



THE
NOURISHING
VOCATION
PROJECT



THE LUTHERAN CENTER
FOR FAITH, VALUES, AND COMMUNITY

with generous support from Lilly Endowment Inc.



Table of Contents

CWTA Session Outline	4
Foundations	5
Personal	6
Within Community	7
Through All Relationships and Dimensions	8
For the Common Good	9
Life on Purpose for the Common Good	10
Spiritual Practice	11
“Vocare” Self-Reflection	12
Daily Life	14
“Vocare” Spiritual Practice Basics	15
Themes, Scripture, Prayers	15
Near and Now	16
Guided Reflection	19
Nuts & Bolts	20
Guiding Questions	21
Congregational Vocation Ministers’ Plan	22
The Nourishing Vocation Lectionary	23
Section 1: Well-being: Listening to your Longings	23
Section 2: Openness: Embracing Holy Indifference	23
Section 3: Values: What are they, and why do they matter?	24
Section 4: Encountering God: Experiencing the Holy in Everyday Life	24
Section 5: Holy Tending: the Art of Paying Attention	24
Section 6: Reframing Regret: From Hindsight to Insight	25
Section 7: Discernment as a Way of Life: Posture, Process, Practice	25
Section 8: Vocation: Who are you called to be? What are you called to do?	26
Phase 1: Planning and Assessment Rubric	27
Taking it Home!	28
Notes	29





CWTA Session Outline

*****All NVP sessions are in Rolvaag Memorial Library (RML) 515***

Session 1: Monday, July 25 (5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Dinner Conversation)

- Welcome and a Theological Framework

Session 2: Tuesday, July 26 (2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Spotlight Session)

- *Vocare*

Session 3: Tuesday, July 26 (5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Dinner Conversation)

- *Vocare* in Practice

Session 4: Wednesday, July 27 (2:45 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. Spotlight Session)

- Tools for the Toolbox

Session 5: Wednesday, July 27 (5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. Dinner Conversation)

- 7 Keys to a Good Beginning



Foundations



A Theological Framework

SESSION 1

Theological Framework

Personal

Within Community

Through All of Life

For the Common Good





Personal

1. The call of God is *personal* for each individual.

There is not another you. God calls you to be yourself and to both embody and live out your unique **gifts** and **passions**. God calls you in and through your **life experiences**, both joyful and sorrowful, extraordinary and mundane. God calls you in the particular **places** that you find yourself and through the particular **relationships** that compromise your life story. Through Holy Baptism, God claims and names you, God gifts you with the Holy Spirit, and God ***calls you*** for a life of purpose for the common good. This is **vocation**.

What are the gifts, passions, life experiences, places, and relationships that uniquely mark your life and make God's call ***personal*** to you? Write them around the figure below.





Within Community

2. The call of God is discerned and lived *within the community*.

None of us discern or live out our vocations in solitude or isolation. We need one another to accompany us on the journey, to test our own ideas and thoughts, and to help us understand things from a variety of perspectives. It is within the company of others that we both wrestle with and lean into our multiple vocations.

In the living out of this called life, there are a host of voices that both literally and metaphorically speak to us and influence both our discerning and our living. Who are the individual people or communities that speak to you? What voices surround you? Which voices are most critical to you?

In the space below, list the people, communities, and voices that influence your discerning and your living. By the numbers around the figure, write the five most important or influential people, communities, or voices that accompany you. These five may be positive, negative, or neutral.





Through All Relationships and Dimensions

3. The call of God is interwoven with and lived out through **all relationships, experiences, and dimensions of human life.**

Each of us have multiple vocations, and it is through those vocations that we live our lives. Sometimes our various vocations support and encourage one another. At other times, our vocations are in conflict with one another, and at still other times, our various vocations can co-exist without a lot of intersection.

Think of your various vocations. Write one vocation by each of the raindrops below. Reflect upon how your various vocations relate to and impact one another.

Examples of vocations: child, citizen, church member, neighbor, employee, parent, volunteer, etc.





For the Common Good

4. The personal call of God, is discerned and lived within community and interwoven through all relationships, experiences and dimensions of human life so that we might **live life on purpose for the common good.**

We are called *so that we* can be persons of good in the world. We are called *so that* we might be agents of good in the world. We are called *so that* we can contribute to the building up of our common life through love and service to the neighbor.

