



# Pick and Mix: A Vocation Planning Resource

Themed  
ideas for  
celebrating  
vocations

Flexible  
tools for you  
to pick and mix  
in discerning  
God's call

Build  
confidence  
for exploring  
vocations

The **Methodist** Church



# Introduction

The purpose of this resource is to help churches, circuits and districts be purposeful and strategic about developing vocations in small, achievable and accessible ways.

There are many small changes we can make, in all aspects of church life, to develop a celebratory culture of vocational exploration. All of this is connected to Our Calling, “to respond to the gospel of God’s love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission”.

The church in each place has a vocation and, as members who make up that church, we need to discern what is ours to be and do as part of church, gathered and scattered.

Church can be gathered (when we are all together in one place) or scattered (when we are in our homes, at work or school, during leisure activities). All church members have a vocation and for some that is church leadership.

We are all called to follow Jesus, this is the general call. When we respond to that call, we each embark on an individual journey, which we might term a vocation. How we work out this vocation is through discernment. This resource offers ideas which build confidence with the general call to be disciples of Jesus, and help us to identify distinctive vocations.

It might be that now is the time for your church to use this resource as a tool to help you respond to God’s calling. Even if you are already busy restructuring change around *A Methodist Way of Life*, or Mission Planning, it is the same church we see whatever lenses we use. The challenge from this resource is simply to include vocation within your conversations.

# Ignite Your Imagination

The ideas in these pages have all come from Methodist churches around the Connexion. They are shared here as an expression of being a connexional church.

This resource seeks to **ignite your imagination**, in your own context, whether in your local church, circuit or district, or as an individual. It seeks to encourage you to choose to make small but significant changes which create a culture that builds confidence to respond to God’s invitations.



A helpful illustration of this might be of a fish bowl – in order to keep fish healthy you must feed them, but you must also oxygenate the water. The environment the fish live in is as important as the food we feed them. **Small changes** can be made to reoxygenate the water, improve the environment, change the culture.

If you use ideas in this resource or are inspired to try other things as a result of what you’ve read, you may find it easier to speak of vocations in ways that are meaningful and accessible. In this way you will reoxygenate the water.

## Key for the themes

Each double page spread focuses on a **theme**; a few tried and tested ideas are offered for you to consider trying or adapting in your context. The colour of the hexagon will link the idea to its own theme.



You will also find **prompt questions**, as a reminder that people have different life experiences and that this may affect how they respond to vocational conversations. These prompts are not limited to the theme on the page where they have been placed. You may encounter someone who is vocationally damaged, possibly because they took a risk, tested a sense of call and it didn't lead to what they had hoped for. That person might still be wounded and could respond to conversations about vocation differently to someone who is Divinely Disquiet, and is clear that God is nudging them to something new.

You may choose to **use this resource in different ways**.

You might flick through, spot something, and give it a try.

If you use it as a leadership team, there are some facilitation and participation ideas at the end that you may be able to take inspiration from.

Hopefully, however you choose to use it, this resource will stimulate some small changes that bring a sense of celebration and confidence around developing vocations.

# Appreciation and Encouragement

If we are intentional about thanking people this builds confidence; when we thank people publicly it sends important messages, to others, that we value one another.

Commit to sending thank you cards to all committee members, officers, secretaries and volunteers.

Get to know one another and discover what each person enjoys doing. Invite people to consider putting the things they are good at to use in church life. For example, if they write poems they could write prayers.

During a communion service provide pitta bread, so that people can tear off and pass pieces to one another with a personal word of thanks for all they offer in the church community.

In small groups, or on pastoral visits, read Mark 10:46-52. Provide people with a box template and invite them to write on it their response to Jesus' question, 'What do you want me to do for you?' Fold the box so these personal answers are on the inside. On the outside encourage them to write other responses they are happy to talk about. Together consider what this conversation says about the person's sense of vocation.

Set up a small nominations committee. Ask them to spend a couple of months, at the start of the year, meeting one to one with people in elected positions and in key ministry roles discerning their sense of call for the next 18 months.

Are there groups of people who are not well represented in the life of your church? Are leadership roles generally held by one ethnic group or age group? Share your own story of calling with someone from an under-represented group, in whom you see gifts or skills you would like to nurture.

In established groups, invite people to talk in pairs about what they see as the gifts of the other. Then ask them to introduce one another, and the other's gifts, to the group. Hold a time of prayer thanking God for these.

**Who is vocationally shy?**

**How can we encourage them?**

# Holy Stories and God Talk

Scripture is the foundation stone of Wesleyan theology. The invitation on these pages is to theologically engage with the Bible through the lenses of calling, vocation and discernment.

In doing this we need to increase the confidence of all God's people to reflect and grapple with Scripture and theology as we all seek to intentionally discern our calling and vocation.

A summary of the *Ministry in The Methodist Church* report (2020) could be: Ministry begins with God, is always shared, is for the sake of the world, and mostly happens locally. How do you respond to this?

One might say that it was not the Moses of Egypt who was called to set God's people free, it was Moses of Midian. What do we learn about a church or individuals' vocations from this?

