

Are you called?

Discern with us



GLOBAL MINISTRIES
General Board of Global Ministries
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



**GLOBAL MISSION
FELLOWS**

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What does it look like to **Discern your calling?**

Discernment is a journey...

God has called us all to serve somewhere. Some are called to engage in transformation within the community in which they grew up. Others are called to share their gifts in communities that are very different than their own. Some are called to work within the church. Others are called to be the church's representative in positions outside the church.

This study is designed to help you discern and articulate your calling and to recognize whether the Global Mission Fellows program is part of your call. Everyone's story is different, so we recommend that you use this study in the manner that best suits you. Devote an afternoon to working through this study, or set aside some time each week for three weeks to focus on the sections one at a time. When you come to the reflection questions, use the medium that allows you to best express yourself, e.g., journaling, sketching, poetry, music, conversation, meditation, etc.

The questions are framed around writing, but don't feel confined to those instructions if another format works better for you.

Global Mission Fellows commit to three core values during their time of service: engage, connect and grow. This study is structured in three parts, each based around one of the core values. We hope that this will help you gain a deeper understanding of the core values and how your ministry will be expressed in each.

Before you begin, we recommend that you use the resources online:

- Learn more about a [theology of mission](#)
- [Gain a deeper understanding of missionary service](#)

See Differently. Serve Differently.

Engage

Global Mission Fellows engage with local communities.

They are called to do ministry with, not to or for, their local partners. Fellows serve alongside churches, community groups and individuals to address the priorities of people in the community they are serving. They discover ways in which God is already at work. Fellows live simply. As learners and co-laborers, they commit to having the same standard of living as their local partners. Simple living is an act of solidarity and humility. It also allows Fellows to witness systemic injustice. Fellows embrace interdependence and become a daily presence in people's lives.

Read: Luke 5:1–11, 27–32 (NRSV)

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And he got up, left everything, and followed him.

29 Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others sitting at the table with them. 30 The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 Jesus answered, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; 32 I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Engage

Frederick Buechner on Calling

*There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this: the kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*¹

Reflect

There are countless examples of people responding to a calling from God in scripture. In the passage above, Jesus calls the disciples into ministry with him. In Exodus, God calls Moses through the burning bush. Samuel is called to be a prophet after hearing God's voice in the night when he is just a boy. Mary Magdalene is called by Jesus to proclaim the news of the resurrection to the other disciples.

- Take a moment to write out your call story so far. When did you begin to feel God's call? Was it sudden or gradual? Who throughout your life has inspired you to listen or given you insight?
- What questions do you still have about what God is calling you to do next?

When Jesus begins to call the disciples in Matthew and Mark, it's a quick process. Jesus says, "follow me," and they do. End of story, no questions asked. Luke, on the other hand, tells a story that most of us can relate to. Simon witnesses a miracle and immediately feels inadequate. He questions whether he is worthy to follow Jesus.

- What concerns do you have about being a part of mission? Are there any areas where you feel inadequate to answer God's call?

Frederick Buechner offers a unique definition of calling. His framework explains that we are not just called, but we are called to something specific.

- What is your deep gladness?
- What is the world's deep hunger?
- You may be able to come up with a long list of answers for both of the questions above. Where do they overlap? How does this fit in with your call story?

¹ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*, (London: Collins, 1973), 118-119.

Engage

Christ's life was a model of engagement with community. God incarnate, he came to live among the poor and marginalized instead of with the kings and rulers. As the early church spread, they continued this engagement by reaching across cultural boundaries and living in intentional community with one another.

- How have you crossed cultural, economic or social boundaries in the past? What did you learn from the experience?

Pray

*You are the God who makes extravagant promises.
We relish your great promises of fidelity
and presence and solidarity,
and we exude in them. Only to find out, always too late,
that your promise always comes
in the midst of a hard, deep call to obedience.
You are the God who calls people like us,
and the long list of mothers and fathers before us, who trusted the promise enough to keep
the call.
So we give you thanks that you are a calling God, who calls always to dangerous new places.
We pray enough of your grace and mercy among us that we may be among those
who believe your promises enough to respond to your call.
We pray in the one who embodied your promise and enacted your call, even Jesus. Amen.*²

Further resources on vocation and calling:

- Explore Calling: A discernment website created by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (explorecalling.org)
- John Neafsey, A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience
- Henri Nouwen, Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life
- Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation
- Howard Thurman, Jesus and the Disinherited
- Other stories in scripture about calling: Moses, Exodus 3; Gideon, Judges 6-8; Esther, Esther 4; Jeremiah, Jeremiah 1:4-10; Mary, Luke 1:26-45; Mary Magdalene, John 20:11-18; Paul and Ananias, Acts 9:1-18.