This project has identified five critical questions that impact the church's collective call to ministry on purpose for common good in this unique time – well-being, antiracism, economics, young adults, and digital ministry.

Think about the critical questions that impact your personal call to live life on purpose for the common good in this unique time. Write one by each of the hands below. Your personal critical questions may be matters of global concern (i.e. climate change), local concern (i.e. affordable housing in your neighborhood), or personal concern (i.e. the health and well-being of a loved one).





Life on Purpose for the Common Good

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.**

In the space under the image below, write your personal hopes for you and for your congregation that you seek to embrace through your participation in the Nourishing Vocation Project.





Spiritual Practice



Vocare

SESSION 2

Vocare

Values

Openness

Call

Attentiveness

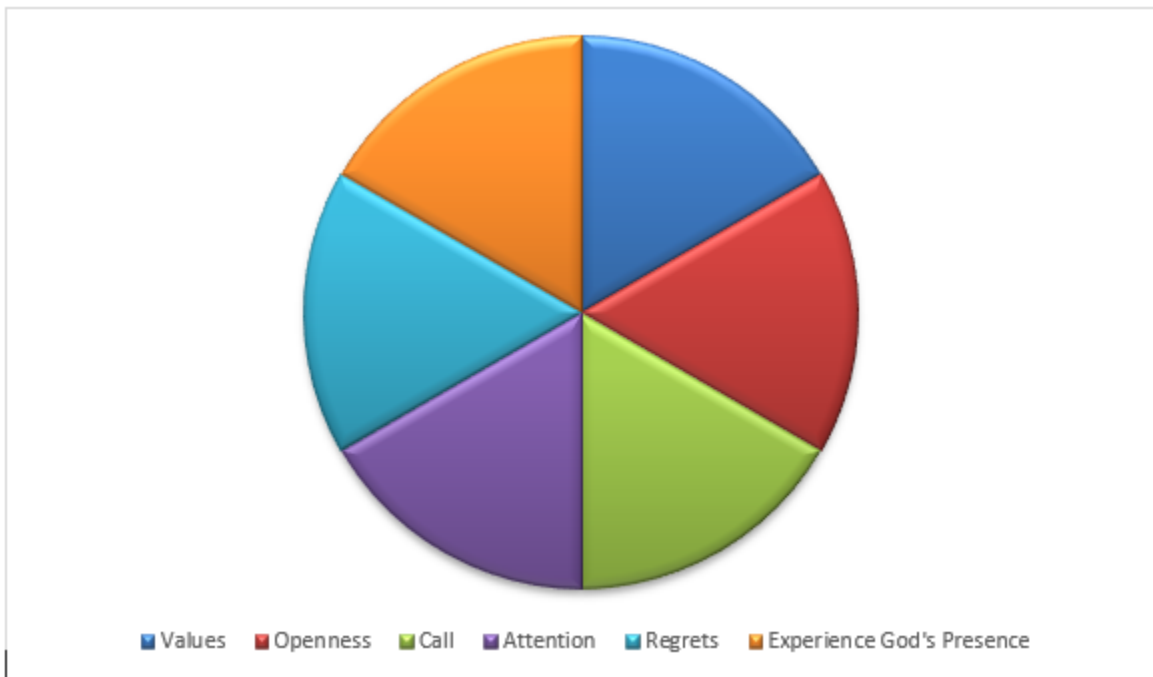
Regret

Experiences
of God's
presence





“Vocare” Self-Reflection



Answer each question. Plot your answers on the chart in the following manner. When all dots are plotted, connect the dots.

Rarely – $\frac{1}{4}$ out from the center

Sometimes – $\frac{1}{2}$ way out from the center

Often – $\frac{3}{4}$ way out from the center

Almost Always – in the center of the outer edge

1. **Values:** Carefully and consistently act out of personal values

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Almost Always

2. **Openness:** Embrace openness to new ideas and opportunities, even when challenging

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Almost Always



3. **Call:** Know what voices are valued and listened to and why in daily life
- ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Almost Always
4. **Attentiveness:** Consistently invest attention with purpose
- ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Almost Always
5. **Regrets:** Regularly name and attend to regrets in a healthy and life-giving manner
- ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Almost Always
6. **Experience God's Presence:** Recognize experiences of God's presence in daily life
- ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Almost Always



