




Make the **Most of Your**
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Magazine

How to Use *Horizons* Magazine

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This engaging issue on vocation offers a multitude of ways to contemplate one's call, response and continuing discernment as vocational direction changes over time. Here are some ways to allow this issue of *Horizons* magazine to challenge, unsettle, deepen, change and/or confirm your own sense of God's claim on your life and your understanding of God's call to be a ministry partner, serving the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Consider using these questions, taken directly from the many articles, in a daily or weekly self-examination time. Each time you settle in to a quiet place for reflection, ask God to sharpen your self-understanding and clarify what God has in store for you. Also, think creatively about which places in your vocational journey you might use some of these questions with others.

- What does Christian vocation actually look like in the crazy grind of daily life? (Risher)
- Who is called? (Stotts)
- Who mediates the call? (Stotts)
- As we recognize our gifts: Is this gift, or are these gifts, in keeping with what God calls me to be and do as I try to make Christ's ministry my own? (Gardner)
- What gift of ours might become a gift to a neighbor (or the relative or the fellow committee member or that one in the soup kitchen, or this one reeling from a grim diagnosis, or she who is liked by few, or he who has doubts about his own abilities, or those who are hungry or tired or lonesome or . . .)? (Gardner)
- Complete this sentence: "If I had my life to live over, I would have become a _____." (Gardner)
- Think about a gift you have. Ask yourself, "[H]ow, in the circumstances of my life today, might I use this gift to the glory of God?" (Gardner)
- "Have you listed everything you can't do or be, and never listed everything that you can do or be?" (Gardner) If so, make the *can* do or be list now.
- Might these questions be fruitfully asked in your own context? "Think about what we do culturally when babies are born. How do we prepare the baby's room? What colors do we choose? How do we dress them? What kind of toys do we buy for them? What types of tasks do we expect them to perform at home? What do we teach them about male and female relationships? In what ways do we expect them to handle conflict? How do we expect them to relate to power?" (Lee) Responses to the last two questions might be eye-opening no matter what our culture, tradition, and circumstance.
- "Am I a leader?" (Lee)
- "How then should we understand leadership, especially as women of faith?" (Lee)
- See Unzu Lee's chart in, "Are You a Leader?" After seeking to understand the dimensions of spiritual leadership using her categories, ask yourself (and your PW group) her questions: "As individuals, how well are we doing in internal and interpersonal dimensions? As an organization, how well is Presbyterian Women doing in institutional and cultural dimensions? As women leaders, how are we exercising the power that we have received from God in each dimension?"

- In what ways “Is it a privilege that one can even think about following one’s calling”? (Pak)
- “What, then, is the role of the Church in helping [immigrants] find meaning in [their] circumstances? How, then, can we re-think vocation for this context?” (Pak)
- “How, then, can we re-think vocation for [racial ethnic constituencies]?” (Pak)
- “Ask yourself: to what can I give an enthusiastic yes?” (Robbins/Bedford)
- “What will you become? How will you shape up to the call that echoes in your heart?” Robbins/Bedford)
- “Women now make up a slight majority of seminary students —776 out of 1437 in 2006— so why are so many qualified, educated women searching for calls? . . . Why are we reluctant to hire women for leadership positions? Why are most female clergy serving smaller, lower-paying congregations? Where does bias come from and how do we deal with it?” (Casteel)

All of the following quotes related to call and vocation come from articles in this issue. Consider these ways to use them to empower PW:

1. Print them and cut them apart. Give one to each person present at a PW gathering. Give the women about 5 minutes to reflect on their personal responses to their quotes, then ask them to share their reflections in groups of three or four.
2. Give a different quote to each small group of three or four and ask them to consider a response from the perspective of Presbyterian Women. Then have small groups read their quote aloud and share their response. Select from those quotes found here the most appropriate for your group and for this purpose.
3. Take some time at a circle meeting to hear and respond to the quote from Jack Stotts’ article that begins, “The Church mediates the call to individuals” Explore such things as what areas of ministry have members of this group been called to by the church? What might some like to do they haven’t been invited to? Who might identify the gifts of those present to those in your church who invite leadership? Discuss the implications of the quote for this group.
4. Provide copies of all the quotes. Ask each person present to select one that has particular meaning for them, or especially challenges them personally, or seems to challenge their circle or PW in this congregation (pick one of these to focus on or use your own selection idea). If you have a small group, hear all the responses. If large, invite them to share in small groups.
5. Select five or six quotes that focus on what responding to God’s call might require of us. Post them around the room. Ask those present to move around the room reading them, then to write around the edges on two or three what that one might require of them—individually or as a group.
6. Ask yourself, or others in a group, “To what has God called you in the past? What do you understand God is calling you to now? What might God be beckoning you toward, and what are the signs to you that that might be so?”
7. Print the handout of quotes and distribute it at your next PW gathering. Invite those present to take it home and reflect on one quote a day as a way to consider their own calls from God and responses to God.
8. Make up your own idea of how to use these quotes in your setting and context.

