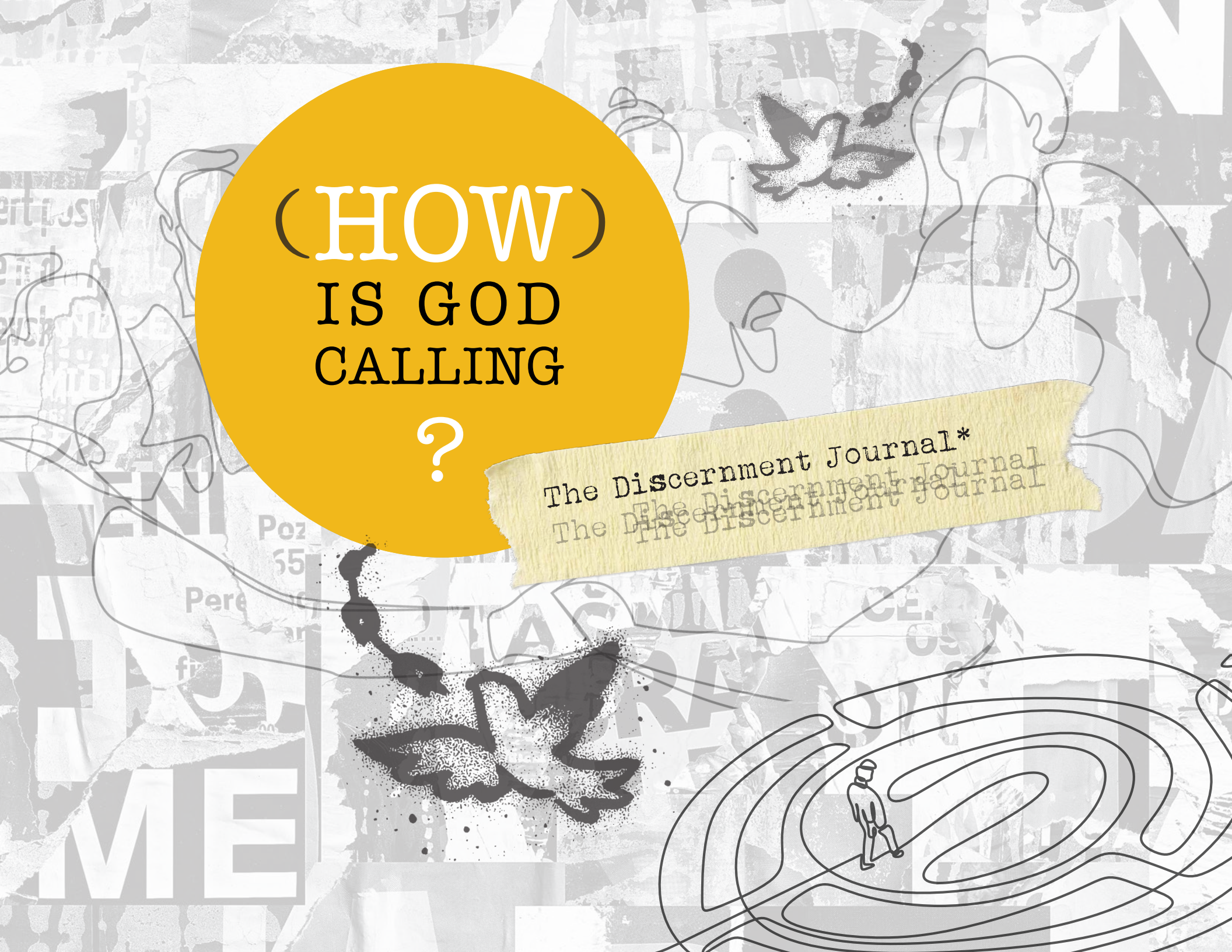


(HOW)
IS GOD
CALLING

?

The Discernment Journal*
The Discernment Journal
The Discernment Journal



HELLO

This journal is intended to be used alongside the full *(How) Is God Calling?* resource. It can serve as a companion for small group discernment or as a support for individual reflection.

If you're working through these materials as part of a small group, this journal can offer a lightly guided space for reflection between gatherings, a place to engage spiritual practices more deeply, or a home for guided activities that support ongoing discernment.

This journal invites individual and group discerners into conversation with others who are also discerning their call. Throughout these pages, students, candidates, and leaders in the ELCA share reflections on their own experiences of discernment.

Following each reflection are questions for journaling and prayer. I pray these voices resonate with your own experiences, spark recognition, or open up new questions and insights as you listen for God's call in your life.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eric Milner-White | Daily Prayer, p. 14. Originally published: Oxford University Press, 1941. (Often called The Prayer of Good Courage)

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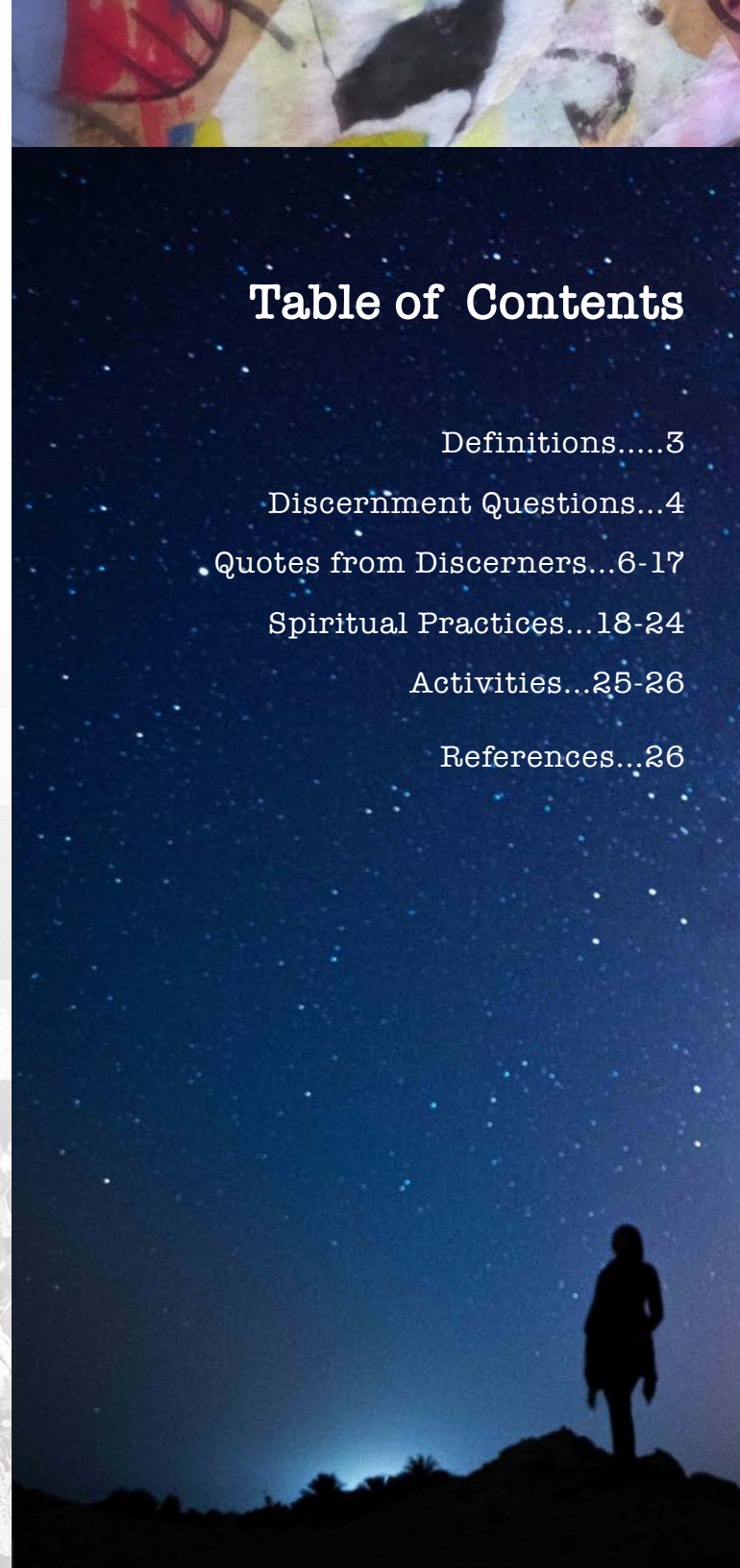
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Definitions