² Walter Brueggemann, *Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann*, edited by Edwin Searcy, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 90.

Connect

Global Mission Fellows connect the church in mission.

They tell stories in local churches about their experiences of God's gracious love. They advocate for social change and testify about hope in the face of injustice. Fellows invite churches to participate in mission projects through prayer, financial support, emotional care and common action. Connecting the local church with the global church is one significant way young adults are making disciples for the transformation of the world.

Read: Isaiah 58:6-7 (NRSV)

6 Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,

and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them,

and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Micah 6:8 (NRSV)

And what does the Lord require of you but to do justice,

and to love kindness,

and to walk humbly with your God?

Henri Nouwen on Calling

Indeed, the one who was from the beginning with God and who was God revealed himself as a small, helpless child; as a refugee in Egypt; as an obedient adolescent and inconspicuous adult; as a preacher from Galilee, followed by some simple fishermen; as a man who ate with sinners and talked with strangers; as an outcast, a criminal, a threat to his people. He moved from power to powerlessness, from greatness to smallness, from success to failure, from strength to weakness, from glory to ignominy. The whole life of Jesus of Nazareth was a life in which all upward mobility was resisted.³

³ Henri Nouwen, *The Selfless Way of Christ: Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 31.

Connect

We are called to follow Christ on the downwardly mobile road, tempted to choose the broad path of success, fame, and influence, and challenged to subject ourselves to spiritual disciplines in order to gradually conform ourselves to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Vocation, temptation, and formation are lifelong challenges. We are called not once, but day in and day out, and we will never know for sure where we are being led. We are tempted at every moment of our day and night and we will never know precisely where our demons will appear. This lifelong tension between vocation and temptation opens for us the difficult but promising task of listening to the church, the Book, and our hearts, thus discovering the real presence of God's spirit within and among us. ⁴

Reflect

One often-cited definition of a prophet is a person who speaks truth to power. This is certainly true of many of the Old Testament prophets. When the Assyrians or Babylonians were in power, the prophets spoke out against the oppressive treatment of the Israelites and their land. Likewise, when the Israelites were in power, the prophets spoke out against the oppression of their own people, their neighbors or their land. Some performed crazy stunts to get the attention of the people in power, like laying on their left side for 390 days and then on their right side for 40 days (Ezekiel 4:4–6) or giving their children terrible names (Hosea 1:6–8).

- Where have you witnessed injustice in your own community? Have you been involved in any attempts to speak truth to power?

Henri Nouwen says that a life following Christ must be a life of downward mobility, resisting power in its various forms. Global Mission Fellows live simply in solidarity with the community in which they are placed.

- What does it mean to you to live simply?
- How did living simply influence Jesus' ministry? How can it influence your ministry?

Nouwen lists three spiritual disciplines which are helpful in resisting the temptation of upward mobility: the church, or staying in connection with God's story, reading scripture and prayer.

- What spiritual disciplines do you practice regularly? Are they challenging you to engage with your community, connect to places where injustice is prevalent and grow in your understanding and practice of faith?
- If you don't currently have any regular practices, consider committing to one as you prepare to become a GMF.

⁴ Henri Nouwen, *The Selfless Way of Christ: Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 91-93.

Connect

Pray

*God lives in community
One and yet Three
Loving, creating, eternally
We're called to community
One, yet Many
Loving, creating, one family*

*All praise to the Trinity
The One who is Three
Who came as a baby
To calm our rough sea
Who died on a lonely tree
And rose on day three
Loving, creating, our victory*

*God lives in community
With all who believe
Loving, creating,
What we're to be
We're called to community
For now we can see
That loving, creating,
Makes us all free ⁵*

Further resources for spiritual practices:

- Upper Room: A collection of spiritual practices centered around social justice issues
(upperroom.org/disciplines or upperroom.org/resources)
- Mariano Magrassi, Praying the Bible: An Introduction to Lectio Divina
- Eugene H. Peterson, Eat This Book: Conversations in the Art of Spiritual Reading
- Barbara Brown Taylor, An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith
- Tish Harrison Warren, Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life

⁵ Lisa Degrenia, "Community" in Called: One Word, Many Ways,
<http://www.explorecalling.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Worship-Full-Resource.pdf>

Grow

Global Mission Fellows grow in personal and social holiness.

