
Calling

April 2024



Unity Church-Unitarian Spiritual Practice Packet



Calling

What is your calling in life? And what does it mean to be “called” to one thing and not another? It’s no coincidence that the theme for the month of April is “Calling” as Unity Church embarks upon the process of calling their next senior minister. Yet the language of calling is not one that is familiar to many outside the religious and spiritual setting. In the secular world, you interview an applicant and you either hire them or you don’t. Employers generally don’t ask “why are you called to this job at this time?” Answering the call to ministry in general, and to a church in particular, is more often associated with religious institutions.

Likely, the roots of this in Western culture go back to several biblical stories. Young Samuel kept hearing God’s voice, thinking it was his mentor Eli calling him out of a deep sleep. Finally, Eli realizes that Samuel is being called by the divine and tells him to say, “Speak, for your servant is listening,” (1 Samuel 3). After an earthquake and fire and wind, the prophet Elijah hears God’s voice in the form of a still, small voice, (1 Kings 19: 12-12). And of course, we can’t forget Moses, hearing the voice of Yahweh who tells him he should do exactly what he doesn’t want to do—go back to Egypt and set the Hebrew people free. So for those who have a relationship with God, there are texts to support the idea of being “divinely called.”

In our faith tradition, we interpret the word “calling” to be a strong inner impulse towards a particular course of action. It is a pull toward something that you may not be sure you are qualified to do but need to explore anyway. Usually, it is an insistent conviction that doesn’t easily go away. With discernment and engaging in one’s own spiritual reflection and practice, the calling becomes clearer. What emerges is the sense, “this is what I was meant to be and to do with my life.” Listening to that voice inside can also help discern what it is you’re not supposed to do. It is a practice of discernment; of listening deeply to what is stirring and moving inside of you—and then asking a trusted mentor, minister, spiritual advisor to help you discern what is or isn’t right for you. Are you called to be a parent? A teacher? A woodworker? An artist? A calling doesn’t always have to mean your full-time vocation. Building on last month’s theme of creativity, you may explore a calling to be creative, to expand your horizons, to deepen in your spiritual practice, to be more present for loved ones who need you. Part of being called is an awareness that the world’s needs are tugging at your sleeve.

Presbyterian minister and writer Frederic Buechner has written extensively about calling, “the kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work that you need most to do and that the world most needs to have done. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and world’s deep hunger meet.”

This is why we often consider ministry a calling instead of a job. Yes, there are office hours and meetings, budgets and vacation days. Yes, there’s health insurance and retirement funds to support. But there’s also the phone call that comes and you need to respond with your whole heart and presence. And there’s the grieving for a beloved church member that must be done in private, in order to be able to show up for others. There’s the countless conversations and ministry done that the minister shouldn’t get credit for, because it’s the people’s work after all. To be called to a ministry and to a congregation is not an office job and it’s not a marriage. It’s a vocational choice—to love, to serve and help a congregation live into its own

values, mission and ends. It's never all about the minister. It's about the congregation's own sense of calling to who they are and who they wish to become. When a congregation experiences their own sense of calling, they live out Buechner's wisdom. They discover the place where their deepest gladness and world's deepest hunger meet." And may the church say, "Amen."

Rev. Kathleen Rolenz on behalf of this month's theme team: Rev. Lara Cowtan, Rev. KP Hong, Rev. Tom Duke, Nelson Moroukian, Rev. Andrea LaSonde Anastos



"Lifelines" by Andrea La Sonde Anastos
Calling is as much a part of our being as the lines in our hands.

Spiritual Practices

Option A

Circles of Calling

It can be easier sometimes to discern someone else's calling—especially when they have been practicing it for many years, or when the world has noticed some huge project they have accomplished.

Wangari Maathai started the work that led to a Nobel Peace Prize by planting a single tree.

Choose a large piece of paper (18" square or larger). You can use old wrapping paper, newsprint, kraft paper, anything with one plain side. This exercise is intended to last the whole month or longer; it is not anticipated that it will be 'finished' in a day.

