

## An Interview with Prince of Peace Lutheran Church Burnsville, MN

[Prince of Peace Lutheran Church - Burnsville MN - ELCA \(popmn.org\)](http://popmn.org)

**The Rev. Dr. Mark Slaughter was interviewed for this piece by our friends at Vibrant Faith. Prince of Peace was one of 24 churches in 8 denominations to participate in *Creating a Culture of Calling (C3)*, a research project conducted by Vibrant Faith in partnership with the Lilly Endowment, Inc.**



Rev. Dr. Mark Slaughter serves as the Minister of Worship Arts at Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. Before moving to Minnesota, he served as the Minister of Music and Worship at First Baptist Church in Owensboro, Kentucky. He also has served in churches in Virginia and Tennessee. In addition to his 35+ years of ministry, he received a Doctor of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity and Church Music from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Bachelor of Music from Belmont University.

Founded in 1963, Prince of Peace is a large, growing ELCA Congregation located in Burnsville, MN, a suburb of Minneapolis. Its mission is to love God and ALL people by being the heart, hands and feet of Jesus in the world so that all might know that they are loved. It's a Christ-centered community that values helping people grow their relationship to God, grow together to celebrate one another's joys and bear one another's burdens, and to provide for the needs of others in Jesus' name. They seek to be known as a connecting church where its members are called to connect:

- with God in a vibrant relationship that brings us to greater aliveness.
- with one another in relationships with other disciples who nurture, support and challenge us.
- with the South Metro area to bring hope and wholeness to others, with specific focus on children, seniors, and people in poverty.
- with partners working together with schools, churches, the "spiritual but not religious", local government, campus partners, other organizations, and the business community to be the heart, hands and feet of Christ in the world.



**Describe the initiative that your congregation is participating in that promotes members living out their faith in daily life.**

The initiative is called "Creating a Culture of Calling," designed to help members understand and embrace their callings from God, and to live more fully into them, in their daily lives. It's a 4-year initiative that was sponsored and funded by the Lilly Foundation that involved 24

congregations representing eight different denominations. The initiative included three convocations that gathered all 24 congregations and having a coach to work with our "C3" team to learn about and create experiments to embed a culture of calling into our faith community.

**What was the spark that caused you to go in this direction?**

Our congregation sought to more fully engage every member in using their gifts to be a living expression of Jesus Christ in the world. We wanted members, not just pastors, view themselves as being called by God and entrusted to the connection and care of others. Our hope is that the majority of our members would be able to articulate their current callings in life and be able to name a few ways in which they were living out their calls.

**How long has the initiative been going on? Who has been involved? What transpired?**

We are in the final year of the initiative. Our pastors and program staff have been involved in various stages of the initiative. A "C3" team was organized to oversee every stage of the project. Short-term task forces were created to oversee specific projects such as the sermon series, the Callings Retreat, the book discussion groups, updating content on our website, and providing resources on callings for our members.

**Describe what happens**

After the first convocation, where the C3 leaders received extensive training, key leaders read and discussed Kathleen Cahalan's book, *The Stories We Live*. C3 leaders then spent time discerning and articulating their callings in life. This was an important step - that core leaders would understand calling, embrace it, and model through words and actions, a life of calling. After that, it was simply a series of experiences and experiments to introduce people to the concept and practical applications of callings in their life

**What has been the response to what you are doing?**

As a whole, members have become much more conversant on the concept of calling. It has profoundly affected our pastors and leadership teams simply because everything we say and do is done through the lens of people's callings. The book discussions, sermon series, and retreat were game changers for our congregation because that's when many people "got it" - when there came an understanding of our own sense of calling and how to live it out.

**Have you done any type of formal evaluation? If so, what?**

Many did an online survey that "benchmarked" where we were at with creating a culture of calling and then another one toward the end of the initiative. We conducted interviews with the members, teams, and task forces to gauge the impact of the initiative.

**What has been the most positive outcome of this? What was the most unexpected outcome?**

The topic of callings has been infused into our culture (and it will need to be continually reinforced) and now shapes our conversations and how we evaluate the impact of our ministries.

**What would you change about it? What are your next steps? What advice would you offer?**

The process we used worked well. Moving forward, it's essential that we continually reinforce the concept of callings, particularly with new people who serve in leadership roles. We are a storytelling church and we will continue to share stories about people living out their callings and practicing their faith in daily life.

**What advice would you give someone hoping to start something similar in their congregation?**

Make sure pastors and key leaders are on board and actively involved in supporting the initiatives. Help all paid and elected leader understand and embrace the vision - share the why, not just the what. Find ways to continually invite people into conversations about callings.

**For more information about Vibrant Faith and their research, please visit the following link:**

[Research Programs - Vibrant Faith Uncover Church Best-Practices](#)