Daily Life



Vocare in Practice

SESSION 3



Experiment

Basic

Themes

Scripture

Prayers

Near and
Now

Guided
Reflection

Make it
your own



“Vocare” Spiritual Practice Basics

V – Values: *What do I value, and how am I living my values?*

O – Openness: *To what am I being asked to be open? How do I respond?*

C – Call: *What voices are calling to me? Which ones do I listen to, and why?*

A – Attentiveness: *Where am I giving my attention? Does my attention align with my values?*

R – Regret: *What are my regrets? What insight do I gain from them?*

E – Experience God’s presence: *When, where, and how have I encountered the presence of the holy in my everyday life?*

What do you need?

In light of your reflection today, name what you need to lean into your vocations in the future.

+++

Themes, Scripture, Prayers

Section 1: Well-being: Listening to your Longings

Emotive Themes: *longing, need, hunger, thirst*

- Psalm 42 (as a deer longs for flowing streams)
 - o *“My soul thirsts for the living God.”*
 - o *Prayer: Meet me in my longings gracious God, and quench my thirsty soul. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **The woman with the hemorrhage** - (Matthew 9:18-26)
 - o *“If only I can touch...”*
 - o *Prayer: Bring your healing touch to the “if only” cries of my heart, O God, and make me whole. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **Rachel** - (Genesis 30:1-24)
 - o *“Then God remembered Rachel...”*
 - o *Prayer: Hear my voice when I call out to you, O God, and remember me in my longings. In the name of +Jesus, Amen*
- **Hagar** - (Genesis 21:8-21)
 - o *“Then God opened her eyes and she saw.”*
 - o *Prayer: When my longings overwhelm me O God, help me focus on you and realize your promises. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

+++



Near and Now

Thriving Congregations

Warm-up Question

What does “thriving” mean to you?



[I want to Thrive](#) by [M's Photography](#) is licensed under [CC BY 2.0](#).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?



Life Abundant

Read John 10:1-10

Bible Story Reflection

Sometimes it is hard to live life “present tense.” It can be easy to focus on the past – either the good or the not-so-good of what has been. It can be equally easy to imagine the future and look forward to what might someday be, but to live “present tense” is to embrace the fullness of today.

When we read Jesus’ words that he came that we “might have life, and have it abundantly,” we can fall into the trap of thinking that the life that Jesus promises is always and only future-tense. It is the life after this life. It is the promise of heaven. While we certainly look forward with joy and expectation to the fulfillment of all that Jesus has promised, the abundant life which Jesus promises is not only about life eternal. It is also about life in the here and now.

The Gospel of John follows a rhythm of “sign, dialogue, discourse,” as it tells the story of Jesus. Jesus performs a sign. There is dialogue between Jesus and someone about the sign, and then Jesus teaches, using the sign as the reference point. Jesus’ words about abundant life are part of what has traditionally been called the “Good Shepherd” narrative, Jesus’ teaching that looks back upon the story of the man born blind who was healed by Jesus.

In receiving sight and all that accompanies it, the man born blind receives abundant life. His place within society changes. His sense of community changes. He is freed from both physical and social oppression. Abundant life is the result of Jesus meeting him amid his particular need and bringing transformation. In such a way, his story teaches us that abundant life looks different depending upon one’s circumstances, context, and need. For the bent over woman, abundant life meant standing upright. For the man with leprosy, abundant life meant healing from his affliction. For the son of the widow of Nain, abundant life literally meant life restored.

This story, then, is an invitation for us to see Jesus’ promise of abundant life as that which speaks into our own particular needs. It is an invitation to recognize that abundant life is God’s grace-full response to whatever it is that seeks to steal, kill, or destroy us in the present-tense.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes it difficult for you to live “present-tense?”
2. When have you experienced Jesus’ grace-full response to a particular need?
3. In what ways are you living life abundantly right now?
4. What is impeding abundant life for you right now?
5. What makes it difficult for your congregation to live “present-tense?”
6. When has your congregation experienced Jesus’ grace-full response to a particular need?
7. In what ways is your congregation living life abundant right now?
8. What is impeding abundant life for your congregation right now?