In the center of the paper, write your name. In a circle around your name, begin to list things you do repeatedly, such as weed my garden, help with Wellspring Wednesday meals, sing in a choir, write cards to shut-ins, put out seeds for birds. These can be large 'doings' or very small ones, but things that happen with regularity.

As you sit quietly with your paper, begin to notice one activity that leads to another. You might notice that writing cards to shut-ins inspires you to write Get Out the Vote postcards. Or you might notice that you are scattering your left-over seeds from your garden in an empty patch of dirt in your neighborhood. Another circle will begin to form around the first. Not everything in the first circle will necessarily 'grow' into the next circle.

As the days pass you may begin to discern a pattern to the choices you make, the work you do, the relationships you nurture. Perhaps 'a calling' seems too big a concept, but you will begin to see what invitations come to you in myriad forms. You may notice that feeding people (physically, mentally, spiritually) is a through thread in your life. You may find yourself creating beauty in hundreds of ways (arranging flowers, painting walls, mending, gardening).

Continue to add circles (and paper, as you need) and pay attention to the pull within to what evokes your "Yes" to life. Listen. Your call is singing your melody.

Option B

What Is Your Practice?

Reflect on your primary spiritual practice, whether it is meditation, time in nature, gratitude, parenting, caretaking, justice work, or something else. How does your calling intersect with your practice? Has this month's theme changed or enriched your practice? Bring your insights to Chalice Circle.

Option C

Finding Your Calling

It can be challenging to discern or gain clarity about calling. Author Stephen Cope suggests three areas to look for it:

- What is it in your life that is most lighting you up? What fascinates you?
- What do you feel is your deepest internally-imposed duty in your life? What is it that if you do not do it in this life you will feel a profound sense of self-betrayal?
- What are the difficulties you are facing in your life and in the world? Is it your calling to embrace these difficulties?

Cope advises that naming these is powerful. He also notes the importance of prayer, meditation, or connection with Spirit.

In reflection, writing, or conversation, explore these questions. Do they point to your true calling? Is it clear to you? Come to your Chalice Circle ready to share something of the story of your calling. What has it been like to discern your calling? How has it shaped your life?

Option D

A Call to Peacefulness

Have you found your calling? Do you feel pressured to find one or disappointed that you haven't? Is your calling no longer fulfilling to you? Is it OK to change your calling? Maybe you have followed all the good advice about finding your calling but are still searching for a calling, a new calling, or another calling. If so, you may be feeling undue pressure or stress. Thich Nhat Hanh, in "Calming, Smiling, Present Moment, Wonderful Moment" from *Being Peace* calls us back to peacefulness, a practice that will relieve your stress and may just help you in your discovery work around calling. He says:

I would like to offer one short poem you can recite from time to time, while breathing and smiling.

Breathing in, I calm my body.

Breathing out, I smile.

Dwelling in the present moment

I know this is a wonderful moment.

"Breathing in, I calm my body." This line is like drinking a glass of ice water-you feel the cold, the freshness, permeate your body. When I breathe in and recite this line, I actually feel the breathing calming my body, calming my mind.

"Breathing out, I smile." You know the effect of a smile. A smile can relax hundreds of muscles in your face, and relax your nervous system. A smile makes you master of yourself. That is why the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas are always smiling. When you smile, you realize the wonder of the smile.

"Dwelling in the present moment." While I sit here, I don't think of somewhere else, of the future or the past. I sit here, and I know where I am. This is very important. We tend to be alive in the

future, not now. We say, “Wait until I finish school and get my Ph.D. degree, and then I will be really alive.” When we have it, and it’s not easy to get, we say to ourselves, “I have to wait until I have a job in order to be really alive.” And then after the job, a car. After the car, a house. We are not capable of being alive in the present moment. We tend to postpone being alive to the future, the distant future, we don’t know when. Now is not the moment to be alive. We may never be alive at all in our entire life. Therefore the technique, if we have to speak of a technique, is to be in the present moment, to be aware that we are here and now, and the only moment to be alive is the present moment.