A few definitions might be helpful. These are also provided in the full discernment resource.

Vocation

comes from the Latin word vocare, meaning “to call.” Dorothy Bass says “vocation” is the Christian answer to the question, “What shall I do with my life?”⁵

Another ELCA resource says it this way: “To have a vocation means to be in relationship with someone whose voice summons our response and calls us to action.”¹

Pacific Lutheran University (one of our ELCA Colleges & Universities) articulates that, “vocation is being called into

relationships to promote human and ecological flourishing.”²

The authors of *Another Way: Living & Leading Change on Purpose* describe vocation this way: “the long arc of a life spent searching for purpose and acting out a call.” They define purpose as “the telos or end to which a life aims” and call as “the episodic, time-bound expression of purpose, as it bubbles up over the course of a lifetime.”³

Vocation is often used interchangeably with calling. Vocation may include one’s job or career, but they are not synonymous. Vocation is much more expansive.

Ministry

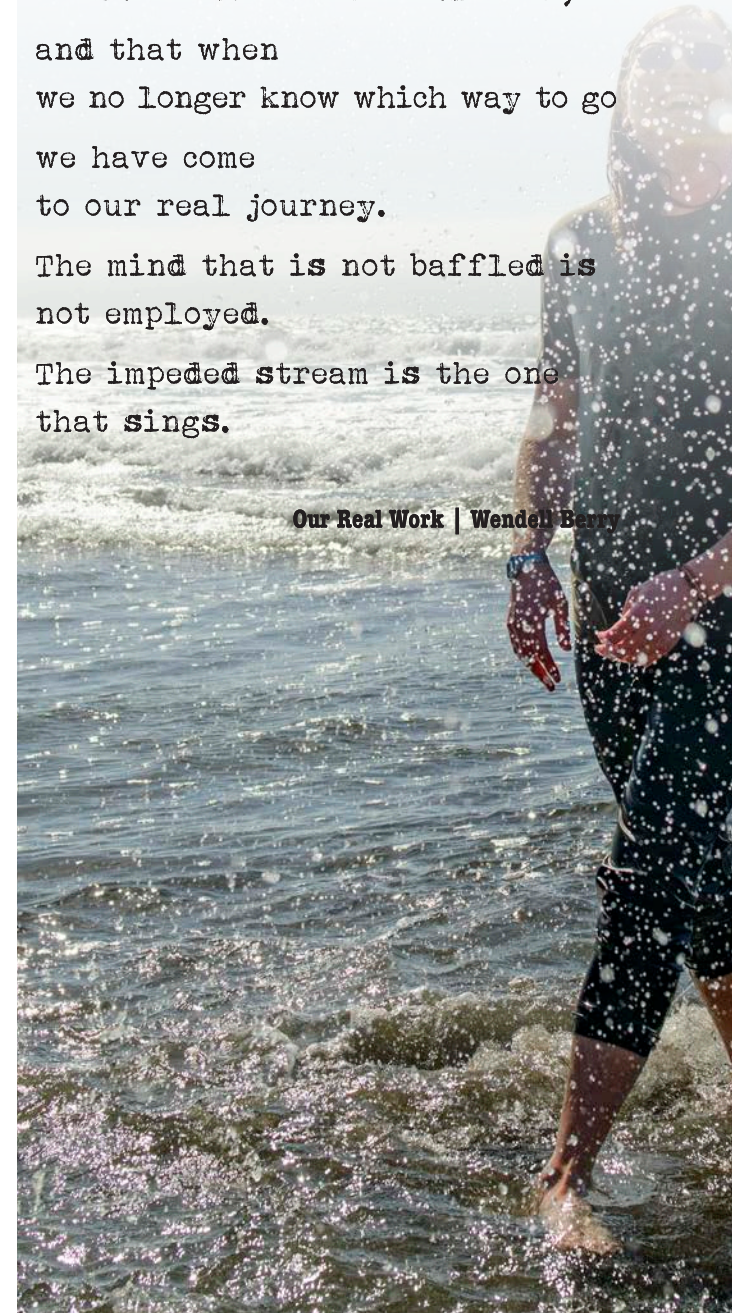
service to God, others, and the earth. This can look a lot of different ways, but in the ELCA we claim that all of us are ministers. Some individuals might specifically be called to professional ministry as a minister of word and sacrament (pastor) or minister of word and service (deacon), but all engage in ministry. The New Testament uses the Greek word diakonos to describe the act of serving or ministering.

It may be that when
we no longer know what to do
we have come to our real work,
and that when
we no longer know which way to go
we have come
to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is
not employed.

The impeded stream is the one
that sings.

Our Real Work | Wendell Berry





Discernment

Questions

What's stirring in you as you spend time in vocational reflection and discernment? Is there a particular question that is on your heart, mind or spirit related to vocation? Take note of those on the next page.

Here are some questions that might be helpful to journal about as you enter into reflective space for listening and discerning. One practice could be selecting a question each day(ish) to respond to in your journal. Notice patterns, themes, insights, places of flow, and/or resistance. If you're in a small group, bring those reflections to the group next time you meet.

