Deacon or in the pastoral ministry of the Elder?

## Words of advice for the student

God is calling you. But what is God saying? God calls some people to be teachers, doctors, or accountants, shining His glory through their work in the world. But God also calls people to be in full-time ministry in the church. So the question for you to think about is this: What is God saying to *you*? God is calling you, but what is God calling you to do?

Obviously, this isn’t a question you’ll answer by merely working through a simple workbook. This is a lifelong question! At every stage of life, it is important to prayerfully ask, “Where does God want to use me now?”

While you discern the answer to that question, you ought to consider the possibility that God may want to use you in full-time, ordained ministry. Hear what Paul says to the Ephesians regarding such ministry.

*It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-13)*

While God calls all people to ministry, what a great privilege it is to be used for this specific purpose! It is altogether possible that God is calling you to this very ministry. This workbook is meant to help you figure out whether or not ordained ministry is a good fit for you. But even if this type of ministry is not right for you, God has some grand purpose for your life.

All this is to say, God is calling you to something. And it’s up to you to turn your ear to what He might be saying. So listen up!!

## Session One –

Throughout the scriptures there are stories of God’s people being called and answering God’s call. The people who are called are common, ordinary, and flawed. They come from various walks and stages of life – shepherds, fugitives, young, old, fishermen, and others. The only thing that they have in common is that God called them to do something that was bigger than they were, and they said “yes.” However, as you will find, not everyone said yes right away.

### Many People... Many Stories

Read through the following stories of God’s call. You may want to read them in multiple translations so that you will be able to see the emotion and energy of the interaction between each person and God.

#### Old Testament Stories

|          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| Abraham  | Genesis 12:1-9   |
| Jacob    | Genesis 32:22-32 |
| Moses    | Exodus 3-4:17    |
| Esther   | Esther 4         |
| Isaiah   | Isaiah 6         |
| Jeremiah | Jeremiah 1:4-19  |
| Ezekiel  | Ezekiel 1-3      |

#### New Testament Stories

|                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Zechariah & Elizabeth | Luke 1             |
| Mary                  | Luke 1             |
| Peter, James & John   | Matthew 4:18-21    |
| John the Baptist      | Luke 3:1-20        |
| Timothy               | 2 Timothy 3:10-4:5 |

Now that you have read through these stories of our faith, take some time to answer the following questions:

## Session Six – Answering the Call

Answering God’s call to ordained ministry is an amazing thing. It is not the end of the journey – it is only the beginning of a lifetime of service to God and the Church. It is putting God’s will for your life as primary, and pushing aside the plans that you or others may have had for your life. It is exciting. It is scary. It may even feel a bit overwhelming. But serving God as an ordained minister is truly one of the greatest honors a person can receive – that God called you to serve His church and care for His people.

What do you think “servant leadership” means?

### Ordination

“Ordination is a gift from God to the Church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit. As such, those who are ordained make a commitment to conscious living of the whole gospel and to the proclamation of that gospel to the end that the world may be saved.” ¶303.1 2004 Book of Discipline

Like the disciples who walked away from fishing nets and tax tables, the ordained minister is dedicating their life to serving God through the church. It means that you will have the opportunity to help others connect to God, to find hope in the midst of despair, to receive the justifying grace of God and accept the gift of salvation. It is a great responsibility.

In the United Methodist Church we ordain people to one of two orders: The Order of the Deacon and The Order of Elder.

Before you began to feel called to ministry – what did you think you wanted to do with your life?

What gifts do you think are necessary for answering God's call?

What gifts are you praying for right now?

How does God call each person?

How does each person respond or react?

Why does God call each person?

Are any of these stories similar to your experience of God's call?

Describe how you think God calls you. (Another way of thinking about this is to ask, “If God were speaking to me right now, what would He say to me?”):

## **Session Five – Gifted for the Call**

As we mentioned in a previous session – each of us has a unique place in the Body of Christ, and each of us has also been given unique gifts and abilities to use to glorify God. Not everyone has the same gifts – and that is okay! If we were all the same the church would be a boring place.

What gifts do you feel you have received from God?

What are some things you feel God has NOT gifted you to do?  
(The very fact that God has *not* given you certain gifts shows that God has special plans for you!)

What are the things that make you the most excited?

through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.” In the end, our excuses are insufficient. We may feel like God’s choice to use us is foolish. But the fact of it all is that God *loves* to use foolishness to bring glory to Himself.

## **Session Two – Everyone has a story**

Regardless of how old we are when God call us, we all have a story, a background, a lifetime of experiences that shapes us and informs us. Each of the people God calls in the Bible has a history – some good and some bad – but God called them in light of or in spite of their past. In this session, you are invited to look at your story and how it has either helped or hindered your journey to this place.

Think about your story. What are the most important parts of your own history?

What are the parts of your story that you think could be used by God?

What are the parts that seem to work against God’s plan?

How has your family contributed to your spiritual growth and faith development? How have your friends? (If applicable, how have they worked against your spiritual growth?)

*Excuse #4: "But I want a family."*  
1 Timothy 3:1-5

Where do you see God currently working in your life for your own spiritual growth?

*Excuse #5: "There is so much I want/need to do first."*  
Luke 9:59-62

How do you see God working through your life for others' spiritual growth?

What other questions or excuses can you think of? How do you think God might respond to them?

In which area(s) of your life do you pray that God will work?

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 says, "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made

foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased

## **Session Four – No Excuses**

Often, people who feel called to ministry feel as though they are not equipped to be ministers. The excuses are endless. In this section, we will explore common excuses, and how God deals with each. For each excuse, read the corresponding scripture and write how God answers it.

*Excuse #1: “I’m not a good speaker!”*

Exodus 4:10-11:

*Excuse #2: “I’ve messed up a lot in my life.”*

1 Timothy 1:12-17:

*Excuse #3: “I’m still weak in my faith. I struggle with so much.”*

2 Corinthians 10:7-10:

Read Acts 17:24-27. What does this tell you about God’s action throughout a person’s life?

## **Session Three – Everyone has a call**

God has a purpose and a plan for everyone (Jeremiah 29:11). Therefore, God calls everyone into ministry. The difference is that some are called to be ordained ministers and some are called to the ministry of the laity (those in the church who are not pastors). The purpose of this session is to explore the difference between those two calls.

We are told in 1 Peter 2:9 that we “are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” We are a royal priesthood – all of us – we are chosen and we are the people of God. How do you understand that idea that we are all part of the “Priesthood of believers?”

1 Corinthians 12:27 says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” It also says that the body of Christ is made up of many different and distinct parts that function to make up the whole. Why is (or isn't) the “body of Christ” a good image to use in describing the church?

In John 15:8, Jesus is speaking and says, “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” We are all called to be fruitful – to live our lives in a way that pleases God and helps to bring the kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. What is the difference between Faithfulness and Fruitfulness?

In the life of believer the Spiritual Disciplines (prayer, bible study, holy communion, fasting, etc) are important for deepening their relationship with God and in becoming the person God created them to be. How is your life shaped by the Spiritual Disciplines? How would you like your life to be shaped by the Spiritual Disciplines?

While we are all called to serve God, to be part of the Body of Christ, to join in the priesthood of all believers, and to bear fruit for God, some are called to live this out as part of the Ordained (set apart) Ministry. How do you describe the difference between ordained ministry and the priesthood of all believers or the ministry of the laity?