“I know this is a wonderful moment.” This is the only moment that is real. To be here and now, and enjoy the present moment is our most wonderful task. I hope you will try it.

Option E

“Discover Your Calling” (Excerpt)

Barb Leonard and Mary Jo Kreitzer

University of Minnesota, Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing

Your calling is as simple as $G + P + V = P$ (gifts + passions + values = purpose).

For some people, work is simply a job, a source of income, perhaps even a source of stimulation and reward, but unrelated to their broader purpose. For other people, their job or career is closely interwoven with their life purpose—it is a vocation, perhaps rooted in the notion of service. As described by Frederick Buechner, “Vocation is where our greatest passion meets the world’s greatest need.”

Your calling may not necessarily be your job—it may be a hobby, raising a family, charity work, or a way of relating to and helping others—but as purpose often extends broadly into all aspects of life, it will likely engage with your work as well.

For those who want to integrate career with life purpose, it is not enough to simply long for more meaningful work. As Nicholas Weiler argues in *Your Soul at Work*, you need to clearly define what you are looking for and then persistently seek it. As he says, “Fulfilling careers seldom happen by chance. People who find personally meaningful vocations do so because they assume responsibility for their journeys.”

This doesn’t mean you need to run out and switch careers. Pursuing meaningful work may simply mean integrating your gifts and passions into the job you do have—for example, volunteering to organize an office recycling program or charity drive.

What are your gifts?

Ask yourself these two questions:

What am I good at?

What do I love to do?

Your gifts will arise in the responses that answer both questions—after all, you probably have a long list of things you’re good at, but don’t enjoy doing. A true gift is something you can give back to the world with ease and pleasure.

What are your passions?

Your calling will engage both your mind and your heart—your natural gifts and the issues you care about most. Your passions will reveal where you want to direct your energy and guide your goals.

Ask yourself:

What do I care about most in the world?

Whom do I want to help the most?

When do I feel most engaged with what I am doing?

How would I use a gift of a million dollars if it had to be given away?

When your life and work decisions are based on your gifts and passions, the power of purpose emerges, bringing alignment, energy, flow, and aliveness.

<https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/discover-your-calling>

IKIGAI

A Japanese concept meaning 'a reason for being'

