

Vocation means what we are called by God to be and do. For some, this is a specific calling to a particular kind of ministry, in or on behalf of, the Church. For others, it could mean serving God through faithful discipleship in everyday life.

Discovering our vocation always involves discernment, the process by which we discover God's will. Prayer, Bible Study and worship are essential parts of this, helping us to identify what is of God, and what is not. It can be helpful to look at the impact of following a specific path, or of making a particular decision. The fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control) indicate the presence and action of the Holy Spirit.

Discerning our vocation is also part of the response of the people of God to God's invitation and initiative. The Methodist Church continues to affirm that ministry is about the witness of the whole people of God in the world. It is never merely an individual endeavour but always exercised as part of the Body of Christ. All members of the Methodist Church contribute to its life and ministry, and are called to re-discover, with the help of the community, their gifts and the roles which they may be called to fulfil. The diverse and complementary gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit to each and every member of the Body of Christ are for the common good of the whole of God's people so that they may support and encourage one another and engage in witness and service in the world.

Belonging to the Church involves supporting and encouraging each other, engaging in corporate discernment and making oneself accountable to other members of the community of faith. Discerning what our vocation might be is therefore not just about what we might feel God is calling us to do or be, but also about whether this is affirmed by the Church. Our desires and fulfilment are important, but sometimes our gifts and skills may be needed, or best used, in places that we have not thought of or would not choose. Our vocation can change over time. Sometimes we are called to lay aside particular gifts and interests for a season, often to pick them up again at another time. Even within a vocation to a lifelong role or ministry there can be different expressions of this at different times.

For some roles in the life of the Church discernment may be undertaken through particular processes. For others, a call may be tested through discussing it with other Christians, particularly in the local church community.