

(HOW)  
IS GOD  
CALLING  
?

the holy work of reflection and discernment

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# APPENDIX

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**Spiritual Practices • Activities & Exercises**  
**Poems & Blessings • Misc. Media**  
**Organizations & Resources**

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## Spiritual Practices: Bible Study Format

This is a basic **sample format** you can use with any biblical text. Adjust the "getting started" questions to tie into the themes of the particular call story or text you are using. The sample below is using 1 Samuel 3:1-10.

### Getting Started (choose 2 questions to respond to)

- Who is a "voice" in your life that you respect? Why?
- Share about a mentor who has been important for your faith.
- What is something you feel like God might be trying to communicate to you in this stage of your life?

### Opening Prayer

#### Read Scripture

As you listen to the scripture reading, think about these two questions: What do you notice? What do you wonder?

#### 1 Samuel 3:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

<sup>2</sup>At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; <sup>3</sup>the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup>Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" <sup>5</sup>and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup>The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup>The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup>Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

### Share Reflections & Discuss Text

Take a few moments of silence and pause. Re-read the text silently. Mark or take note of wonderings and noticings. After this pause, respond to "What do you notice? What do you wonder?" as a starting point for discussion.

### Discussion Questions

- Mentors can help us listen. Who is (or could be) a mentor in your life that can help you listen to God? Why might this be useful? What has a mentor helped you hear?
- What Samuel hears in this call is difficult and he knows it will hurt his mentor (more details on that further in the passage). Samuel responds faithfully (encouraged by Eli) and speaks the truth. Where have you been called to speak the truth? How did you discern that it was worth taking the risk?
- What voices (however you understand that) have been most influential in your life so far?
- Which of the common vocation themes do you notice in this text? (a sense of feeling unworthy/beyond capacity, callings are contextual, listening and attention as key factors, God provides what is needed, the calling requires response/consent)

### Call & Response

- What's a call you hear from this scripture passage?
- How might you respond to this call?
- How does this matter for your life of faith?

### Closing Prayer

## 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 to<sup>20</sup> 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 2 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 Examen<sup>21</sup>

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 your 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 your 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 a 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 Divina

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:<sup>22</sup>

*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: Lectio Divina Format

This is a basic **sample format** you can use with any biblical text.  
The sample below is using Exodus 3:1-12

### Getting Started

If you are practicing in a group, invite 3 people to read the text aloud, when prompted.

### Opening Prayer

### Moment of Silence

Prepare to listen to God's word

### The First Reading

As you listen to this first reading, pay attention to a word or phrase that speaks to your heart.

#### Exodus 3:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness and came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight and see why the bush is not burned up." <sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup> Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup> He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>

*The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup> Now go, I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup> He said, "I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."*

### Moment of Silence

### Sharing

Share the word or phrase that spoke to your heart without commentary.

### The Second Reading

As you listen this time, pay attention to what God might be saying to you through the word or phrase that spoke to your heart.

### Moment of Silence

### Sharing

Share aloud your reflections on what God might be saying to you through this word or phrase.

### The Third Reading

As you listen this time, pay attention to what God might be calling you to respond or to act through this word or phrase that spoke to your heart.

### Moment of Silence

### Sharing

Share aloud your reflections on how God might be calling you to respond or act through this scripture or phrase.

### Closing Prayer

## 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.**

## 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?

You can [click here for a more structured Terra Divina Facilitator Guide](#) from the BTS Center, [and click here for the Participant Guide](#).<sup>23</sup>

## 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 third 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.<sup>24</sup>

### 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?

## Prayers, Poems, Blessings with Vocational Themes

### Anthony, Dane | Right Here

Stop moving. Stand in  
one place – this place.  
Breathe slowly; in, then out. Repeat.  
Repeat again. Let your  
shoulders sink and relax. Unclench  
your jaw; slowly close your eyes.  
Listen for your heartbeat; really  
listen. Feel it pulse in  
your fingertips.  
Lessen expectations. Under-do all your  
efforts. Requisition the time  
for your soul  
to catch up. Lean  
into the wind; feel it  
like a tree and test the ground.  
Learn to trust the resilience.  
It would be treason  
to move quickly – left or right –  
from this place. It is alright to be exactly  
what you are, who you are, where you are.  
Right here, right now.