John Wesley, our Methodist founder, used the terms “personal holiness” and “social holiness” to describe our inward growth in the love of God and neighbor, which in turn leads to outward works of love. Through service and contemplation, Fellows grow as disciples of Jesus Christ. Following Jesus’ example, they show compassion through presence, word and deed. They understand, as did John Wesley, that transformation happens when the inner and outer life are aligned in right relationship with God, oneself, others and creation.

Read: Romans 12:9–21 (NRSV)

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

UMC Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God’s gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God’s handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

Grow

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

*We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.*⁶

UMC Resources

The mission of The United Methodist Church (UMC) is to make disciples of Jesus Christ of the transformation of the world. Our beliefs are laid out in our doctrine, summarized in the What We Believe and FAQ sections, and Social Principles, a set of guiding principles about what it means to live in community. You don't need to read or learn everything contained in these links, but learning about The UMC will help you to determine whether this is the right program for you.

- [What We Believe](http://umc.org/what-we-believe/basics-of-our-faith) (umc.org/what-we-believe/basics-of-our-faith)
- [Social Principles](http://umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed) (umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed)

Reflect

As explained above, John Wesley was concerned with both personal and social holiness. In his own life, he followed a strict daily routine that included spiritual disciplines, exercise and healthy eating (personal holiness). He also advocated for the poor, particularly in regards to access to health care (social holiness). In Romans 12, Paul lists several examples of both personal holiness and social holiness that are important for a life of faith.

- How have you grown in personal and social holiness in recent years? In what ways might the GMF program help you to grow further?

In the engage section you wrote about your concerns about becoming a missionary. Look back at these now.

⁶The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2018 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2018), ¶166 .

Grow

- How might you grow to be more confident in these areas of concern through the GMF program?
- Have you experienced any major setbacks in your life? How did you overcome the situation? How might you use your experience to deal with any unexpected setbacks during your time as a missionary?

The GMF program is part of The United Methodist Church. Fellows are not required to be United Methodist, but they do agree to represent The UMC and abide by its values.

- Spend a few minutes reviewing the UMC resources above. Where do the beliefs and values overlap with your own? Where do they diverge?
- Are there any differences that would be problematic during your missionary service?

Most of us will never experience the level of clarity in our calling that the disciples did when Jesus walked up to them and said “follow me.” Or that Moses did when God spoke to him from the burning bush. Even then, they doubted and had to make a leap of faith to answer the call.

- Look back at your call story and the questions you had about where to go next. What questions have been answered? What questions remain?
- Are you ready to make a leap of faith?

Pray

Holy Spirit, you opened my ears to hear Jesus calling me to serve You opened my step to the path now set before me

Continue to open me

Open my mind to the changes I must make Open my arms to the new life I will embrace

Open my hands to those I will partner with in service

Open my eyes to the resources, answers and grace you will provide Open my mouth with your love, truth and wisdom

Open my heart and fill it again and again with the courage to follow faithfully ⁷

Further resources on The United Methodist Church:

- Learn about Global Ministries (umcmission.org/learn-about-us/our-work)
- New World Outlook: The Mission Magazine of The UMC (nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/gbcm/newworldoutlook_2018fall/index.php#/0)
- Ted A. Campbell, Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials
- Global Ministries, [A Mission Journey: A Handbook for Volunteers](#)

⁷ "Congregational Litany" from Called: One Word, Many Ways, 2015, explorecalling.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Worship-Full-Resource.pdf



Discernment Worksheet

This worksheet will walk you through one method of discerning your calling. This method may not bring you absolute clarity, but it should be helpful for exploring your gifts and passions and how they point toward your calling. Use it once to get you thinking, then revisit your answers later for inspiration as you continue to explore where God is calling you.