We often hear calling stories as 'called from or to something'. Where in our own calling stories do we see 'called alongside; called with; called as'? In small groups or worship, consider: "What do these different calling stories tell us about God's character?"

Read Luke 4. What do you notice? In this message we hear Jesus' manifesto – which he came to by spending 40 days in the wilderness. How would you summarise your church's vocational manifesto? What does that mean for your own vocational manifesto?

Read Mark 5:18-20.  
In this passage the man is told not to follow Jesus. What do we learn about appreciation and vocation from this?

If you are a church leader be clear that you don't have all the answers. Be honest about the parts of the Bible you struggle with.

Luke 17:21 says, "the kingdom of God is among you." What do we learn about prayer and vocation from this verse?

Treat a church or circuit leadership team as a discipleship group rather than as a set of meetings. Could you gather around a shared meal as you meet?

Put on theological reflection programmes in circuit (or advertise Learning Network events). When one circuit did this Glynis, a participant in her 70s, said, "Why has no one taught me this before?"

**Who is vocationally excited?**

**What can you learn from them?**

# Inclusive Church

We all desire to be welcoming churches open to all. And yet, sometimes, our communities are not as welcoming and inclusive as God calls them to be.

If we make our churches accessible and inclusive for one group, we often improve them for everyone. When the preacher in a wheelchair can get to the pulpit, the older preacher can too. When we facilitate meetings so children and young people can participate, we also make them more accessible to adults.

Are there barriers preventing people from exploring possible callings? How could you find out what these are? What can you do to remove these barriers?

How can you be intentional about giving people skills in church life that can be transferred to vocations and paid work outside of church? Perhaps a person was shown how to write church council minutes, this goes on their CV and they get a paid job in an office.

Encourage those with potential to 'come and see' so they can try out a role for a short period. This will help both the individual and the church see if it's a good fit.



“Vocation is not a possession, not something we ‘have’, so much as a gift from God into which we live across the ages of our lifespan”, Joyce Ann Mercer (p.177) *Calling All Years Good: Christian Vocation throughout Life’s Seasons*. Consider this.

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When you plan activities that focus on mission, invite church and non-church people onto the planning groups.

Support new leaders by pairing them with a mentor. This could be an experienced church leader with whom they can meet regularly for support and prayer.

**Who might be vocationally isolated?**

**How can we change that?**

# Prayer and Discernment

*Perichoresis* is a Greek word, which speaks to us of the relationship of a triune God – a dance of love in which we are invited to join.

We join in where we see God, and we see God where we notice the Fruit of the Spirit.

Therefore, prayer is at the heart of any developing vocations strategy, as we discern where we see God.

Give everyone in your church a copy of *This Time: This Place*. Inside this journal are a series of reflection questions to ponder: “What is my vocation here and now?”

Use the questions from *This Time: This Place* for a preaching series, or in small groups.

As well as thanksgiving and petition, prayer can be lament, outrage and activism. How are you enabling this?

Host a Bible study and ask people to think of a Biblical character they would like to invite for a meal. Why that person? What would you talk about? What would be your first question? What might they say to you? What, if anything, does this say to you about your sense of vocation?

Pray, in worship, for church leaders. Hold commissioning services for different groups within church life.

Include people's stories of vocation and calling in your prayer handbook or newsletter. Invite people whose stories are not often told; for example share the vocation stories of the gas engineer, or the housebound members.

As individuals, commit to praying for three people in particular. Share with them some of your discipleship story and experiences. Invite them to share with you.

Commit to praying together with two other people about your individual callings and that of your church.

**Who is vocationally outraged?**

**How can you resource these people?**

# Checks and Balances

Our explicit theology around vocation says that we are all part of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12).

In 1 Peter 2 we understand the “holy priesthood” to be all believers, and we believe in the Ministry of the (whole) People of God (Methodist Conference 1988).

Does our implicit theology match this explicit teaching?  
Do we practise what we preach?

Talk about different vocations: do we hold some in higher regard than others? Be honest. What actions can come from this honest conversation?

At your decision-making meetings, ask:  
“How are vocations celebrated here?”  
“Is mentoring offered to the next generation?”

At your decision-making meetings, ask of each policy you approve: “How does this policy enable calling to be explored and celebrated?”

Create space in policy and decision-making meetings for stories of discernment and vocation.

Consider having a vocations champion who could, for example, create energy about developing vocations, signpost discernment opportunities or host events.

When you invite someone to discern if a new role or opportunity is for them, also invite them to discern what they might be able to stop doing.

Actively identify potential future leaders in gathered or scattered church. Set aside time to meet with these people each month and just see where it goes.

What can you do to create a culture where people say, "I want to be a part of that"?

Study the call of Samuel in 1 Samuel 3. If the church community is Eli, what could you do to enable its members to recognise the voice of God? Who are the Samuels?

Who might be vocationally damaged?

What might enable healing and wholeness?