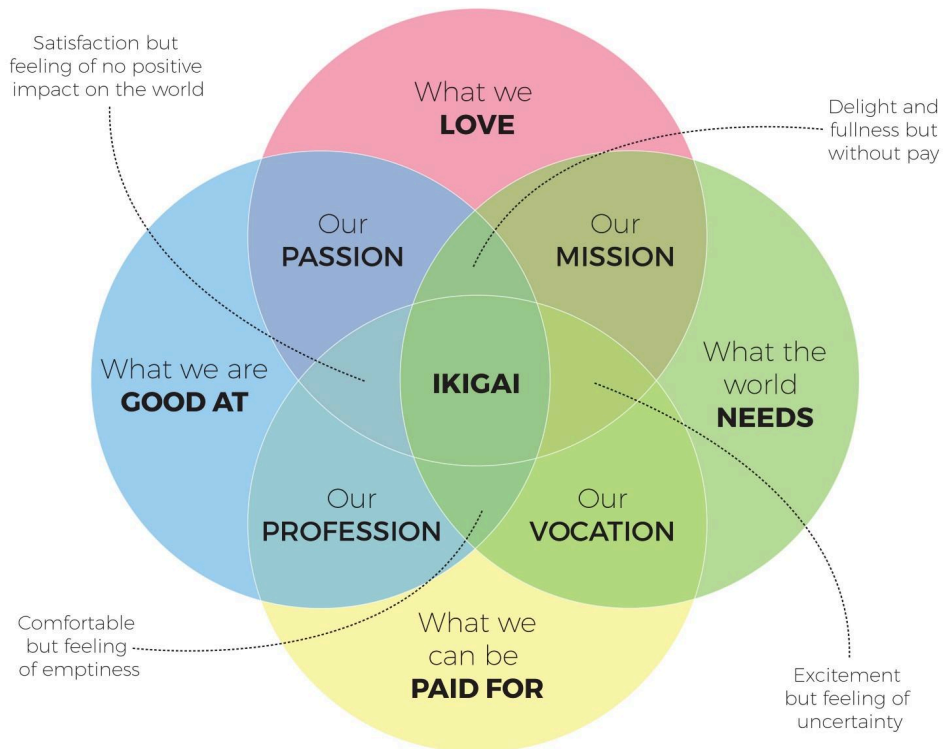


Photo by Max Vertsanov on Unsplash

Questions to Ponder

Read through the questions below and notice which ones resonate with you. One or more of the questions might seem particularly compelling—or some might stir resistance in you. Either of these reactions might make the question fruitful to consider. Choose just one and take time to consider it, over several days if possible. Write it down on a piece of paper you carry in your pocket. Or take a picture of that paper with your phone. Or record it in your journal—and spend some time, each day if you can, reflecting on it in writing or otherwise, noticing where it leads you and what you learn from it, and your response to it.

Questions

1. A calling isn't always for a vocation or an action; sometimes we are called to be. What have you been called to be in your life?
2. Does the idea of calling resonate with you?
3. Is there a calling you feel is primary in your life? What is it? Or, have you experienced many callings?
4. How are you living your calling? What, if anything, has your employment to do with your calling?
5. How did you discern your calling? How did it come to you?
6. Has your calling changed over time? How?
7. What gifts do you have for your calling? Who has nurtured them? What gifts have you nurtured in others?
8. Have exemplars with kindred callings inspired you?
9. What have you done to support your calling? What in your life does not support or even works against your calling? What have you let go of for the sake of your calling?
10. Have you ever let go of a calling in order to make room for a new one?
11. Have you followed a calling despite a lack of recognition in the world? Have you ever neglected or denied a calling, or tried to follow a calling that was not yours?
12. Has your calling been formed by experiences of injustice, or the needs of the world?
13. How do you balance your calling with the rest of your life? Or, how do you live more than one calling?
14. What does your faith have to do with your calling?

What is your question? Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't name what life is asking of you now, spend the month listening to your heart to hear what your question is.



Inspiration

Recommended Resources

For Personal Exploration & Reflection

Here you will find a variety of resources to help you take a deeper dive into the worship theme. These offer you several ways to engage with the theme that invite you to consider it thoughtfully, to inspire thinking, and open you to new insights. They are optional. As you browse the packet, consider trying out several that hold meaning for you and, possibly, one or two that may feel challenging.

Word Definitions

Calling. noun

1. A strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action especially when accompanied by conviction of divine influence.
2. The vocation or profession in which one customarily engages.

Synonyms: profession, career, life's work, mission, trade vocation.

From Merriam Webster and Collins dictionaries online.

Wise Words

“Beyond traditional understandings of vocation as a static noun, something we receive once in our life, the prepositions of calling open up callings as multiple, dynamic, and changing over time.”

—Kathleen A. Cahalan

“When consciousness is strong enough to undertake the task of submission to and honest dialogue with the soul, then one will experience healing, and know the difference between job and calling, between career and vocation.”

—James Hollis, from *Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life*, Gotham Books

“Yet you shall not deplore having known blindness, nor regret having been deaf. For in that day you shall know the hidden purposes in all things. And you shall bless darkness as you would bless light.”

—Khalil Gibran

“Our deepest calling is to grow into our own authentic self-hood, whether or not it conforms to some image of who we ought to be. As we do so, we will not only find the joy that every human being seeks—we will also find our path of authentic service in the world.”

—Parker J. Palmer

“Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

—Howard Thurman

“Becoming a parent may happen on purpose or by accident, but however it comes about, parenting itself is a calling. It calls us to recreate our world every day, to meet it freshly in every moment. Such a calling is in actuality nothing less than a rigorous spiritual discipline—a quest to realize our truest, deepest nature as a human being. The very fact that we are a parent is continually asking us to find and express what is most nourishing, most loving, most wise and caring in ourselves, to be, as much as we can, our best selves.”