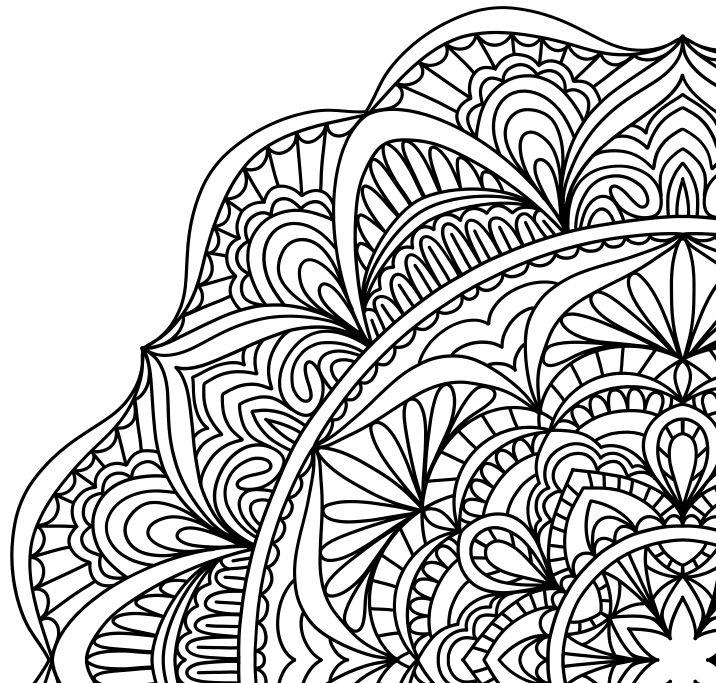
First ...think about what you're good at.

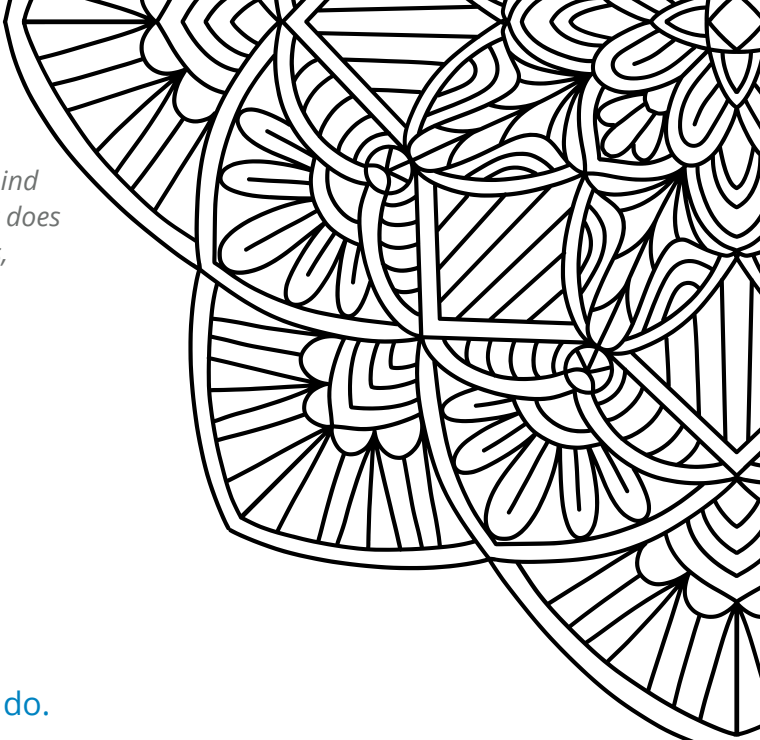
Make a list of 5 - 10 skills you have. These include tasks that you can almost mindlessly do or skills for which you have special certification or education.

Next ...think about what you love to do.

Make a list of 5 - 10 things you love or love to do. These should be things that bring you joy or make you light up. This list can overlap with the first list but should also include other things.

THINK ON
what is true





Now...think about what the world needs.

Make a list of 5 - 10 things the world needs. Use what comes to your mind first, but try to be specific. For example, if the world needs peace, what does it need to achieve that peace? (Like community development programs, legislation reform, dialogue, etc.)

Finally...think about what can you get paid to do.

Not everyone has a calling that needs a salary; your calling may be a complement to your profession or you may be blessed with a life situation that doesn't need a salary. However, many of us do need a salary to live out our calling. Using your answers above, brainstorm jobs or careers that overlap all three categories. If you get stuck, search the internet or ask mentors for inspiration. Don't limit yourself to only opportunities that you think are possible right now.

List 1 - 2 dream jobs that best match your answers above and 4 - 5 other opportunities that fit well.

So...connect these thoughts.

How do the things you listed connect to help you find clarity for your calling? What new questions do you have as you look at the responses above? Who could talk and pray with you as you continue to discern?

Do you still feel a call to mission?

We look forward to continuing this discernment journey with you.

- Email missionaryinfo@umcmmission.org to talk more about options
- Connect on social to hear stories of young adults putting faith into action.



[globalmissionfellows](https://www.facebook.com/globalmissionfellows)



[globalmissionfellows](https://www.instagram.com/globalmissionfellows)

Adapted from: kaylanaab.com/life-balance.