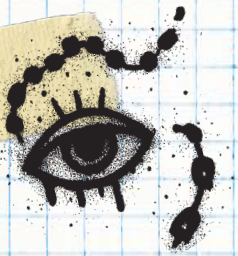
The following questions have been collected from sources including [NetVUE](#), [Conversation Cards](#), and [Practicing the Way](#)



follow up
with "why"?

1. How would you title this chapter in your life journey? Why?
2. What's something you regret quitting when you did, or something that you wish you had quit sooner? Why?
3. If you were asked to give a 15 minute presentation on anything, without any prep, what would you talk about? Why?
4. What is a current injustice that you feel strongly about? Why?
5. What are you currently curious about? Why?
6. What is a memorable piece of advice you received (was it helpful or terrible)? Why?
7. If you could have God respond to one question today, what would it be? Why?
8. What conditions seem to bring out your best self? Your worst self? Why?
9. What are you currently learning about yourself?
10. What was the last encouragement someone shared with you that had a meaningful impact? How?
11. If your future self could give you advice for this current season of your life, what might they say? Why?
12. Humans, too, are creatures of the Earth. How does the reminder that you are part of Earth's ecosystems shape your sense of identity and purpose?
13. What is happening in the wider world, and how are those events shaping your sense of purpose?
14. Where do you seek wisdom when things do not unfold as planned?
15. What is something you are being invited to pay attention to by someone or something outside yourself (God, the universe, other people)?
16. What is the difference between "making a living" and "making a life"? Do your needs for making a living impact your ability to make a life—or vice versa?
17. What gives you courage to step into an unknown future?
18. What quirk of your personality could help you make a meaningful contribution to God's world?
19. What was a difficult decision you have had to make? How did you decide what to do in that situation?
20. How does your background (such as your socioeconomic status or religious commitments) affect your decision-making?

I Notice...



I wonder...





Reflections

from fellow discerners

"It's beautiful to be part of a church that affirms that my calling as a boyfriend, as a brother, and as a neighbor are all just as holy as my calling as a seminarian and vicar. I often talk about vocation as an intersectional thing — my callings as a brother, a boyfriend, and a neighbor are all shaded by my intersectional identities as a white, cisgender, gay man in America. By thinking about vocation intersectionally, I'm able to see the unique ways that God has called me to different work." | Vicar Erik Nelson; Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis; Senior, Luther Seminary

These reflections come from students, candidates, and leaders in the ELCA, solicited by staff from the ELCA seminaries in the fall of 2025. After reading the quote, take some time to reflect on the questions below and ways another person's words might stir something in you related to your own discernment and callings.

What's your experience of feeling called to multiple things?

Is there a hierarchy of importance? A balance?

How do they all intersect in you?



"God's call on my life has emerged little-by-little, through doors that have opened and next steps that feel faithful. When I got back from my YAGM year, I worked as a fundraiser for the ELCA. I visited congregations and individuals all over the southeast, and that experience taught me that I love being with God's people in church settings. I wanted to learn more about the Bible and my faith, but I still was not convinced that I wanted to be ordained. I thought I might still be a teacher, just as a professor of religion or something. So I applied and was admitted to seminary before I entered the candidacy process, and it was only through that communal process of discernment that I finally internalized the external call to ministry that I had been hearing for much of my adult life." | Rev. Katie Elkin Ziehr; Campus Pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

God can call us in multiple ways - including through our passions and interests, through other people, through the needs of communities or creation, through hardship, etc.

Where else do you think a calling from God might come from?

What sources of calling have you experienced?

Do you find it easier to listen internally or externally as you reflect and discern your vocations? Why do you think that is?



"As a Hispanic woman, coming from an immigrant family, I have had to grow up knowing what it felt like to live behind closed doors. My parents faced oppression throughout their time living in the United States and I carried that suffering and fear with me. Since starting seminary at PLTS and becoming more involved at my home church, I felt like my call to ministry evolved. There were setbacks, insecurities and fear along the way that at times kept me from trusting what God was calling me to do. My story has shaped who I am as a person that stands up against oppression and has a strong sense of compassion for our world. I aspire to use the gifts that God has blessed me with to serve those around me. I aspire to use my story of growing up with a single mother and coming from an immigrant family to bring hope to those facing the same fears today. To bring the assurance of God's loving grace that will transform our battles as we surrender them to God." | Perla Flores, recent graduate of PLTS

"As a gay man, I can certainly say I've faced experiences where my call was questioned or challenged on the basis of my identity. One of the most effective ways I navigated that difficulty was through connection with other queer seminarians and mentorship from older gay and lesbian pastors. One important thing to remember when facing these roadblocks is that we never face them alone. There's an entire world of Holy Spirit-powered people who want to stand with us and support us. And as I'm thinking about how I live into my call in the future, I also hope that I will one day be the person that rising generations look to for support and mentorship. It feels very grounding and rewarding to know that I'm part of an unbroken chain of love and support." | Vicar Erik Nelson; Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis; Senior, Luther Seminary

