



THE  
NOURISHING  
VOCATION  
PROJECT



THE LUTHERAN CENTER  
FOR FAITH, VALUES, AND COMMUNITY

*with generous support from Lilly Endowment Inc.*



## WHAT IS VOCATION?

Who am I called to be?

What am I called to do?

Why am I here?

VOCATION

Who are we called to be?

Why are we here?

What are we called to do?

Vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare*, which means “to call.” To embrace *vocation* is to recognize that what one does in life is not merely by one’s personal choice or for one’s personal fulfillment or gain. Instead, God calls people to be a part of God’s purposes in this world for the sake of the common good. Leaning into the call of God in all areas of life is to live attentive to *vocation*.

### ➤ VOCATION IS MUCH MORE THAN THE JOB THAT ONE HAS OR THE WORK THAT ONE DOES

- *Vocation* is the belief that all human beings are called by God, not out of but into the world, with all of its beauty and all of its sorrow, all of its joy and all of its suffering, all of its gladness and all of its sadness.
- *Vocation* means understanding daily life and work as ongoing opportunities where the call of God is heard for service to the community and the whole creation.
- *Vocation* means listening for the call of God in a specific place at a specific time, deeply engaging *where* one is with all that *who* one is, for the sake of the greater good.
- *Vocation* is the belief that all human beings are called by God — especially where there is need, oppression, or suffering — *to love and serve the neighbor*.

### ➤ VOCATION ASKS THREE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS IN ALL AREAS OF ONE’S LIFE

- Who am I called to be?
- What am I called to do?
- Why am I here?



# WHAT IS THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT?

I Discern

We Discern

We Act

We Reflect

The Nourishing Vocation Project is a four-phase experience that invites individual participants and whole congregations to deepen their understanding of God's call upon their life and work so that they might more intentionally *live life on purpose* and *engage in ministry on purpose for the common good*.

## ► PHASE 1

### NOURISHING PERSONAL VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Participants engage in holistic, personal vocational discernment as a regular, spiritual practice using the *Vocare* spiritual practice tool.

## ► PHASE 2

### NOURISHING CONGREGATIONAL VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Participants continue their personal vocational discernment while expanding their reflection into congregational vocational discernment that moves toward action. The congregational vocational discernment phase is attentive to questions in five critical areas impacting the church today — well-being, young adults, anti-racism, economics, and digital ministry.

## ► PHASE 3

### NOURISHING CONGREGATIONAL VOCATION IN ACTION

"Practicing Vocational Discernment" underpins the action that congregations have discerned in Phase 2. Personal vocational discernment continues.

## ► PHASE 4

### REFLECTING ON THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT

Personal and congregational discernment continue while participants intentionally reflect back on the experience and look to what comes after the conclusion of the project.





## WHY THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT?

We live in unprecedented times. We have experienced unparalleled changes to the ways that we live, work, and experience community. We have been deeply affected by both personal and collective trauma, and we face critical questions that are defining not only for this present time but for what it means to be the church now and into the future.

### ► THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT

- Takes seriously the **well-being** of the world, the specific communities in which congregations dwell, congregations themselves, and individual participants
- Values **ministry** as the embodied and enacted call of the whole people of God
- Nurtures spiritual **practices** that enrich both personal and collective vocational discernment
- Invites exploration of new **possibilities and partnerships**

Well-being

Ministry

Practice

Possibilities  
and  
Partnerships

SERVE  
THE  
GOSPEL





## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT?

- Approximately 10 congregations from across the country will participate in each cohort.
- Congregational participation in Cohort 1 will be primarily by invitation in consultation with various ELCA synod staffs.
- While learning will evolve throughout the Nourishing Vocation Project, the first cohort of congregations will be deeply engaged not only in their own vocational discernment but also in ongoing project development.
- Together, these congregations will learn by doing, anticipating that their experiences will inform some yet-to-be-realized need for adjustments and changes to both the program content and rhythm for subsequent cohorts.
- Subsequent cohorts will be ecumenical in their composition.