### Berry, Wendell | Our Real Work

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.

### Coffin, William Sloane | Benediction

May the Lord bless you  
and keep you.  
May God's face  
shine upon you and  
be gracious unto you.  
May God give you the grace  
never to sell yourself short;  
grace to risk something big  
for something good;  
grace to remember that the  
world is too dangerous  
for anything but truth and  
too small for anything but love.  
So, may God take your minds  
and think through them;  
may God take your lips  
and speak through them;  
may God take your hearts  
and set them on fire.  
May God look on you with joy  
and give you peace.  
Amen.

### de Chardin, Pierre Teilhard | Above All, Trust in the Slow Work of God

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.  
We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the  
end without delay.  
We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way to something  
unknown, something new.  
And yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through some stages of  
instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.  
And so I think it is with you;  
your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own  
good will)  
will make of you tomorrow.  
Only God could say what this new spirit  
gradually forming within you will be.  
Give Our Lord the benefit of believing  
that his hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

## Drake, Sir Francis (adapted; attributed via Desmond Tutu) | Disturb Us, O Lord

Disturb us, O Lord  
when we are too well-pleased with ourselves,  
when our dreams have come true because we dreamed  
too little,  
because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord  
when with the abundance of things we possess,  
we have lost our thirst for the water of life,  
when, having fallen in love with time,  
we have ceased to dream of eternity,  
and in our efforts to build a new earth,  
we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord,  
to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas  
where storms show Thy mastery,  
where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.  
In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our  
hopes  
and invited the brave to follow. Amen.

## Garnaas-Holmes, Steve | Listen

A voice said,  
"This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"  
—Luke 9.35

The command is not to believe,  
or even to remember,  
but to listen.

In stillness,  
apart from the screaming news,  
listen.

Let your fears and opinions  
sit quietly in the corner  
and talk amongst themselves;  
let them go; ignore them.

In silence, listen  
even if only to the sound  
of your own breathing, listen  
for the silence  
that is God,  
the cloud  
that is unknowing,  
the presence  
you can trust without feeling.

And if nothing comes to you,  
keep the silence.  
Honor the cloud.  
Keep listening.

## Harjo, Joy | Eagle Poem

To pray you open your whole self  
To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon  
To one whole voice that is you.  
And know there is more  
That you can't see, can't hear;  
Can't know except in moments  
Steadily growing, and in languages  
That aren't always sound but other  
Circles of motion.

Like eagle that Sunday morning  
Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky  
In wind, swept our hearts clean  
With sacred wings.  
We see you, see ourselves and know  
That we must take the utmost care  
And kindness in all things.

Breathe in, knowing we are made of  
All this, and breathe, knowing  
We are truly blessed because we  
Were born, and die soon within a  
True circle of motion,  
Like eagle rounding out the morning  
Inside us.

We pray that it will be done  
In beauty.  
In beauty.

## Hafiz | Now Is the Time

Now is the time to know  
That all that you do is sacred.

Now, why not consider  
A lasting truce with yourself and God.

Now is the time to understand  
That all your ideas of right and wrong  
Were just a child's training wheels  
To be laid aside  
When you finally live  
With veracity  
And love.

Hafiz is a divine envoy  
Whom the Beloved  
Has written a holy message upon.

My dear, please tell me,  
Why do you still  
Throw sticks at your heart  
And God?

What is it in that sweet voice inside  
That incites you to fear?

Now is the time for the world to know  
That every thought and action is sacred.

This is the time  
For you to compute the impossibility  
That there is anything  
But Grace.

Now is the season to know  
That everything you do  
Is sacred.

## Oliver, Mary | Praying

It doesn't have to be  
the blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot,  
or a few small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch

a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

## Ramsden, Lindi | Beatitudes for Justice Builders

Blessed are you who can question your own assumptions  
and listen with an open mind; you will receive new insights  
beyond your imagining.