—Myla Kabat-Zinn, Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Everyday Blessings*

“It is such a relief and joy to find the calling that expresses and incarnates your spirit. When you find that you are doing what you love, what you were brought here to do, it makes for a rich and contented life. You have come into rhythm with your longing. Your work and action emerge naturally; you don't have to force yourself. Your energy is immediate.

Your passion is clear and creative. A new calling can open the door into the house of vision and belonging. You feel at home in your life, heart and hearth are one.”

—John O’Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*

“I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not ended.”

—Nelson Mandela

“I refused to allow those who did not see my beauty to deter me from becoming the woman God was calling me to be. I ignored the names that limited my call. I answered to the names that affirmed my call. It is not what they call you that matters, it is what you answer to.”

—Rev. Yvonne Delk, first Black woman ordained to the UCC, “A Soul on Fire,” *Sojourners*, 2001.

Poetry

Austerity

E. Ethelbert Miller
(for Temo)

We will all lose our jobs
if not today then tomorrow.

A writer calls me asking about
how to get published. Writers are having
a difficult time. I start to explain
the journey we are on, the poet’s path.
The writer interrupts me and says—

Cut the metaphysical bullshit! I want
a Mercedes Benz.

What do you want?

Today I returned my poems to my lover.
I filed for unemployment.
My heart stopped.

The Call of the Wild (excerpt)

Robert Service

Can’t you hear the Wild? —it’s calling you.
Let us probe the silent places, let us seek what luck
betide us;
Let us journey to a lonely land I know.
There’s a whisper on the night-wind, there’s a star
agleam to guide us,
And the Wild is calling, calling . . . let us go.

Read the entire poem here:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/amverse/BAD8607.0001.001/1:10?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

The Journey (excerpt)

Mary Oliver

One day you finally knew
What you had to do, and began,
Though the voices around you
Kept shouting
Their bad advice,
Though the whole house
Began to tremble
And you felt the old tug
At your ankles.
“Mend my life!”
Each voice cried.
But you didn’t stop.
You knew what you had to do

Read the entire poem here:

<https://static.oprah.com/images/201104/omag/the-journey.pdf>

The Bell and the Blackbird (excerpt)

David Whyte

The sound of a bell
Still reverberating,
or a blackbird calling
from a corner of the field,

asking you to wake
into this life,
or inviting you deeper
into the one that waits.

Either way
takes courage,
either way wants you
to be nothing
but that self that
is no self at all,
wants you to walk
to the place
where you find
you already know
how to give
every last thing
away.

Read the entire poem here:

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/15379838-The-bell-and-the-blackbird-by-David-Whyte>

Articles

“John Dewey on How to Find Your Calling, the Key to a Fulfilling Vocation, and Why Diverse Interests Are Essential for Excellence in Any Field” (excerpt)
by Maria Popova

The question of how to find our purpose in life and make a living of what we love is indeed a perennial one

Philosopher, psychologist, and education reformer John Dewey—one of the finest minds our civilization has produced, whose insights on how we think and the real role of education continue to refine the human spirit—addressed this abiding question of purpose in his 1916 masterwork *Democracy and Education* (public library).

Perched in time between Nietzsche’s gripping 1873 meditation on how to find yourself and Parker Palmer’s contemporary manifesto for how to let your soul speak, Dewey examines the question of

how we find our purpose and what makes for a deeply fulfilling occupation.

Read the entire article here:

<https://www.themarginalian.org/2015/10/20/john-dewey-democracy-and-education-calling/>

“7 Lessons About Finding the Work You Were Meant to Do” (excerpt)
by Kate Torgovnick May

“Finding your calling—it’s not passive,” he [StoryCorps founder Dave Isay] says. “When people have found their calling, they’ve made tough decisions and sacrifices in order to do the work they were meant to do.”

In other words, you don’t just “find” your calling—you have to fight for it. And it’s worth the fight.