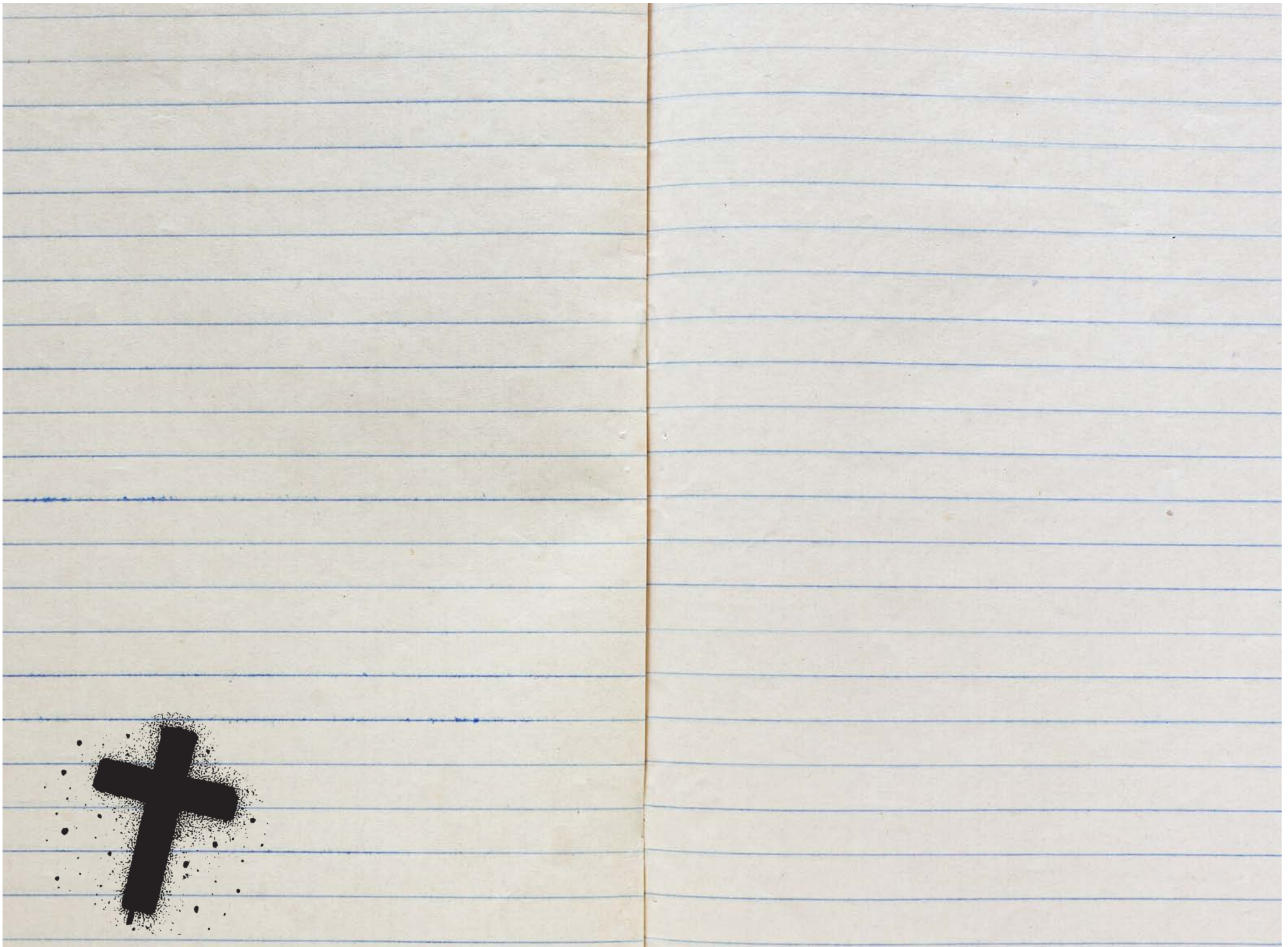
"I never felt like my vocation was completely denied but certainly challenged. I have felt some push back and lack of respect for being young and a woman. I have encountered a few people along the way who weren't very supportive of my role as a leader in ministry because I was "inexperienced." It was at times quite discouraging but I had to remain strong and faithful to who I was and why God called me. I had to trust that God's purpose for me in this world was to make a difference and that just like Jesus encountered push back, I would too. We are all created in the image of God and no person is worth more than another. No person is more acceptable than the other in the eyes of God, to speak God's word and truth. We are all called to preach the Good News and that is the greatest gift I hold." | Perla Flores, recent graduate of PLTS



**In what ways do your identities shape your discernment?
Have you experienced feeling oppressed or discriminated
against in the church?**

**What limitations have been placed on you? In what ways do
limitations encourage your development, and when do they
get in the way?**

**(Where) have you been able to find communities of support
and accountability?**



"It was in my job as the Program Director for ELCA Young Adult Ministry that I felt a call to seminary. I was convicted that the young adult community I was serving around the country was a REAL Christian community, a congregation, and that this community deserved educated and thoughtful spiritual leadership just like any other. I went to seminary to more deeply invest in my own academic theological knowledge and pastoral care skills so that I could serve this national "congregation" with confidence and integrity.

As the only young adult member of the Lutheran World Federation Staff, my theological education was not only an invaluable part of my personal spiritual formation, but it has also given me the confidence to speak up and even raise tension in conversations about church leadership and theology with Christian leaders of all ages and education levels from over 100 countries. Most importantly, though, theological education has given me language and tools to serve this global congregation of young people – to teach and to learn new theologies alongside them and to hold their joy and grief in a pastoral way." | Savanna Sullivan, Program Executive for Youth (Young Adults) at the Lutheran World Federation

"As an outdoor ministry professional I frequently find myself in various ministry contexts but have never felt a call to rostered ministry. Nevertheless, I have a deep love of learning coupled with persistent theological curiosity. I am pursuing a Master of Arts degree at Wartburg Theological Seminary in order to satisfy some of this curiosity and to engage with new perspectives on issues of faith, vocation, and life in Christian community. I fully believe that my seminary experience may raise more questions than answers, but such is the nature of the Spirit and discernment." | Bjørn Anderson, MA student at Wartburg Theological Seminary

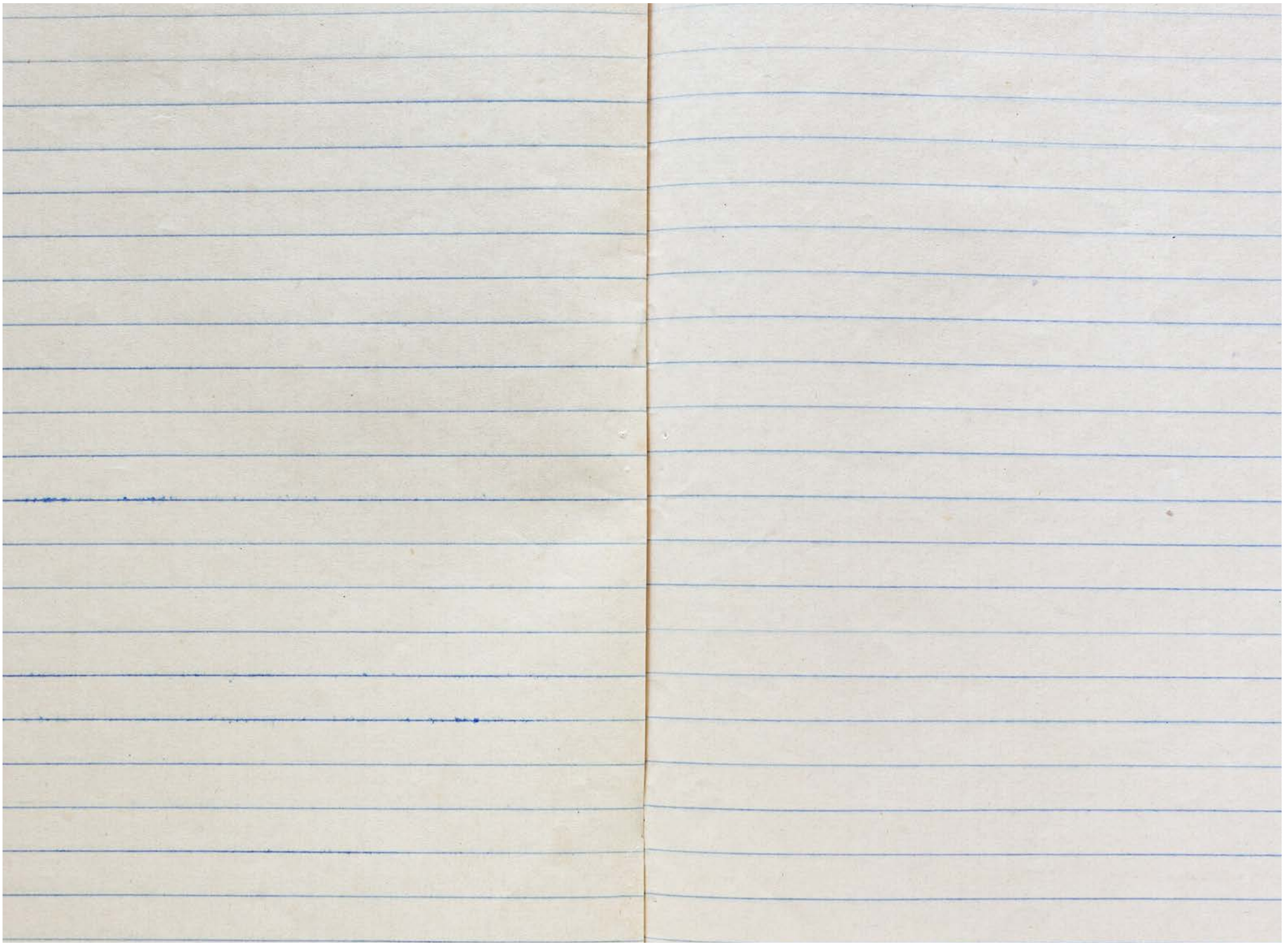
Have you ever thought about seminary/theological education? If so, what's at the root of that interest?