“Vocation is not a particular job. A call to vocation is not reserved only for those who are going to be ordained pastors or church educators or missionaries. It is not just for people who know where to find all the passages of importance in the Bible, or those who never stumble when saying the Apostles’ Creed. Vocation is the call of God to all who know God in the person of Jesus Christ. It is the shape of our lives as Christians, the first thing after creation and love that God bestows on us. It is the meaning of our lives and also the beauty of our individualism” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 4–5).

“All are called . . . and all are gifted . . . for living out that call in whatever work or social circumstance is theirs. None of Christ’s disciples are excused from that call or lacking in the particular and peculiar gifts that can or will be the means for their response to that call” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 5).

“To be honest, sometimes we’d rather not name a gift because it might imply taking on another form of ministry. Yet many of us have said to ourselves, “I could do that,” but never acted on it for fear that we would have to do something more than we think we can handle” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 5).

“Most gifts do not imply just one way of expression. There are usually more opportunities for their expression than life has time to allow” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 5).

“Vocation: a big word that has been reduced and made manageable by the world but is enormous in God’s dictionary. This word can shape our lives whether we are young and just getting in touch with ourselves, middle-aged and doing some midlife assessments, or in our later years and asking about stewardship of whatever gifts still can be used, or what new ones have been discovered in our changing physical, emotional, financial and familial circumstances” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 6).

“Sometimes we need each other to point out the gifts we are afraid to name, but there is always time to recognize a gift and ask how, in the circumstances of my life today, might I use this gift to the glory of God?” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 6).

“God calls each of us and gives us gifts for answering that call. That is our vocation. It takes form in our occupations, in our life in the church, and in our families and neighborhoods, our state, nation and world. There, wherever there is, in whatever form it takes, with or without a title, there is where we love the Lord our God and our neighbor as ourselves” (Freda Gardner, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 6).

“A vocation is elusive, often hiding in the forest of ambiguity. Should I do this or that? Chameleon-like, it changes color to blend into a changing environment. At times it is aggravating; taking me places I do not wish to go, submitting me to experiences I would prefer to avoid. Perhaps most annoying, it is finally a relationship to myself and the surrounding world that I do not so much choose as it chooses me. That is to say, when it comes to vocation, choice follows gifts. Choice is response to something given, to a ‘calling’” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 7).

“One’s life pulse and the pulse of a movement or an area of activities or a cause throb together. That is where a vocation begins to arise. One’s will, mind and heart stand at attention when one of these powers descends and offers a life of challenge, meaning and purpose. Choosing a vocation is a little like choosing a mate. One falls into the strange power called love, to which one has consented rather than created. In the same way, one consents to a vocation. It is a response to a power outside oneself that is attractive and compelling. One stalks a vocation only to find that one has been stalked by it!” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 7).

“God calls. The people respond. The first choice is not ours, but God’s. God stalks us, and God’s stalking is the context of our search and choice. The pulse of the world is God’s living presence—lively and tender. Theologically, the context of vocation is God’s initiative, which is always respectful of our freedom. And our consent/choice is set within the context of God’s prior choice” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 7).

“God chooses. That is God’s gift to us, giving us what we need for meaning, purpose and significance—a vocation—and giving us that in relation to what, we believe, the world needs as well. In Jesus Christ our lives are given meaning by being set within a network of purposive relationships that have ultimate significance” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 7).

“Theologically speaking, the call comes to a people, not an individual. . . .All are called to be God’s sign and God’s agents of reconciliation and shalom. That is God’s gift to the whole church. The gospel is a community-creating power, for the sake of an ever-enlarging community—not simply in numbers, though I do not deny that—but enlarging in spirit and concern” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 7–8).

“The church mediates the call to individuals. The church becomes God’s subordinate calling agent in the world, God’s mouthpiece. It calls all peoples to receive the gift and to participate in the ministry. And one way is by calling leaders for its life. . . . In the context of the church’s provision of meaning, purpose and significance, it invites, encourages, provides for and calls individuals into leadership responsibilities” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 8).