Read the entire article here:

<https://ideas.ted.com/7-lessons-about-finding-the-work-you-were-meant-to-do/>

“Trying to Find Your Calling? These 16 Tips Will Get You Started” (excerpt)
by Maggie Wooll

“I don’t know how to find my calling.” From celebrities to your friends and family, anyone that wants to find their calling has to start by admitting that they don’t have the know-how.

If you ask your community about their callings, some might enthusiastically say they’ve found theirs. Others might not be sure. “What’s my calling?” is the type of question that can make people evaluate where they are in life.

Maybe you’re also asking, “What is a calling? How do I learn how to find my calling?”

Read the entire article here:

<https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-find-my-calling>

“2016 Interfaith Series,” *Bearings Online*
by Diane M. Millis, Colledgeville Institute

In four articles, Millis interviews leaders from Confucianism and Daoism, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism on what calling means in each religion. <https://collegevilleinstitute.org/tag/2016-interfaith-series/>

“I Hear Them...Calling” (excerpt)
by Vincent Harding, in *Leading Lives That Matter*
Callings are strange things. I think I’ve heard a fair number in my time, perhaps fewer than I was supposed to—or maybe it was more; I’m not certain now. Sometimes they proved to be nothing more than echoes bouncing off from other lives (lives I sometimes thought were mine) and passed on their way. Others puzzled me, and led me into ways I do not yet understand. Some I understand and fear. A few—perhaps more than I know—I have followed as far as they led; and some are still moving. Still moving, preparing to join themselves to the sounds of the new summons, and I suspect there are yet borders to cross....

Callings are strange things. I think I have heard many voices in many times and places, but it may be that I have heard only One.

Read the entire piece here:
<https://calledtolives.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Vincent-Harding-I-Hear-Them-...-Calling-LLM2.pdf>



Prayers

Discernment Prayer
Sisters of Notre Dame

Walk with me, good and loving God, as I journey
through life.
May I take Your hand and be led by Your Holy Spirit.

Fill me, inspire me, free me to respond generously to
Your call.
For I believe You desire my deepest joy,
And it is only in Your company
That my soul will be satisfied
And my life will find its meaning and purpose.
Amen.

Books

Callings: The Purpose and Passion of Work
by Dave Isay. Penguin Press, 2016.

StoryCorps founder Dave Isay presents unforgettable stories from people doing what they love. Some found their paths at a very young age, others later in life; some overcame great odds or upturned their lives in order to pursue what matters to them. Together they demonstrate how work can be about much more than just making a living, that chasing dreams and finding inspiration in unexpected places can transform a vocation into a calling.

<https://storycorps.org/podcast/storycorps-466-callings/>

Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity by David Whyte. Riverhead Books, 2002.
Crossing the Unknown Sea is about reuniting the imagination with our day to day lives. It shows how poetry and practicality, far from being mutually exclusive, reinforce each other to give every aspect of our lives meaning and direction. For anyone who wants to deepen their connection to their life’s work—or find out what their life’s work is—this book can help navigate the way. Whyte encourages readers to take risks at work that will enhance their personal growth, and shows how burnout can actually be beneficial and used to renew professional interest. He asserts that too many people blindly trudge through a mediocre work life because so many “busy” tasks prevent significant reflection and analysis of job satisfaction. People often turn to spiritual practice or religion to nurture their souls, but overlook how work can actually be our greatest opportunity for discovery and growth. *Crossing the Unknown Sea* combines poetry, gifted storytelling

and Whyte's personal experience to reveal work's potential to fulfill us and bring us closer to ultimate freedom and happiness.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/290956/crossing-the-unknown-sea-by-david-whyte/>

The Seven Storey Mountain

by Thomas Merton. Harper One, 1999.

Merton's autobiography, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, chronicles his journey from a worldly life to embracing a monastic vocation. In the book, he reflects on his search for meaning and purpose, ultimately finding fulfillment in the contemplative life of a monk. Merton describes feeling a profound sense of calling to pursue a life of prayer, solitude, and service to God. Originally published in 1948.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Seven_Storey_Mountain

Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation

by Parker J. Palmer. Jossey-Bass, 1999.