9. If you could name just one thing for which you need Jesus' grace-full response in your life, what would it be?
10. If you could name just one thing for which your congregation needs Jesus' grace-full response in its life, what would it be?

Activity Suggestions

Make a list of all of the ways that your life in Christ is life abundant in the present-tense.

Think of your congregation. Make two columns. In the left-hand column, identify all of the ways that your congregation's ministry is a demonstration of life-abundant in Christ. In the right-hand column, make a list of the things that seek to steal, kill, and destroy life-abundance in your congregation. Share and reflect upon what you have written.

Start a "Just One Thing" journal. Each day, write down "just one thing" that you do or experience that is a present-tense example of abundant life in Christ.

Prayer Concerns

Those for whom living "present-tense" is a challenge, congregations that are struggling, congregations that are leaving into present-tense abundant life and ministry

Closing Prayer

Give me grace, O God, to live in the blessings of your abundant life today. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

+++



Guided Reflection

Vocare Spiritual Practice
Well-being: Listening to your Longings

Vocare

Vocare is an ongoing spiritual practice designed to help you discern and embrace your multiple vocations so that you can more intentionally live life on purpose for the common good. *Vocare* invites regular reflection upon values, openness, call, attentiveness, regret, and the experience of God's presence. *Vocare* can be used by individuals, small groups, and whole congregations.

Focus

You are invited to focus on your own **well-being** by listening to your personal longings and by doing so, nourish in a particular way God's call upon your everyday life. Use the time between the guided questions for your own reflection and meditation. Bring to mind an **experience of longing** from your own life. Is this a story of longing-fulfilled, or is it a story of longing that lingers? How has this particular longing shaped your life and its horizons?

Guided Reflection

Opening prayer

Meet me in my longings gracious God, and quench my thirsty soul.

*What life **values** are present for you in this experience of longing? Are they your most important values?*

*To what does this longing ask you to be **open**? How easy is it for you to be open to this?*

*What **voices are calling** to you through this longing? Are these voices that you want or need to listen to?*

*As you consider this longing, what holds your **attention**? Is this where you want or need your attention to be?*

*What **regrets** does this longing bring to mind for you? What do you do with these regrets?*

*Where and how in this longing do you **experience God's presence**?*

Closing Prayer

Bring your healing touch to the "if only" cries of my heart, O God.

Hear my voice when I call out to you,

Remember me in my longings.

And when they overwhelm me, help me to focus on you and trust in your promises for me.

In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

+++



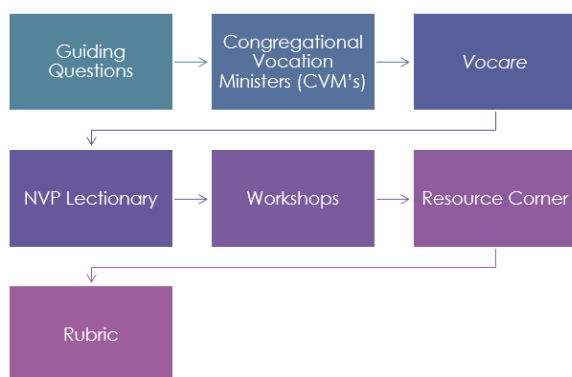
Nuts & Bolts



Tools for the Toolbox

SESSION 4

Tools for the Toolbox





Guiding Questions





The Nourishing Vocation Project Phase 1:

Congregational Vocation Ministers' Plan

Section	Theme	Actions
One	Well-being: Listening to your Longings	Form CVM team Kick-off with Program Director Introductions Connection Process & Schedule <i>Vocare</i> self-reflection Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Two	Openness: Embracing Holy Indifference	Determine personal goals Virtual Workshop Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Three	Values: What are they, & why do they matter?	Complete Values Exercise Virtual Workshop Connection Process & Schedule Update Congregation
Four	Encountering God: Experiencing the Holy in Everyday Life	Virtual Check-in with Program Director Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Five	Holy Tending: the Art of Paying Attention	Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Six	Reframing Regret: From Hindsight to Insight	Begin pivot to Phase 2 Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Seven	Discernment as a Way of Life: Posture, Process, Practice	Virtual Workshop Continue pivot to Phase 2 Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation
Eight	Vocation: Who are you called to be? What are you called to do?	Virtual Workshop Continue pivot to Phase 2 Connection Process & Schedule Practice <i>Vocare</i> Update Congregation