Blessed are you who suffer the attacks of others to stand  
up for what is right; you will not be alone, for your courage  
will inspire others to rise.

Blessed are you who build friendships as well as justice;  
even when you lose an issue, you will have strengthened  
the foundation of your community.

Blessed are you who take delight in people; you will not be  
bored in meetings.

Blessed are you who agitate the placid waters of  
complacency; you will create waves in the inertia of  
privilege, and will know the thrill of riding the surf of  
change.

Blessed are you who lead with enthusiasm and confidence,  
resisting the temptation to shame the apathetic or self-  
absorbed; you will inspire curiosity and hope in others.

Blessed are you who play as well as work; you will have  
more fun, build more energy, and will draw the powers of  
the impish to your cause.

Blessed are you who ask for help in your role as leaders;  
you will find teachers at every turn, and your work will

remain interesting and alive.

Blessed are you who, when wrongfully attacked, find safe  
outlets for your righteous rage; your mind will be clear,  
your decisions strategic, and your progress will not be  
derailed by the backlash of the fearful.

Blessed are you who do not demonize your opponents;  
your eyes and your hearts will be open.

Blessed are you who sing and dance; you will find energy  
and joy to lift you on your journey.

Blessed are you who offer thanks and praise five-fold for  
every critique; your children will want to visit after they are  
grown, people will want to serve on your committees, and  
friends will be interested in your opinions.

Blessed are you who study the rhythms of history; you will  
have knowledge with which to shape the future.

Blessed are you who work in coalition rather than in  
principled isolation; you will meet great people, learn things  
you didn't realize you needed to know, and have partners for  
the journey when you are in the lead, or in need.

Blessed are you who volunteer to be secretary and take  
good minutes; your words will become history, and your  
efforts will move steadily forward rather than running absent-  
mindedly over thoroughly discussed ground.

Blessed are you who discover, train and encourage young  
leaders; you will see your work expand and grow beyond  
your own time and talent.

Blessed are you who can change your mind; you are still  
alive.

Blessed are you who will not let the perfect be the enemy of  
the good; you will see progress in your lifetime.

Blessed are you with an active spiritual life; you will find  
perspective and comfort in times of loss and betrayal, and  
will rise without cynicism to meet the challenges of a new  
day. Blessed are you who live from a place of gratitude; for  
you will know the meaning of Life.

## Richardson, Jan | Blessing of Courage

I cannot say where it lives,  
only that it comes  
to the heart  
that is open,  
to the heart  
that asks,  
to the heart  
that does not turn away.

It can take practice,  
days of tugging at what keeps us bound,  
seasons of pushing against  
what keeps our dreaming small.

When it arrives, it might surprise you  
by how quiet it is,  
how it moves with such grace  
for possessing  
such power.

But you will know it  
by the strength  
that rises from within you  
to meet it,  
by the release  
of the knot  
in the center of your chest  
that suddenly lets go.

You will recognize it  
by how still  
your fear becomes  
as it loosens its grip,  
perhaps never quite  
leaving you,  
but calmly turning  
into joy  
as you enter the life  
that is finally  
your own.

## Soelle, Dorothee | Dream Me, God

It's not you who should solve my problems, God,  
But I yours, God of the asylum-seekers.  
It's not you who should feed the hungry,  
But I who should protect your children  
From the terror of the banks and armies,  
It's not you who should make room for the refugees,  
But I who should receive you,  
Hardly hidden God of the desolate.

You dreamed me, God,  
Practicing walking upright  
And learning to kneel down,  
More beautiful than I am now,  
Happier than I dare to be,  
Freer than our country allows.

Don't stop dreaming me, God.  
I don't want to stop remembering  
That I am your tree,  
Planted by the streams  
of living water.

## Thurman, Howard | How Good It Is to Center Down

How good it is to center down!  
To sit quietly and see one's self pass by!  
The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic;  
Our spirits resound with clashings, with noisy silences,  
While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the  
still moment and the resting lull.

