

Calling Cohort Session Guide

Introduction

This guide is meant to help guide a Calling Cohort – the small group of people gathered around an individual who is discerning whether or not they are being called into credentialed ministry in the Church of the Brethren – in their work of listening for God’s call in the life of a discerner. The Church of the Brethren understands “call” to be a process that happens before God as expressed and discerned in community. The Calling Cohort enters into a covenant for their time together, that the process of discernment is focused more on the process and the journey than the destination, that everyone commits to seeking the mind of Christ together, and that the focus of their time together is to accompany the individual discerner in seeking answers to their particular questions of call and leading.

This guide is arranged into four sessions, offering a simple structure of prayer, bible study, singing and conversation about questions of discernment. Both the structure and the number of sessions presented here should be seen as a helpful starting point for groups wondering how to begin in their time together. The function of a Calling Cohort is to be support, companion and accountability partners for an individual doing the work of discerning call toward set-apart ministry in the Church. Your Cohort may choose to dive deeper into discernment through asking further questions of discernment, studying more biblical texts or meeting more than four times. This is great!

Session 1

Call to Worship

Begin your time together in prayer, perhaps something like this:

*God who calls us,
You have a plan for each one of us,
You hold out to us a future full of hope.
Give us the wisdom of Your Spirit
So that we can see the shape of Your plan
In the gifts You have given us,
And in the circumstances of our daily lives.
Give us the freedom of Your Spirit,
To seek You with all our hearts,
And to choose Your will above all else.
We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Bible Study

Read together Genesis 12. Discuss these questions:

- Who is being called in this story?
- Where did the sense of a call come from? God? Other people? A church community?
- How did the person being called respond to the call?
- Which part of this story resonates with you? How does it seem like or unlike your own sense of call to ministry?

Hymn

Sing together the hymn *God who stretched* (#414 in *Hymnal: a Worship Book*)

Silent Prayer and Questions of Discernment

After a praying silently together for a few moments, ask the discerners to consider these questions:

- Have there been major turning points in your life?
- When have you felt God's presence or faithfulness?
- When have you sought God's guidance in the past? Or guidance from friends? Family?
- Could you name some "finger prints of God" upon your life?

Closing Prayer (from Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude):

Have someone pray this aloud:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Session 2

Call to Worship

Begin your time together in prayer, perhaps something like this:

*God who calls us,
You have a plan for each one of us,
You hold out to us a future full of hope.
Give us the wisdom of Your Spirit
So that we can see the shape of Your plan
In the gifts You have given us,
And in the circumstances of our daily lives.
Give us the freedom of Your Spirit,
To seek You with all our hearts,
And to choose Your will above all else.
We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Bible Study

Read together Ruth 1:1-18. Discuss these questions:

- Who is being called in this story?
- Where did the sense of a call come from? God? Other people? A church community?
- How did the person being called respond to the call?
- Which part of this story resonates with you? How does it seem like or unlike your own sense of call to ministry?

Hymn

Sing together the hymn *Precious Lord, take my hand* (#575 in *Hymnal: a Worship Book*)

Silent Prayer and Questions of Discernment

After a praying silently together for a few moments, ask the discerners to consider these questions:

- How does your call affect others in your life?
- Are there ways that your call might bring change to your current situation? How does that feel?
- Does you sense there are ways God's call is in tension with what others expect?
- What promises have you made in the past? How might following this call be the same as those other promises, or different from other vows you have made?

Closing Prayer (from Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude):

Have someone pray this aloud:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Session 3

Call to Worship

Begin your time together in prayer, perhaps something like this:

*God who calls us,
You have a plan for each one of us,
You hold out to us a future full of hope.
Give us the wisdom of Your Spirit
So that we can see the shape of Your plan
In the gifts You have given us,
And in the circumstances of our daily lives.
Give us the freedom of Your Spirit,
To seek You with all our hearts,
And to choose Your will above all else.
We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Bible Study

Read together Luke 1:26-38. Discuss these questions:

- Who is being called in this story?
- Where did the sense of a call come from? God? Other people? A church community?
- How did the person being called respond to the call?
- Which part of this story resonates with you? How does it seem like or unlike your own sense of call to ministry?

Hymn

Sing together the hymn *Here I am, Lord* (#395 in *Hymnal: a Worship Book*)

Silent Prayer and Questions of Discernment

After a praying silently together for a few moments, ask the discerner to consider these questions:

- What does it mean to you to say “Here I am, Lord?”
- Are there ways that you can say “yes” to God?

- Are there ways you feel called to say “no, not now?”
- Which of these questions seems more life-giving to you?

Closing Prayer (from Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude):

Have someone pray this aloud:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Session 4

Call to Worship

Begin your time together in prayer, perhaps something like this:

*God who calls us,
You have a plan for each one of us,
You hold out to us a future full of hope.
Give us the wisdom of Your Spirit
So that we can see the shape of Your plan
In the gifts You have given us,
And in the circumstances of our daily lives.
Give us the freedom of Your Spirit,
To seek You with all our hearts,
And to choose Your will above all else.
We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Bible Study

Read together Luke 5:1-11. Discuss these questions:

- Who is being called in this story?
- Where did the sense of a call come from? God? Other people? A church community?
- How did the person being called respond to the call?
- Which part of this story resonates with you? How does it seem like or unlike your own sense of call to ministry?

Hymn

Sing together the hymn *Lord, you have come to the lakeshore* (#229 in *Hymnal: a Worship Book*)

Silent Prayer and Questions of Discernment

After a praying silently together for a few moments, ask the discerners to consider these questions:

- What does it mean for you to go out to the deep water?
- If you were to name a color – what color would “answering the call” be? Why?

- How has your calling become clearer through this process?
- Where do you need to hear Jesus say, “Do not be afraid.”?
-

Closing Prayer (from Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude):

Have someone pray this aloud:

“My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”