The Nourishing Vocation Lectionary

Each lectionary section includes the following resources:

- o Themes and prayers
- o Summary Reflections
- o Readers' Theater
- o *Vocare* Reflection Guide
- o "Near and Now" for each Scripture
- o "Engaging the Living Word" for each Scripture

Section 1: Well-being: Listening to your Longings

- **Emotive Themes:** *longing, need, hunger, thirst*
 - o Psalm 42 (as a deer longs for flowing streams)
 - *"My soul thirsts for the living God..."*
 - *Prayer: Meet me in my longings gracious God, and quench my thirsty soul. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - o **The woman with the hemorrhage** - (Matthew 9:18-26)
 - *"If only I can touch..."*
 - *Prayer: Bring your healing touch to the "if only" cries of my heart, O God, and make me whole. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - o **Rachel** - (Genesis 30:1-24)
 - *"Then God remembered Rachel..."*
 - *Prayer: Hear my voice when I call out to you, O God, and remember me in my longings. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - o **Hagar** - (Genesis 21:8-21)
 - *"Then God opened her eyes and she saw..."*
 - *Prayer: When my longings overwhelm me O God, help me focus on you and realize your promises. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 2: Openness: Embracing Holy Indifference

- **Emotive Themes:** *receptive, open-minded, amenable*
 - o Ephesians 1:15-23 (with the eyes of your heart enlightened)
 - o Near and Now
 - o Engaging the Living Word
 - *"With the eyes of your heart enlightened..."*
 - *Prayer: Open the eyes of my heart, O God, that I might see the hope to which you have called me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - o **The man who could not hear or speak** (Mark 7:31-37)
 - *"Ephphatha," that is 'Be opened'."*
 - *Prayer: Give me ears to hear and eyes to see, O God, your unfolding vision for me and for your world. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - o **Abraham and Sarah** (Genesis 12:1-9)
 - *"So Abram went..."*
 - *Prayer: Open me to where you are calling me, O God, that I might go out in trust and hope. In the name of +Jesus, Amen*
 - o **The Emmaus Road** (Luke 24:13-35)
 - *"Then their eyes were opened."*



- *Prayer: Walk with me on my seeking journey, O God, and open my heart to understand where you would have me go. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 3: Values: What are they, and why do they matter?

- **Emotive Themes:** *care, love, commitment, passion*
 - Matthew 6:19-21 (where your treasure is)
 - *“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*
 - *Prayer: Help me, O God, to value what matters and to live my life reflecting those values. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Sarah - Genesis 18:1-15; 21:1-7
 - *“Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?”*
 - *Prayer: Guide me to value what you value, O God, and to trust in your Word for me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Ruth - Ruth 1:15-18
 - *“Where you go, I will go.”*
 - *Prayer: Shepherd my commitments, O God, that they may reflect your purposes in and through my life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10
 - *“Today salvation has come to this house...”*
 - *Prayer: Show me, O God, when my values are misguided, and move me to correct my ways. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 4: Encountering God: Experiencing the Holy in Everyday Life

- **Emotive Theme:** *awe, wonder, reverence, doubt, fear*
 - Psalm 46 (be still and know)
 - *“Be still, and know that I am God!”*
 - *Prayer: Still my heart and mind, O God, that I might meet you in the ordinary experiences of my everyday life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Elijah - I Kings 19:11-18
 - *“The Lord is about to pass by...”*
 - *Prayer: Fill me with anticipation, O God, that I might see you where I least expect to find you. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Consider the Lilies - Matthew 6:25-34
 - *“Consider the lilies of the field...”*
 - *Prayer: Help me, O God, to look for you in even the smallest things and to believe that nothing is too insignificant to reveal your presence. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - Foot washing - John 13:1-17; 31b-35
 - *“You also should do as I have done to you...”*
 - *Prayer: Work through me, O God, that others might encounter you in who I am and what I do. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 5: Holy Tending: the Art of Paying Attention

- **Emotive Themes:** *wrestling, contemplating, brooding*
 - Ephesians 4:1-6 (life worthy of your calling)
 - *“Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called...”*