With wisdom, compassion, and gentle humor, Parker J. Palmer invites us to listen to the inner teacher and follow its leadings toward a sense of meaning and purpose. Telling stories from his own life and the lives of others who have made a difference, he shares insights gained from darkness and depression as well as fulfillment and joy, illuminating a pathway toward vocation for all who seek the true calling of their lives.

<https://www.librarycat.org/lib/UnityChurch/item/172513864>

See a video on the same topic by Palmer:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLgTVq76LNO>

Children's Books

Miss Rumphius

by Barbara Cooney. Puffin Books, 1982.

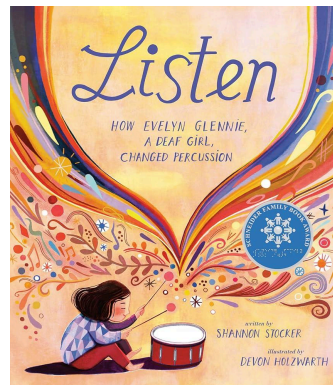
Miss Rumphius has a calling to do something to make the world more beautiful.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrjPzbuxLJU>

Listen: How Evelyn Glennie, a Deaf Girl, Changed Percussion by Shannon Stocker, illustrated by Devon Holzwarth. Dial Books, 2022.

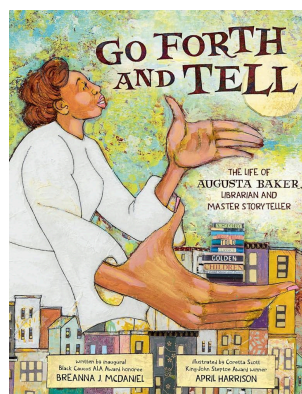
This is the award-winning, true life story of Evelyn Glennie who was born into a musical family. After she went deaf in her early years, she discovered percussion and passionately yearned to be a percussionist. Even after being turned away from the Royal Academy of Music, she continued to fight for her chance and her second audition resulted in being accepted. She won two Grammy awards and was made a Dame of the British Empire.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/623828/listen-by-shannon-stocker-illustrated-by-devon-holzwarth/>



Go Forth and Tell: The Life of Augusta Baker, Librarian and Master Storyteller

by Breanna J McDaniel, illustrated by April Harrison. Dial Books, 2024.



This beautiful book traces the life of Augusta Baker from her childhood in Baltimore to become the children's librarian of the Public Library in Harlem and, from there, to influencing Black writers and educators to create stories about Black people. She took her

story-telling calling around the country and around the world, inspiring children to believe in themselves and teaching them to tell their stories.

<https://bit.ly/4acWvyc>

Movies

Lillies of the Field

Produced and directed by Ralph Nelson, 1963.

Homer Smith, an unemployed construction worker heading out west, stops at a remote farm in the desert to get water when his



car overheats. The farm is being worked by a group of East European Catholic nuns, headed by the strict Mother Maria, who believes that Homer has been called by God to build a much-needed church in the desert. An Oscar-winning classic from 1963, free to watch on several platforms.

<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057251/>

Billy Elliot

Directed by Stephen Daldry, 2000.

Wikipedia excerpt:

In 1984, Billy Elliot, an 11-year-old from the fictional Everington in County Durham, England, loves to dance and has hopes of becoming a professional ballet dancer. Billy lives with his widowed father, Jackie, and older brother, Tony, both coal miners out on strike (the latter being the union delegate). His maternal grandmother lives with them; she has Alzheimer's disease and had once aspired to be a professional dancer.

Billy's father sends him to the gym to learn boxing, but Billy dislikes the sport. He happens to see a ballet class that is using the gym while their usual basement studio is being used temporarily as a soup kitchen for the striking miners. Unbeknownst to Jackie, Billy joins the ballet class. When Jackie discovers this, he forbids Billy to take any more ballet classes. But, passionate about dancing, he secretly continues his lessons with the help of his dance teacher, Sandra Wilkinson.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Elliot

Soul

Directed by Pete Docter, 2020.