What are you curious about that you might want to explore in seminary?

How might theological education equip you with confidence and courage in your vocation?

How and whom might this education help you serve?





"My feeling of call has only deepened in my time in seminary. When I started, I was on the fence about whether I really wanted to do the whole process of candidacy and CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) and classes and internship, but as I dove deeper and leaned into the journey, I felt more and more confident in my call. I'm especially grateful for the opportunity to get off the seminary campus and actually do ministry as I was studying. This experience was very rewarding and really helpful in my discernment process." | Vicar Erik Nelson; Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis; Senior, Luther Seminary

"I definitely heard an external call before my internal one...Internally... I doubted that call. I thought I was not spiritually deep enough. I thought that I couldn't possibly write and deliver sermons on a regular basis. I thought that I needed to explore other vocations first. The candidacy process was crucial for me to embrace my inner sense of call. The interviews, essays, and mentors I received helped me begin to internalize the external call." | Rev. Katie Elkin Ziehr; Campus Pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

What do you feel "on the fence" about with regard to your own vocation?

What ministry have you engaged in that has been helpful for discernment? Or what might you want to "try" to facilitate your discernment?

Have you heard an internal or external call? Share a bit about that.

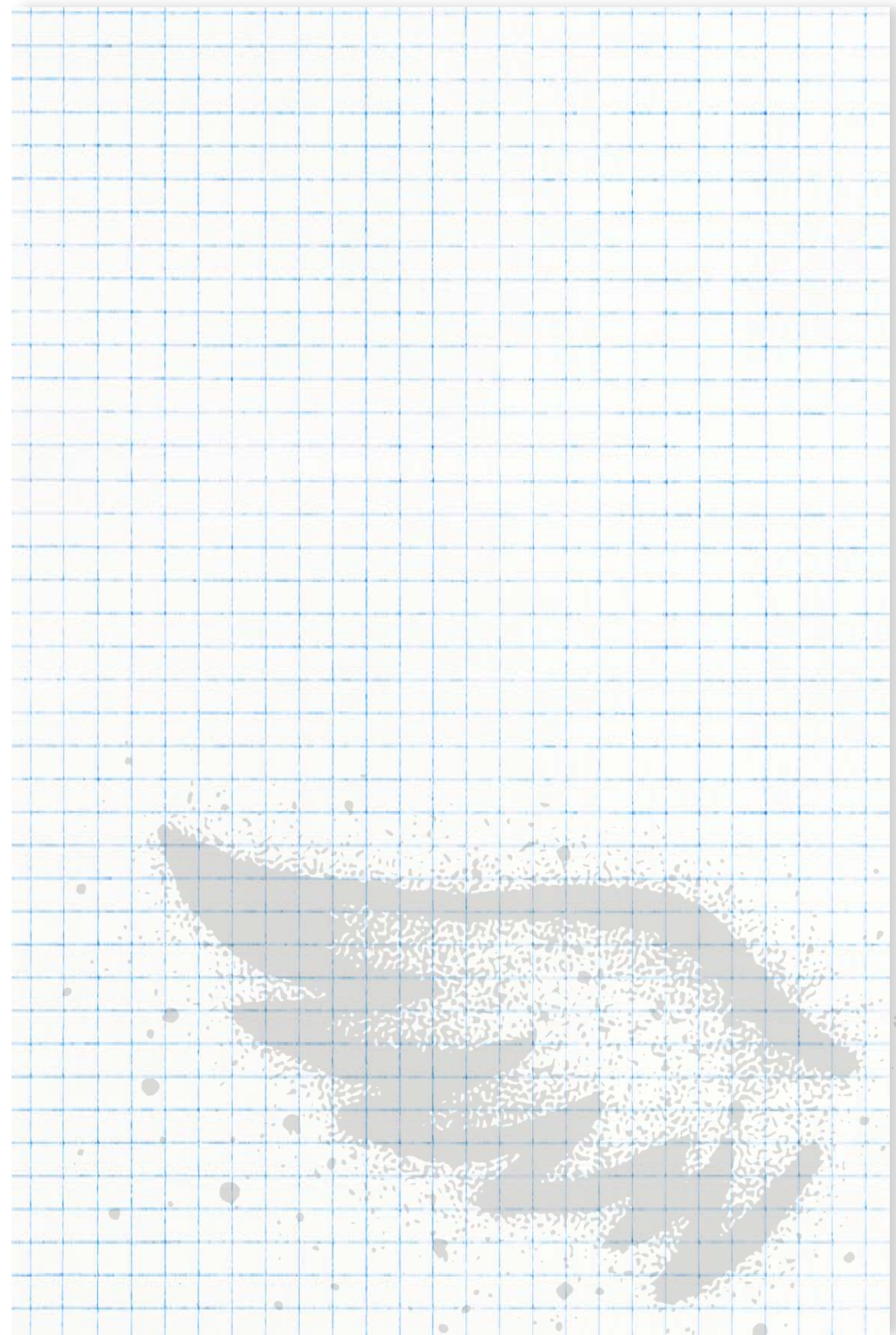
What would help you listen more deeply for both the internal and external call?