- *Prayer: When I am distracted by things that cause me to lose sight of your call, O God, turn my attention back to you. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **Mary** - Luke 1:26-38
 - *"She was much perplexed by his words and pondered..."*
 - *Prayer: Direct the ponderings of my heart, O God, toward where you call me to pay attention. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **A Man Born Blind** - John 9
 - *"He opened my eyes"*
 - *Prayer: Open my eyes, O God, to pay attention to your work in my life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **God Answers Job** - Job 38
 - *"Where were you?"*
 - *Prayer: Teach me, O God, to regard your work in all creation and to pay attention to what you are doing. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 6: Reframing Regret: From Hindsight to Insight

- **Emotive Themes:** *sadness, despair, grief, heartache, determination*
 - Psalm 51 (create in me a clean heart)
 - *"Create in me a clean heart..."*
 - *Prayer: Help me, O God, to give my regrets to you and to go forward today, confident in your mercy. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Joseph and his brothers** - Genesis 50:15-21
 - *"God intended it for good..."*
 - *Prayer: Bind up the wounds of my mistakes, O God, and help me learn from them. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Jonah** - Jonah 2:1-10
 - *"I called to the Lord in my distress..."*
 - *Prayer: Use my regrets, O God, to give me insight into my choices and actions. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Nathan confronts David** - II Samuel 12:1-14
 - *"I have sinned."*
 - *Prayer: Forgive me my sins, O God, and raise me to new life today. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 7: Discernment as a Way of Life: Posture, Process, Practice

- **Emotive Themes:** *awareness, wonder, apprehension, peace, habit*
 - I Corinthians 12:1-11 (spiritual gifts)
 - *"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*
 - *Prayer: Help me, O God, to use the gifts you have given me for the common good. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Philip and Nathaniel** - John 1:43-51
 - *"Come and see"*
 - *Prayer: Guide me daily to come to you, O God, that I might see and hear anew your call for my life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Nicodemus** - John 3
 - *"How can these things be?"*



- *Prayer: Help me, O God to live the questions of my life in relationship with you, trusting that you will walk with me into the answers. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
- **Elijah's despair** - I Kings 19:1-10
 - *"An angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat'."*
 - *Prayer: When I am exhausted and overwhelmed, O God, meet me in my need and sustain me with your gifts of grace. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

Section 8: Vocation: Who are you called to be? What are you called to do?

- **Emotive Themes:** fulfillment, purpose, fear, pleasure, determination, anxiety
 - Psalm 8 (what is the human being)
 - *"What are human beings that you are mindful of them?"*
 - *Prayer: In whatever I face today and to whatever I am called today, remind me O God, that you, Creator of the universe, love and care for me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Humankind** - Genesis 1:26-31
 - *"So God created humankind in his image"*
 - *Prayer: Lead me, O God to see your face in every person I encounter and to be your face for all whom I meet. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Esther** - Esther 4:1-14
 - *"For just such a time as this"*
 - *Prayer: Open my heart, O God, to be who you have called me to be and to do what you have called me to do. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*
 - **Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch** - Acts 8:26-40
 - *"Get up and go."*
 - *Prayer: Move me to act, O God, when I hear your voice calling me. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.*

+++



The Nourishing Vocation Project

Phase 1: Planning and Assessment Rubric

*"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."
1 Corinthians 3:6*

- Below is a **sample planning and assessment** document
- In column one, under **vocation** identify areas in which you seek to be nourished, i.e. parenting, work, civic engagement.
- In column one, under **discernment** identify components of *vocare* in which you seek to be nourished, i.e. values, attention, regrets
- In column two, identify a specific action that you plan to do to **"plant the seeds"** to tend to this particular focal point.
- In column three, identify the actions that will **nourish the seeds** that have been planted
- In column four, identify **the anticipated outcome**, i.e. who are you called to be? What are you called to do? How will you have grown?
- Add as many rows as needed

Focal Point	Planting	Nourishment	Growth
Vocation	Action	Action	Anticipated Outcome
Discernment	Action	Action	Anticipated Outcome



Taking it Home!



7 Keys to a Good Beginning

SESSION 5

Taking it Home: 7 Keys to a Good Beginning



Pray

Get to know
each other
anew

Establish a
Covenant

Communicate

Determine
Process &
Schedule

Discuss roles &
responsibilities

Embrace
openness &
discernment



Notes

