

Responding to God's Call

God calls some to special service as full-time ministers. What is this call about? How do you respond to God's call on your life?

The Call to Ministry

What is the call to ministry?



God calls every Christian to full-time ministry. The Church of the Nazarene believes all Christians are called to minister. God's call to ministry is not limited to a few saintly Christians who are deeply committed to pray, sacrifice, and serve while others live "normal" lives in a secular society. Whatever vocation God calls you to—carpenter, doctor, farmer, teacher, missionary, or homemaker—becomes the arena for your ministry.

While not everyone will earn their living through full-time ministry, every Christian must choose a vocation and carry out ministry as God directs. Everything you do must be for His glory. God expects full-time Christian service from you.

God's call comes to people in different ways. Biblical accounts of God's call vary greatly. It would be so much easier if God would speak his will in a clear, audible voice or send an engraved invitation. It would require less faith if he called us all in the same predictable way. Instead, he expects us to be sensitive and obedient to his direction as he leads us step by step.

God equips us and helps us fulfill his call. God is the source of the gifts and graces that equip us to fulfill his call. Your call will take advantage of your strengths—an important indication of God's will for you. You may not be aware of those qualities and abilities before he calls you. The advice and help of other Christians will guide and affirm you as you seek to develop and to use your God-given potential for him.

God calls some Christians to specific kinds of ministry. Some Christians will be called to specific ministries, such as pastor, missionary, Christian education, or other ministries, in response and in obedience to the call of God. These callings carry with them such responsibility that the church provides special educational preparation for them. Approval to serve in these areas includes careful examination and nurture before endorsement is given, credentials are granted, and appointments are made.

God calls us through other Christians. Fellow Christians have an important role in confirming or correcting your perception of God's call. Because everyone will not understand your response to God's call, you should prayerfully listen to fellow believers who encourage or question your pursuit of a particular ministry. God may be speaking through them. If you need more direct, personal help, contact your pastor.

To what types of ministry might God be calling me?

The traditional type of ministry to which God calls men and women is preaching ministry. You recognize these men and women as those who lead congregations of believers, serve as evangelists, missionaries, or plant new churches.

However, in our changing world many are recognizing God's call to minister in a variety of different capacities. One type of minister directs works of compassion and relief for people suffering from hunger, homelessness,

sickness, addiction, economic hardship, and disaster. Other ministers serve as chaplains in the armed services, in hospitals, prisons and retirement centers, and with police officers and firefighters.

God may be calling you as a staff pastor to a specific age group of the church like children, or youth, and their families, or senior adults. You may have special talents in outreach evangelism, church administration, or music that God will use to build his church.

Some men and women are called to bi-vocational ministry. These ministers hold significant employment outside the church, to maintain community contacts and provide financial support for their families while they also serve as congregational leaders.

What is ordained ministry?

Ordination is the authenticating, authorizing act of the church that recognizes and confirms God's call to ministerial leadership as stewards and proclaimers of both the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ.

It is important to realize that God calls but the church ordains. The church does not claim the right to call people to the ministry. That is the work of God the Holy Spirit.

Ordination is an authorizing act of the church. By means of ordination the church officially approves you as a minister. The ordination service itself bears witness to the church universal and to the world at large that you are truly a man or woman of God, that you have the gifts and graces for public ministry, that you have a thirst for knowledge, especially for the Word of God, and that you can clearly communicate the sound doctrine of the gospel.



Ordination is also a confirming act of the church. But before the public service of ordination, the church is at work evaluating you and your potential for ministry. The local church and the District Ministerial Credentials Board will observe you closely to determine if they will recommend you to the District Assembly for ordination.

Ordination is a spiritual and theological act of the church. It is more than receiving a certification to minister. It is more than passing qualifying exams of your profession. It is the church's acknowledgment that God calls and gifts certain men and women for ministerial leadership in the church. Because scripture teaches that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Greek, male nor female, but all are one in Christ, the Church of the Nazarene ordains persons regardless of their economic status, their nationality or race, or their gender. The issue in ordination is the testimony of a call from God, completing minimum educational preparation for and experience in ministry, and the demonstration in the life of the church of the gifts and graces for ministerial leadership.

What are elders and deacons?

In the Church of the Nazarene two categories of ordination are recognized—elder and deacon. Elders are ministers, called of God to full-time preaching ministry.

The order of deacon is reserved for those with a call to a lifetime of ministry. Deacons may preach from time to time but are not called to a full-time preaching ministry. The following descriptions are not exhaustive; God may be calling you to these or other types of ministry.

Pastoral Ministry: proclaiming the Word of God, teaching, counseling, and creating centers of compassion as an administrator, friend, guide, and co-laborer within a community of believers

Children and Youth Ministry: shaping tomorrow's world by helping children and teens make the right choices, in an era full of dissolving families and relaxed moral attitudes

Campus Ministry: guiding students from secular and denominational schools through the big decisions of life directly affecting their entire future

Compassionate Ministry: addressing some of society's most critical problems: hunger, homelessness, unemployment, at-risk children and youth, and AIDS, through Compassionate Ministry Centers, Good Samaritan Churches, and Nazarene Disaster Response

Chaplaincy: serving others through the role of chaplain in corporate businesses, the armed forces, jails, prisons, hospitals, and other institutions

Christian Counseling: providing competent guidance to those struggling with stress and instability to the point of complete physical, mental, and/or spiritual collapse

Christian Education: planning, organizing, and administering an effective local church education ministry; writing, planning, and organizing denominational education programs; teaching and administering at various colleges and seminaries around the world

Communications: creative minds and skilled hands transforming sophisticated hardware into meaningful tools for ministry and communicating the gospel locally and globally

Evangelism: spontaneous birthing of spiritual movements that extend the Kingdom of God; starting new churches as the most effective means of evangelism today; personally sharing the life-changing message of Christ with an unsaved friend

Missions: representing the Church of the Nazarene in world areas, in assignments ranging from medicine, education, and agriculture to pastoral ministry and administration.

Do I need to be ordained?

Ordination is not required for ministry in the Church of the Nazarene, although all ministers must complete the educational requirements of the course of study to receive a district ministerial license.