"As a queer climate scientist who grew up in the ELCA, I figured that after undergrad, I would work for NOAA and continue to be active in a church. However, this plan didn't feel like it encompassed my full views and beliefs around how interconnected faith and environment are. Despite many church people telling me otherwise, I knew I didn't want to be a pastor. These comments made me feel like my gifts and talents weren't seen, and that I was simply a young warm body that could fill a spot. It wasn't until I learned about deacons and the Climate Justice and Faith Concentration at PLTS that I felt fully seen, and a path forward honoring my vocational call to attend to community and environment (and connect the sacred in both) emerged. My vocation becomes more tangible with each course and conversation with other deacons and scientists, as well as with my experience doing chaplaincy." | Julia Rankin, Diaconal Student at PLTS in the Climate Justice and Faith Concentration

Have you had someone tell you what they thought you should do, but it didn't feel right to you? How did you respond?

Do you have multiple interests that at first might seem incompatible? Can others help you imagine how God might be calling you to use your many interests and gifts?



"There have been times when I've been in worship, seeing the pastor or priest consecrating the elements, and I felt like I had a spiritual hook in my chest, pulling me to that life of Word and Sacrament." | Vicar Erik Nelson; Mount Olive Lutheran Church, Minneapolis; Senior, Luther Seminary

Is there anything about Vicar Erik's experience that sounds similar to yours?

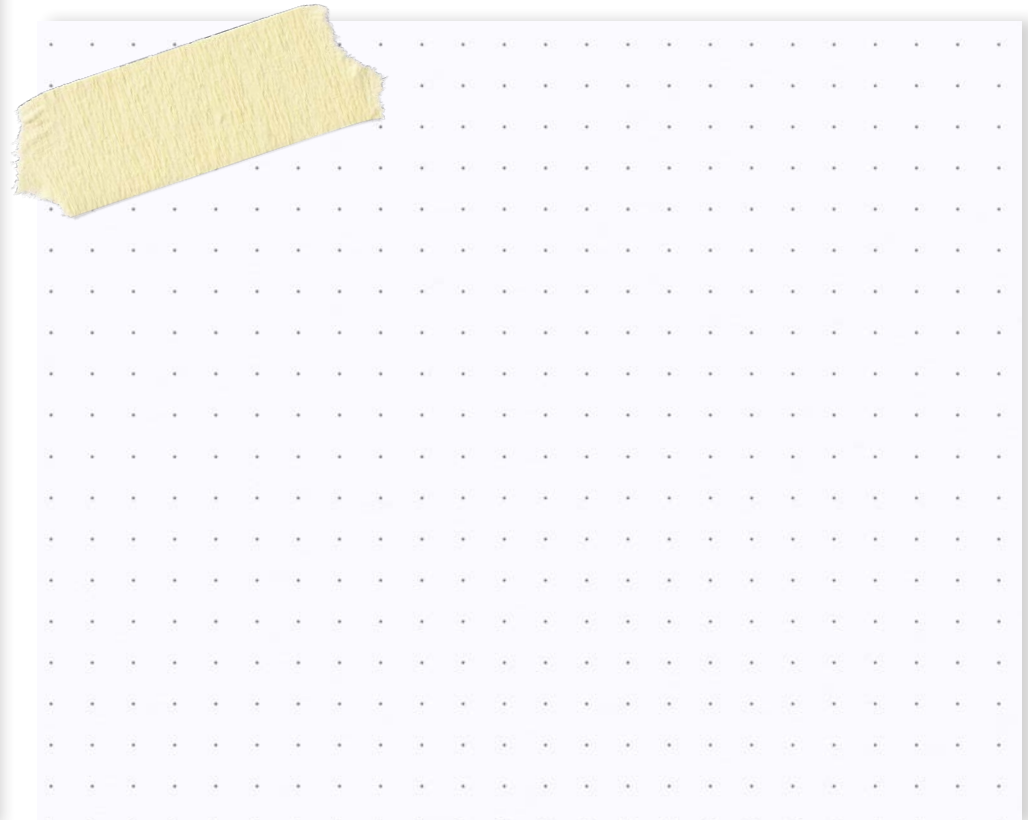
What has been the role of sacraments in your faith journey?



"Having only ever really been presented with one example of a pastor at that point—older, white, male—I didn't really see myself going to seminary. That changed when I served with the ELCA's Young Adults in Global Mission program in Palestine, where the experience of accompanying people living under occupation lit my heart on fire for the intersection of faith and justice. Now, I am eager to live out my call to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God as an ordained minister." | Lyndsay Monsen, MDiv Student at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and Candidate for Word and Sacrament Ministry in the Metro Chicago Synod

What examples of pastors did you witness growing up and how did that impact you?

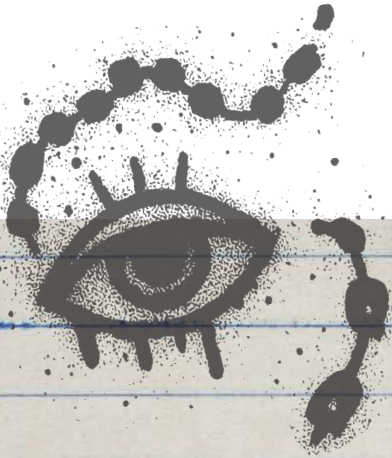
How do faith and justice connect for you?



"I felt and continue to feel a **sense** of call through prayer and **discernment**, working with a **spiritual director**. You cannot **serve** the **spiritual needs** of others when you yourself do not talk, trust, and live in God. I **lost** that in **seminary** and it **needs** to be the **most** important in **seminary**." | Pastor Wylie Cook, First Lutheran Church, Lynn, Massachusetts

**What are your ongoing spiritual practices?
How do you tend to and nurture your faith?**

**What does it mean to you to "talk, trust,
and live in God"?**



"When I began seminary, I was not convinced that ordained ministry was for me. During my time working for the ELCA, I found that I loved preaching, having one-on-one conversations with people about their faith, and teaching about my time in Madagascar. So I applied to seminary because I thought it would be a good idea to learn more than what I could find on the internet for preaching and teaching. Ordained ministry ended up becoming my vocation, so my theological education has really enriched that! But even before going the pastor route, I could sense that theological education would enrich my own faith and ability to follow God's call in any vocation." | Rev. Katie Elkin Ziehr; Campus Pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Are you drawn to further study through theological education? What do you hope to explore?

What do you see as the value of ongoing theological learning and study?

Spiritual Practices



Spiritual Practices: Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is also called the prayer of consent. In this practice you consent to God's presence and activity within you.

Facilitation Guide:

To begin:

We'll begin with a short prayer, followed by 5-10 minutes of silence, and ending with a closing prayer.

During the time of silence, you are invited to⁵ choose a sacred word (for example: grace, love, held, open, listen). This serves as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.

Sit comfortably and with your eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within you.

