



## Vocation

*The life of a congregation is a rich community tapestry of people, programs, ministries and worship. We lift up the patterns of this tapestry at Unity Church with the threads of monthly themes woven through our worship and programming. These themes deepen our understanding of our own faith and strengthen our bonds with one another in religious community.*

As the days shorten and the nights turn cooler, September's theme of vocation invites us, in the words of Rev. Martha Postlewaite, to "create a clearing in the dense forest of your life and wait there patiently, until the song that is your life falls into your own cupped hands and you recognize and greet it." Have you found the song that is your life? Are you listening, patiently? Are you filling these last days of summer with every bit of Minnesota goodness you can soak up, too busy to listen to anything but radio in your car and the chimes of your calendar reminders, as we rush to savor these fleeting summer days? This month, as we consider the theme of vocation, we invite you to find time to create that clearing in your life, to listen for the song of vocation and to reflect on that place where "your deep gladness meets the world's great need."

From its roots in the Latin word *vocare*, meaning "to call," vocation speaks to us through images of purpose, work, and a sense of being called. In our often work-obsessed American culture, vocation can get caught up in notions of paid employment and career, but in the less-quoted part of Frederick Buechner's meditation on gladness and need, we're reminded that vocation — that point of intersection between our deep gladness and the world's great need is a place that we're called to by God. Or, as Thomas Merton writes, "Vocation. . . comes from a voice in here calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God." In other words, vocation

is not just about what we do, but about who we are. Vocation calls us into relationship with our deeper purpose.

This notion of purpose is echoed in the Bhagavad Gita where vocation is less about God's call, and more about our dharma, which refers not just to universal truth or eternal teachings, but also to each individual's unique purpose in life. In the Bhagavad Gita, as we hear Krishna instructing the warrior Arjuna of his essential nature as a warrior, what we learn is that our lives are lived best and most fully when we're aligned with the deeper purpose that is ours from the moment of our creation. Living our purpose is so important in these teachings that it's more preferable to live one's dharma's imperfectly, than to live another's dharma to perfection. The invitation is to fully be who we are, not someone else.

Parker Palmer echoes this refrain in *Let your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* when he writes, "Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am." So as we gather in church this month, we invite you to notice where and how you experience your deeper purpose coming through. Perhaps you see it in your employment, when you sit with a loved one's pain, or when you care for the Earth. Maybe you feel it when you answer the call of Black Lives Matter or meet with firm and uncompromising compassion the ignorance and hatred of racism and xenophobia. Or perhaps you touch vocation in moments of prayer, art,

or song. Where ever you're noticing vocation, we invite you to deepen into your sense of call as we journey into vocation, together.

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team: Drew Danielson,  
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### Vocation Theme Resources

#### FOR FAMILIES

*March* (graphic novel trilogy) by John Lewis and Andrew Aydin, illustrated by Nate Powell.

#### VIDEO

*Moana* (2016)

In Ancient Polynesia, when a terrible curse incurred by the Demigod Maui reaches Moana's island, she answers the Ocean's call to seek out the Demigod to set things right. (IMDB)

*Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (2011)

A documentary on 85-year-old sushi master Jiro Ono, his renowned Tokyo restaurant, and his relationship with his son and eventual heir, Yoshikazu. (IMDB)

#### BOOKS

*Let your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* by Parker Palmer

*Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Richard Rohr

#### POETRY

"Clearing" by Martha Postlewaite  
"To be of use" by Marge Piercy