## WHEN DOES THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT OCCUR?

The Nourishing Vocation Project begins in June 2022 and will engage four overlapping cohorts of congregations, with each congregation participating over approximately two years.

### ► COHORT 1 — JUNE 2022

Cohort 1 will function as a pilot for the program. Approximately 10 congregations from various contexts will be invited to learn and grow together.

### ► COHORT 2 — JANUARY 2023

Cohort 2 will build upon the learning from Cohort 1. Applications and invitations for Cohort 2 will open in October of 2022, for the Cohort to begin in January of 2023.

### ► COHORT 3 — JUNE 2023

Cohort 3 will begin at the mid-point of Cohort 1. Applications and invitations for Cohort 3 will open in March of 2023, for the Cohort to begin in June of 2023.

### ► COHORT 4 — JANUARY 2024

Cohort 4 will begin at the mid-point of Cohort 2. Applications and invitations for Cohort 4 will open in October of 2023, for the Cohort to begin in January of 2024.

## HOW DOES THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT WORK?

Central to THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT are **Congregational Vocation Ministers** (CVMs) from each congregation. CVMs:

- Form a Community of Practice within each congregation to nourish vocation within their own lives and to nourish vocation within the life of the congregation
- Participate in a Community of Practice with CVMs from other project congregations, to share experiences and enrich their own personal and congregational discernment and practices

The Project provides each CVM and their congregations with the **Vocare spiritual practice tool**, a guide for regular reflection to nourish both personal and congregational vocational discernment. Supported by scripture, music, visual art, and guiding questions, *Vocare* encourages regular reflection upon:

- Values
- Openness
- Call
- Attentiveness
- Regret
- Experiences of God's presence

Each cohort will also engage the **Nourishing Vocation Lectionary**, a collection of Biblical readings that support the entire project experience.

- Four sections support the four phases of the project (individual discernment, congregational discernment, action, reflection)
- Includes scripture, music, and visual art

Regular virtual **workshops** will support the work of the Congregational Vocation Ministers.

- Topics will nourish participants in the current phase of their discernment
- Workshops will be recorded and may be shared within the congregation to enrich the congregation's work
- Workshops will feature experts in various fields relevant to congregational life and ministry

**The Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts** ([stolaf.edu/cwta](http://stolaf.edu/cwta)) will support participants in their Nourishing Vocation experience.

- Bi-annual, beginning in 2022
- All conference expenses are covered for three participants from each congregation. Congregations may send as many additional CWTA participants as they wish. Scholarship support is available.





## WHAT IS THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT?

- Project leadership provided by the Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, St. Olaf College Program Director for Congregational Thriving
- Virtual orientation for each congregation at the beginning of the project, led by the St. Olaf Program Director for Congregational Thriving
- Program launch for Cohort 1 at the July 2022 St. Olaf Conference on Worship, Theology, and the Arts (represented by at least three CVMs from each congregation)
- Monthly workshops with CVMs from other congregations (represented by at least one CVM from each congregation)
- Quarterly congregational check-in with the St. Olaf Program Director for Congregational Thriving
- Open door access to the St. Olaf Program Director for Congregational Thriving for conversation, questions, and concerns



## THE NOURISHING VOCATION PROJECT

*[stolaf.edu/nourishing-vocation](http://stolaf.edu/nourishing-vocation)*

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECT?

There is NO COST to participate in The Nourishing Vocation Project.

The project is brought to you through the St. Olaf College Lutheran Center for Faith, Values and Community with generous support from Lilly Endowment.

Any programs developed by congregations as a result of their participation in The Nourishing Vocation Project would be the financial responsibility of the congregation.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Pastor Char Rachuy Cox, St. Olaf College Program Director for Congregational Thriving at [cox11@stolaf.edu](mailto:cox11@stolaf.edu)



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