An animated film from Pixar explores themes of purpose, passion, and finding one's spark. While not explicitly about career calling, it can spark meaningful discussions about the pursuit of fulfillment in life and work.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_\(2020_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soul_(2020_film))

Perfect Days

Directed by Wim Wenders, 2023.

Beauty calls Hirayama, a toilet cleaner in Tokyo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzZBbX5AIFA>

Where'd You Go, Bernadette

Directed by Richard Linklater, 2019.

Bernadette rediscovers her true calling.

<https://www.npr.org/2019/08/16/749952478/bernadette-is-a-stirring-tribute-to-a-woman-rediscovering-her-true-calling>

Videos

“Why Some of us Don't Have One True Calling”

Emilie Wapnick

Have too many passions to settle on just one?

Perfect. Your unique mix of interests may turn out to be your very own super power. Author, entrepreneur and artist, Wapnick was blessed with so many interests that she was unable to pick just one. She studied music, visual arts, film production and law, and graduated from the Law Faculty at McGill University. After years of feeling anxious about her zigzagging career path and hyphenated credentials, she finally decided to embrace her plural nature and start a movement for others who lean toward being “multipotentialites.” Since launching her website, Puttylike, in 2010, Wapnick has inspired thousands of multipotentialites to stop trying to fit themselves into boxes, and embrace their plurality. She has been featured in *Lifehacker*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Huffington Post*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QJORi5VO1F8>

Podcasts

“Stephen Cope: Finding Your True Calling”

Insights at the Edge, Sounds True, August 21, 2018.
Stephen Cope discusses his study of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in *The Great Work of Your Life: A Guide for the Journey to Your True Calling*, Bantam Books, 2012. He describes the four pillars of action:

1. Discern, name, and embrace your calling;
2. Do it full out;
3. Let go of the outcome;
4. Take yourself out of the way and trust the guidance you receive.

Cope has also written *The Dharma in Difficult Times: Finding Your Calling in Times of Loss, Change, Struggle, and Doubt*, Hay House, 2022.

<https://www.resources.soundstrue.com/podcast/stephen-cope-finding-your-true-calling/>

“Calling and Wholeness”

OnBeing with Krista Tippett, November 3, 2022.

Excerpt: In the modern western world, vocation was equated with work. But each of us has callings, not merely to be professionals, but to be friends, neighbors, colleagues, family, citizens, lovers of the world. Each of us imprints the people in the world around us, breath to breath and hour to hour, as much in who we are and how we are present as in whatever we do. And just as there are callings for a life, there are callings for our time.

<https://onbeing.org/programs/calling-and-wholeness/>

Music

“The Life You Chose”

Jason Isbell, from *Something More Than Free*, 2015.

“Are you living the life you chose? Are you living the life that chose you?”

<https://open.spotify.com/track/7u7KSW5VKTYOTod6NvYgvT?si=3f4dec0f73724cd0>

“Calling” Spotify Playlist

<https://spoti.fi/4afzdaR>

“Something More Than Free” —Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit

“London Calling” —The Clash

“Call My Name” —Louise Taylor

“Good Work” —Bodeans

“Somewhere a Voice Is Calling” —Tommy Dorsey

“Listen, Listen” —Shaina Noll, Russell Walden

“A Still Small Voice” —Perry Como

“Born to Get Busy” —Cypress Hill

“I Go to Work” —Us3

“Amen” —Leonard Cohen

“I’m Ready” —Tracy Chapman

Art



Mother and Child Figure, Tlatilco
Culture of Mexico, cir.1000-15000



1917 World War I Recruitment Poster
James Montgomery Flagg

Contributors: the Spiritual Practice packet team—Merrill Aldrich, Rev. Andrea La Sonde Anastos, Lizabeth Bougie, Shelley Butler, Mike Funck, Lia Rivamonte; with staff support from Rev. Kathleen Rolenz, Rev. KP Hong, and Martha Tilton.