When you find yourself engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with your eyes closed for a couple of minutes. we'll close with a closing prayer.

The Practice:

Begin with an opening prayer (your own or below):

O God, grant me an undivided heart to love and serve you today with all of my heart, mind, strength and soul. Open my eyes to see you and serve you in the ordinary events of this day. May Love radiate through me.

Come, Holy Spirit, Come.

Ignite within me the living flame of Your love.

Open my heart to your love.

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.

[period of silence]

Closing Prayer (your own or below):

O God, Creator and Beloved Companion, you are the author of being and life. Inspire in me a spirit of devotion, service and praise, that I may give you glory in everything I think, feel, say and do, through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Take a moment to give thanks for whatever occurred during your prayer time. As you're ready, bring your attention back to this space.

Spiritual Practices: The Examen

This practice is rooted in Ignatian spirituality. It is a practice to help you become more aware and attentive of how life might be speaking to you by reviewing the day and week using a particular focus.

Facilitation Guide:

[For more examen resources click here.](#)

Encourage participants to practice this for 1 week at the end of each day, and notice recurring themes and listen for wisdom or invitation that arise.

Below are some additional paired questions you might use in lieu of "when did I feel most alive today/when did I feel most drained today?:"

What was today's high point?

What was today's low point?

When did I feel most free today?

When did I feel most bound up or anxious?

When today did I have the greatest sense of belonging to myself, to God, to the earth?

When today did I have the least sense of belonging to myself, to God, to the earth?

The Practice:

Begin by taking a few deep breaths
with closed eyes or a soft focus.

Look back over the course of the last day in your mind.

As you look back, which moment rises to the surface as you consider the question:

When did I feel most alive today?

Be present to the moment, savor it, and allow it to bring you life again.

Now look back and consider which moment rises to the surface as you consider the question:

When did I feel most drained?

Again, be present to the moment, allow yourself to feel any emotions that are there, maybe making space for letting go or healing, if needed.

Meditate or pray on these two moments.

Listen for wisdom or guidance or what these moments might be teaching you.

Jot down these 2 moments in a journal

include other reflections you experienced in meditation or prayer, if you would like.

Spiritual Practices: The Embodied Examen⁶

This version of the Examen prayer uses gentle arm movements to access the wisdom of the body, seeking to be present to the body's knowing.

Facilitation Guide:

This practice may be done sitting or standing. Encourage participants to center themselves by getting in touch with their body through deep breathing. Let them know that this is a practice meant for them to listen deeply to their body, and its messages.

The Practice:

Take a few deep breaths

Reaching both arms down

Become aware of your connection to the earth and feel its support beneath you. Ground your awareness and your body in the present moment. Continue to feel your breath. (1 min)

Reaching back behind you with right arm:

Looking back on the last few days, recall what was most life-giving for you? Where did you feel most filled with love? Hope? Take a few moments to experience this sensation in your body. (1 min)

Bring your right arm back along your side.

Reaching back behind you with left arm:

What in the last few days was most life-draining for you? When did you feel most restless in your body?

How does revisiting these moments feel for you in your body? Let yourself experience these feelings. If there is pain, or a need to offer or receive forgiveness, take a moment to offer these moments and experiences to God in prayer. (1 min)

Bring your left arm back along your side.

Reaching both arms forward:

How do you want to move forward? What are your hopes? How are you being invited to follow the Spirit now? (1.5 min)

Reaching both arms upward:

What guidance do you need to support you? Take a few moments in prayer to call on the Divine for this guidance. (1.5 min)

Reaching inward:

Bring your hands to prayer position or leave them open in a receiving posture. What did you notice stirring within you as you moved and prayed? What wisdom is your body sharing today? (1.5 min)

Take a moment to give thanks for whatever occurred during your practice, take a final deep breath or two, and then return to the immediate place, and people.

Spiritual Practices: Lectio Divina⁴

Lectio Divina, or holy reading is an ancient practice from the Christian tradition, dating from the early medieval era of prayerful study of Scripture in monasteries. Lectio Divina is a slow, quiet, and thoughtful encounter with Scripture. Reading and responding to the biblical passage three times provides time and space for God's Word to move from our lips, into our minds, and finally into our hearts. Based on the image of Jacob's ladder, a twelfth century Carthusian monk named Guigo II described four steps of Lectio Divina: lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation), oratio (prayer), and contemplatio (contemplation). Through these four steps, God's Word sinks deeper into our hearts and imagination.

Facilitator Guide for Group:

Facilitators may wish to use lectio with a Scripture passage or poem as an opening or closing prayer for the group's meeting. To begin:

Make yourself comfortable as you settle in for a time of quiet prayer. Breathe deeply to settle your body and your mind, becoming aware that you are in God's presence.

Listen to the first person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on the passage. What word or phrase speaks to your heart? When the group is invited to share, speak that word or phrase aloud.

Listen to the second person read the Scripture passage aloud, keeping in mind the word or phrase that first spoke to you. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase. When the group is invited to speak, share what this word or phrase means to you.

Listen to the third person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on how God may be calling you to act through the word or phrase that spoke to you. When the group is invited to speak, share how you feel God may be calling you to respond.

Close the practice of Lectio Divina with a prayer of thanksgiving for your encounter with God's Word.

The Practice:

Ask for three volunteers to read the Scripture passage. Invite the group into prayer with a few moments of silence.

Listen to God's Word for the first time.

Listen for a word or phrase that God will speak to us today. Reflect in silence.

Share aloud the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.

Listen to God's Word for the second time.

Reflect in silence on what God may be saying to us through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.

Share aloud what this word or phrase means to us.

We listen to God's Word for the third time.

Reflect in silence on how God may be calling us to act through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.

Share aloud how we feel God may be calling us to respond. We thank God in prayer.

Close with a prayer thanking God for this encounter with the Word. Alternatively, each participant may offer a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Spiritual Practices: Terra Divina

Terra Divina (divine earth) is designed for encountering our more-than-human neighbors and moving beyond a solely human focus.

Prayer Excursion Practice:

Take an excursion outdoors, as you are able. Some may walk, others may prefer other modalities of movement. Others may prefer to sit still. All approaches are ok for this practice.

Use all of your senses as you take in the earth around you. Attend to God's presence and activity. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Is there anything you are touching or feeling?

Offer prayer of gratitude for God's creation. Open your mind and heart to what God might be communicating as you experience the earth.

When finished, reflect on your experiences.

You can [click here for a more structured Terra Divina Facilitator Guide](#) from the BTS Center, [and click here for the Participant Guide](#).

Engaging Creation: A Guided Experience:

Take a few deep breaths

Read Job 12:7-10

[Job said:] "But ask the animals, and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you.

Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In God's hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being."

Reflect on this quote: "Every single creature is full of God and is a book about God. Every creature is a word of God." Meister Eckhart (1260-1329).