With full intensity we seek, ere the quiet passes, a fresh  
sense of order in our living;  
A direction, a strong sure purpose that will structure our  
confusion and bring meaning in our chaos.  
We look at ourselves in this waiting moment—the kinds of  
people we are.  
The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives?  
What are the motives that order our days?  
What is the end of our doings? Where are we trying to go?

As we listen, floating up through all the jangling echoes of  
our turbulence, there is a sound of another kind—  
A deeper note which only the stillness of the heart makes  
clear.

Our spirits refreshed, we move back into the traffic of our  
daily round  
With the peace of the Eternal in our step.  
How good it is to center down!

## Ungar, Lynn | The Path

Life, the saying goes, is a journey,  
and who could argue with that?

We've all experienced the surprising turns,  
the nearly-impassible swamp, the meadow  
of flowers that turned out not to be quite  
so blissful and benign as we first thought,  
the crest of the hill where the road  
smoothed out and sloped toward home.

Our job, we say, is to remain faithful  
to the path before us. Which is an assumption  
as common as it is absurd.  
Really? Look ahead. What do you see?  
If there is a path marked out in front of you  
it was almost certainly laid down for someone else.  
The path only unfolds behind us,  
our steps themselves laying down the road.  
You can look back and see the sign posts—  
the ones you followed and the ones you missed—  
but there are no markers for what lies ahead.  
You can tell the story of how  
you forded the stream or got lost  
on the short cut that wasn't,  
how you trekked your way to courage or a heart,  
but all of that comes after the fact.

There is no road ahead.  
There is only the walking,  
the tales we weave of our adventures,  
and the songs we sing  
to call our companions on.

## Untener, Ken | A Step Along the Way

*(Prayer composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw;  
drafted for a homily by Cardinal John Dearden, 1979)*

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.  
The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even  
beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the  
magnificent  
enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete,  
which is a way of  
saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said.

No prayer fully expresses our faith.

No confession brings perfection.

No pastoral visit brings wholeness.

No program accomplishes the Church's mission.

No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about.

We plant the seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold  
future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces far beyond our  
capabilities.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation  
in realizing that.

This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along  
the way, an

opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference  
between the master

builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not  
messiahs.

We are prophets of a future not our own.

## White, Rowan | Seeds Poem

An expression of faith

In life Herself

Is to sow seeds into dark soil

Not knowing what awaits.

Returning to the patience

Reverence

Grace

Humility

Practiced by our ancestors.

Who knew how to feed the hungers of time that call down  
the rains

With a simple song.

It is those kinds of people

Whose memory courses through my veins, like wild rivers.

Reminding me to wake up amidst the confusion

To do what must be done to feed the children.

To tuck vibrant seeds into fertile soil

And patiently tend the garden, back bent in service.

To those whose faces look up at us from the well-worn path  
we walk.

The garden that our ancestors left for us is beautiful.

May we water it well with our tears and our laughter, our  
stories, and our songs.

Today I choose to plant seeds of hope into the winds of an  
unknown future.

May we grow from this tiny seed of remembrance.

This intimate immensity.

Coming totally apart, emerging out of the hard shell  
of generations of protection and prayer; a seed coat  
tempered by love and loss, joy and pain.

Completely coming undone to reorient to this new form.

It's a New dawn.

The time to be those ancestors our grandchildren are  
waiting for is upon us.

What seeds are you sowing?

## Whyte, David | Start Close In

Start close in,  
don't take the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first  
thing  
close in,  
the step  
you don't want to take.

Start with  
the ground  
you know,  
the pale ground  
beneath your feet,  
your own  
way to begin  
the conversation.  
Start with your own  
question,  
give up on other  
people's questions,  
don't let them  
smother something  
simple.

To hear  
another's voice,  
follow  
your own voice,  
wait until  
that voice  
becomes an  
intimate  
private ear  
that can  
really listen  
to another.  
Start right now  
take a small step

you can call your own  
don't follow  
someone else's  
heroics, be humble  
and focused,  
start close in,  
don't mistake  
that other  
for your own.  
Start close in,  
don't take  
the second step  
or the third,  
start with the first  
thing  
close in,  
the step  
you don't want to take.