“At its best, the church stalks those who will be keepers of the tension between the now and God’s future—a future of justice, righteousness and peace, where every person lives a life of meaning, purpose and significance” (Jack Stotts, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 8).

“I have wrapped my life around a sense of call. I want to believe that every aspect of my life—my relationships, my parenting, my job, my day-to-day-life-as-maintenance tasks, my citizenship and my church life—looks different because I try to follow the way of Jesus” (Dee Dee Risher, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 11).

“Ah, yes! I cannot live out my call without gratitude for God’s great abundance of grace” (Dee Dee Risher, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 12).

“We often find ourselves among people from a similar race and culture who share our education level, white or blue collar work, or religious background. Part of our vocation as followers of God is to break down those barriers when they breed otherness among us. God demands that we look at the injustices and the unloving places in which we participate as a society. In a culture fixated on status, money and power, we are called to live out radical alternatives” (Dee Dee Risher, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 12).

“As I try to live out a daily discipleship that feels authentic, I return again and again to a single concept: intentionality. The term implies thoughtfulness and a desire to choose the best path. Yet it also carries some graceful and necessary leeway. I intend to live in just ways, even if I do not entirely accomplish that. Intentionality allows for the willingness of my spirit to do the work at hand while acknowledging the weariness and confusion and humanness that may foil me in the process” (Dee Dee Risher, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 13).

“Ultimately, Jesus teaches, those who believe in God will live differently because of love. There will be many shapes to that love, but every one shall look like joy” (Dee Dee Risher, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 13).

“... [M]y present work is a gift from God” (Joyce J. Michael, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 15).

“My call . . . was like a telephone call from a telemarketer. I was minding my business, working Suddenly, my “spiritual telephone” rang and God was on the other end telling me that the next step in my ministry was The first few calls I just said, “Thanks, but no thanks.” However, God, being a persistent caller, continued to call. I even asked God more than once to take me off the call list. Eventually, I said yes” (LaTease Brooks, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 15).

“I thank God for the call” (LaTease Brooks, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 15).

“In discussing the terms leader and leadership, we must demystify and naturalize them in the context of our own social life and world. For many women, this means in the context of family and women’s organizations like ours” (Unzu Lee, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 17).

“. . . I go because I must. This I understand to be what we Christians mean when we speak of “call,” of God’s beckoning voice challenging us to a place and time not of our own choosing, for a purpose that may or may not be clear” (Beth Pyles, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 24).

“Long ago, Jesus began his ministry by calling a group of followers together. Today’s disciples continue to refer to the Divine invitation to use one’s gift in a particular way, as a call” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 28).

“Jesus calls each one of us to a particular ministry. . . . Our job is prayerfully to figure out what God is calling us to do” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 28).

“. . . Jesus asked his earthly disciples . . . not only to give up steady employment and a routine family life, but also to give up their old perceptions of themselves. Jesus still gathers disciples today, and that is still what he may call you to do” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 28).

“Change comes from people who see things differently, who inspire others to a common purpose—people with a sense of call who listen to that inner voice and say ‘Yes!’ . . . Ordinary people, are often called to do extraordinary things.” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 29).

“God probably won’t call you within your comfort zone. God will call you to stretch and grow and sometimes to do what looks unusual, or even dangerous. God may also call you to serve with gifts you didn’t know you had” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 29).

“Often, when God calls us, God also sends teachers, mentors and encouragers who can help us to identify our gifts and discern our paths. Pray that God will clearly show you what you are being called to do, so that in the silence of your listening you will hear Christ’s call and be drawn more closely into the circle of Christ’s love” (Kikanza Nuri Robins and Anna H. Bedford, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 29).

“Presbyterians often talk about following one’s call and pursuing vocation as something that can be achieved through the process of discernment within one’s faith and community. We often presuppose that people have a range of choices available to them and that they can decide what they want to do for a career. The ability to survive is assumed. In examining the issue of vocation in racial ethnic congregations or for racial ethnic persons, one finds there can be obstacles in place that prevent some persons from living out their call” (Irene Pak, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 32).

“...[C]all and vocation are impacted by systemic prejudice and racial discrimination that still pumps through the veins of our daily living. All church communities can be a location for grounding people in their cultural identity and provide tools to deal with racism in society and within their own walls. Congregations can embrace and integrate their members’ and leaders’ cultural and ethnic heritages into the life of the faith community. To draw into the larger church potential gifted leaders for whom vocational choice may not appear to be an option, we must recognize that stereotyping and internalized racism shape our perception of people’s possibilities and how we might nurture possibilities in others” (Irene Pak, March/April 2008 *Horizons*, page 33).