Go outside. Take a few moments to sit or stand quietly noting what captures your attention. Choose a creature or object in nature (a squirrel, a tree, a rock, a bird, a flower petal, etc) to focus on for 8-10 minutes.

Use one of these prompts for reflection in your journal:

- What does this creature or object from God's community say to you about life?
- What might God be trying to say to you through this creature or object?
- What does this creature or object say about who God is and what God might be like, since God created it?

Spiritual Practices: Visio Divina

Visio Divina (divine seeing) is a contemplative practice involving a picture, image, or icon. Similar to Lectio Divina, this practice is a way to slow down and attend to God's presence and action within us.

Facilitation Guide:

If you're doing this practice as a group and choose one image that the whole group uses for this practice make a copy for each person. You could also have a variety of images for participants to choose from.

The Christian Century magazine or Googling "images for Visio Divina" is very effective. You could even ask participants to choose one of the last 10 photos they've taken with their phone. Note that you risk participants becoming distracted by their phones if you take this option.

In many ways, it doesn't matter what image is chosen. The image serves as a 3rd thing for this practice.

If you have participants choose an image of their own, it may be helpful to give them a prompt. Here are some potential prompts to guide them:

- *Choose an image that speaks to you of calling or vocation*
- *Choose an image that speaks to you of listening to God*
- *Choose an image that calls to you when you think faith*
- *Choose an image that speaks to you of discernment*

[*Another example of Visio Divina can be found by clicking here.*](#)

The Practice:

Begin with some deep breathing. Allow yourself to fully enter the immediate place and moment.

Look at your image.

Let your eyes stay with the very first thing that captures your attention. For now, keep your attention on that part of the image. (1 minute)

Keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that one particular part of the image. (1 minute)

Now, let your eyes take in the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of the picture. See it all. Maybe turn your image around so you see it from a different perspective. Reflect on the image for a minute or so. (1 minute)

Be present to the image and allow it to speak to your heart, without any particular agenda. What emotions does the image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you? (1 minute)

If you were in the image, where would you place yourself? (30-60 seconds)

Do you get a glimpse of the sacred from this image? How might God be speaking to you in this image? Is there an invitation? Take a few minutes to sit quietly in prayer or to write a few reflections about this experience in your journal. (3 minutes)

Give thanks for whatever has occurred during this time of prayer and reflection.

When you're ready, bring your attention back to the immediate place, moment, and people around you.

Activities & Exercises: Mentor Exercise

Invite each person to take a few minutes and think about 3 people they admire. This can be someone they know, living or dead, fictional, someone famous. Have them write each name at the top of a piece of paper (one name per page).

In pairs, take 10 minutes and have one partner ask the other about why they listed each name, why they admire them (mostly listen!). While one person shares all their reasons, the other partner is taking detailed notes about what the partner is saying (on the paper with the name on it) - key phrases, attributes. If the partner runs out of things to say, dig deeper and ask questions. Over the course of the 10 minutes, make time to talk about each of the 3 people. Switch roles. (20 minutes total)

As a group - invite participants to share some of the words/phrases they heard their partner say about those they admire (They don't need to tell the group who the person they admire is, just what their partner admires). Then take a few minutes for each person to circle the recurring words/phrases that their partner said and write any themes they noticed. (5 minutes)

"We tend to pick our heroes because they reflect back to us the values and beliefs that are most important to who we want to be." - Andrea Scher (quoted in The Lightmaker's Manifesto).

Reflect on this quote. As you look at the notes your partner took and reflect on what you admire in others, does this ring true? How so? Take some time to journal and discuss your thoughts.

What we admire in others is often something that we are longing to develop within ourselves.

- How/where do you see that in this exercise?
- What might this reveal to you about your vocational callings?

Anchor/Bridge/Guide Exercise

This language of anchor, bridge, guide is from the book *How to Navigate Life: the New Science of Finding Your Way in School, Career, and Beyond* by Belle Liang, PhD and Timothy Klein, LCSW.⁷

Anchors:

- Companions, confidants, people who "get us," who ground us, people we do life with.
- Emotional support and sounding boards.
- Helpful when you have general questions about your options and want to explore.

Guides:

- Can move us forward, have been where we're heading, are those who can share strategic information.
- Can provide information, advice, and guidance.
- Helpful when you are deciding X or Y and need some specific guidance.

Bridges:

- Connect us to opportunities and resources, can help us access other relationships or resources, and their experiences can serve as a road map.
- Can provide access to opportunities and other people.
- Helpful when you need recommendations, referrals, and concrete steps to pursue your goals.

Activity:

Choose an anchor, bridge, and/or guide and have an intentional conversation about your own discernment. Create questions in advance. Set aside dedicated time. Consider the questions you have been engaging as part of your current vocational reflection.

Journal about your conversation, noticing themes, questions, and insights.

Activities & Exercises:

Venn Diagram of Vocations

Consider the many vocations within you.

Listen to them.

List them.

The list may include things like student, sibling, caretaker, community member, activist, artist, child, parent.

Make a circle for each calling

whose size corresponds to its current importance and place in your life, creating overlaps that make sense.

- What does each calling want of you?
- Which one(s) need your attention now? How do you know?
- In a Venn diagram of these callings, what names would you give the places where they overlap?

L. Roger Owens, Alban Weekly newsletter, 8/8/25, adapted

It can be hard to balance multiple vocations when we feel limited on time, energy, and/or resources.

- What's your experience of feeling called to multiple things?
- Is there a hierarchy of importance? A balance between the things?

References:

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- 2: Baglyos, P. Called to Lead: God's Call, Your Vocation. p. 8. https://vasynod.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Called_to_Lead-Discernment-Guide.pdf
- 3: Lewis, Williams, Baker. Another Way: Living & Leading Change on Purpose. (Missouri: Chalice Press, 2020.) P. 49.
- 5: This particular form of Lectio Divina is adapted from Laura Kelly Fanucci | © 2016 Collegeville Institute. <https://www.communitiesofcalling.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Lectio-Divina-Guide.pdf>
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- 6: Adapted from Christine Valters Paintner in Awakening the Creative Spirit by Betsey Beckman, Christine Valters Paintner
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the end is the beginning

we're never actually done

Hopefully you have had some insights and discoveries as you have spent time in reflection with these questions, reflections, spiritual practices, and activities. And you're not done. Discernment and reflection are ongoing and lifelong. We hope you have some new tools and questions that will support you both in this season and in other seasons of discernment. Blessings to you as you continue to listen and discern God's call - and prayers for courage as you respond.

Lord God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eric Milner-White | Daily Prayer, p. 14. Originally published: Oxford University Press, 1941. (Often called The Prayer of Good Courage)

not Grandma's discernment journal.
**no shade, Grandma. We love you, too.