## Other Media, Organizations & Resources

### Vocation Related

[Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable](#) Luvvie Ajayi Jones (The value and calling to courage and how to speak up, even when it's challenging.)

[There's More to Life Than Being Happy](#)  
4 pillars of meaning - Emily Esfahani Smith  
(Having a meaningful life, beyond happiness.)

### Blogs/podcasts/articles

[The Summoned Self](#) by David Brooks <sup>25</sup>

[NetVUE \(Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education\)](#) blog has many searchable topics

- [Navigating Your Cultural Commute: A Scientist's Approach to Vocation](#)
- [Finding a Way When Vocation is Denied](#)

### NetVUE podcast

- [Vocations we don't choose](#) Deanna Thompson talks about her journey with cancer and other vocations we don't choose

### LGBTQIA+:

[Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries](#) and [Proclaim](#) organizes queer seminarians and rostered ministers, confronts barriers and systemic oppression, and activates queer ideas and movements within the Lutheran Church. Proclaim is a community for LGBTQIA+ seminarians and rostered leaders. Proclaim is a program of ELM.

[Reconciling Works](#) advocates for the acceptance, full participation, and liberation of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions within the Lutheran Church.

### Ministries of Diverse Cultures and Communities

This team works within the ELCA toward the goal of full partnership and participation of African Descent, American Indian and Alaska Native, Arab and Middle Eastern, Asian and Pacific Islander and Latino people in the life of this church. [Click here for an up to date list of ministry areas, leadership, and contact information.](#)

### ELCA Seminaries

[Click here for the ELCA Seminaries page](#) which will link you to all seven ELCA Seminary homepages where you can find out more about the various degree and non degree programs offered at each institution, seminary specific discernment events, how to visit each campus, financial-aid and scholarship information, and about any joint programs the cohort of seminaries are sponsoring together.

### ELCA Fund For Leaders Scholarship

If you're discerning Rostered Leadership in the ELCA learn more about the [ELCA Fund For Leaders scholarship](#).

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**Pastor Jen Rude** currently serves as the University Pastor at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, WA, where she finds joy and meaningful challenge in accompanying students, faculty, and staff in learning and discovery, engaging big enough questions, and listening together for God's call to imagine and practice ways of living that are more rooted in compassion, justice, meaning and purpose. Her other calls have included serving as the program director for Extraordinary Lutheran Ministries and as an Outreach Minister with The Night Ministry in Chicago. In 2007, Jen was extraordinarily ordained at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Chicago and served there as Associate Pastor. After policy change at the national level removed barriers for partnered LGBTQ clergy, Jen was received onto the ELCA roster in 2011. Jen has a Masters of Divinity from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, CA and a B.A. from Augustana University in Sioux Falls, SD. Outside of work, Jen enjoys walking and running in the neighborhood, podcasts and reading, decluttering, meals with friends, and living in beautiful Tacoma with her spouse Deb Derylak. | **author**



**Rev. Sam LaDue** serves in a call which combines campus ministry at Stanford University, where she pastors the only queer-affirming progressive Christian community on campus (affectionately known as the "Gay Jesus Group"), with year-round pastoral ministry at University Lutheran Church in Palo Alto, CA. She is a self-proclaimed "joy junkie," finding energy and beauty in creativity and communion. Prior to rostered ministry, Sam served as Director of Communications for San Francisco Night Ministry and as a communications and leadership development professional within a specialized sector of the hospitality industry. Her ministry background includes extensive work in liturgy and music direction in both Roman Catholic and Lutheran contexts. Sam received an MDiv from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and an MA in Practical Theology from the GTU, both in Berkeley, CA. She recently had the honor of serving as Artist-in-Residence and liturgist at Holden Village for Queer Renewal: Wilderness & Homecoming. When not pondering the universe and its complexities through mediums such as photography, glitter, and paint, Sam enjoys cycling, hiking, and life with her dog, Crispy. | **design** | [www.samrladue.com](http://www.samrladue.com)