# Bigger Changes

If we refer back to the analogy of the fish tank, used in the Introduction, and the creation of a healthy environment, sometimes the process of reoxygenating the water just requires the shift from a plastic tree to a living plant.

At other times it is necessary to invest in a water filter.

Although most of the suggestions in this resource involve small changes, here are some bigger ones.

Consider having a 'market-place' or a 'living library' event. A space where people can gather and hear stories about one another's vocations in either a gathered or scattered church environment.

Be intentional about succession planning: Ministers and lay employees, invite people to spend the day with you and help them consider if this vocation, or another, is for them.

Preachers, invite someone out with you when you preach. Nurture their gifts and skills.

Have a preaching theme on vocations.

Hold a synod or circuit meeting with a vocations theme.

Start an intern programme where you nurture the vocations of young adults.

Is there a fund to support people exploring vocation in accessing retreats?

Have one month a year when all committees don't meet and instead have a month of prayer.

If you have a Directory, which roles are at the front? Which posts are not listed at all? What are you saying explicitly or implicitly in this?

Host a circuit or district series for people to 'come away' to explore their vocations. Alternatively see what the Learning Network is offering and promote it well.

Do you celebrate Vocations Sunday? What are you saying explicitly and implicitly in this?

**Who is Divinely Disquiet?**

**How can you offer them opportunities to take some risks and try things out?**

# Facilitation and Participation

- Use the Snowball Consensus activity (page 45 of the Voice Activated resource) to decide which of the challenges you want to try [www.methodist.org.uk/media/5771/voice-activated-whole-document.pdf](http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/5771/voice-activated-whole-document.pdf)
- Individually, pick two ideas from each section that you think will make the most impact in your context.
  - In pairs, share your selections and reach consensus on two ideas under each heading.
  - Meet with another pair and reach consensus on two ideas under each heading.
  - As a group of four, share your ideas with the whole group.
  - Have an open conversation to decide which challenges you will try.
- Questions to help you move from ideas to action.
  - Why have you never done these actions before?
  - What barriers have prevented you before today?
  - What problems do you anticipate now?
  - Is this a serious commitment on the part of your church or project?
  - Are you willing and able to give the time and resources needed to see this through?
  - How will you involve the whole church community in this?
  - Do you need to hear the experiences of others as a next step?
  - What skills, experience, knowledge and expertise do others bring?
- To whom will you delegate each action?
- Do you need to allocate any funds to any of this?
- At the end of 12 months, review each challenge. Has anything changed? Do you want to maintain any of these new practices? Do you want to stop any of these new practices? Do you want to try any other ones as well or instead?
- Kick start these conversations (above) using the 'Angels' activity from *The Healthy Churches' Handbook*. Print lots of images of angels and invite people to choose the one they think best depicts this church. Facilitate open conversation about why these images were chosen. Repeat, but this time ask each person to choose the angel which depicts how they think God wants this church to be.

## Who could be involved in conversations about developing vocations?

When during **worship and preaching**, and **pastoral conversations** there is an energy and confidence to celebrate God's invitation to us to participate, we see transformations.

- In Local Preacher and Worship Leader meetings, and Pastoral Committees hold conversations about calling, vocation and discernment.
- Hear one another's current testimonies of vocation.
- Use this resource, or the others below, to stimulate conversation.

In a number of the churches who are intentional about developing vocations, the business meetings are also places of prayer, Bible study, theological conversation and encouragement.

In the churches where new leaders emerge, there is a commitment to actively supporting adult small groups and children's and youth groups.

## Other resources

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*Called To Be...* postcards

*This Time: This Place* vocation journal

*The Work of God in this Place*

### Methodist websites:

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### Books

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Flexible tools for you to pick and mix in discerning God's call

Build confidence for exploring vocations

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What might enable healing and wholeness?

# Bigger Changes

If we refer back to the analogy of the fish tank, used in the Introduction, and the creation of a healthy environment, sometimes the process of reoxygenating the water just requires the shift from a plastic tree to a living plant. At other times it is necessary to invest in a water filter. Although most of the suggestions in this resource involve small changes, here are some bigger ones.

Consider having a 'market-place' or a 'living library' event. A space where people can gather and hear stories about one another's vocations in either a gathered or scattered church environment.

Be intentional about succession planning: Ministers and lay employees, invite people to spend the day with you and help them consider if this vocation, or another, is for them. Preachers, invite someone out with you when you preach. Nurture their gifts and skills.

Have a preaching theme on vocations.

Hold a synod or circuit meeting with a vocations theme.

Start an intern programme where you nurture the vocations of young adults.

Is there a fund to support people exploring vocation in accessing retreats?

Have one month a year when all committees don't meet and instead have a month of prayer.

If you have a Directory, which roles are at the front? Which posts are not listed at all? What are you saying explicitly or implicitly in this?

Do you celebrate Vocations Sunday? What are you saying explicitly and implicitly in this?

Host a circuit or district series for people to 'come away' to explore their vocations. Alternatively see what the Learning Network is offering and promote it well.

Who is Divinely Disquiet?

How can you offer them opportunities to take some risks and try things out?