
Theological Convictions about Call and Leadership

Call System Report

IN REGARD TO THE CALL

Calls are both general and specific, universal and particular. God calls the Church into being. God calls certain people to leadership roles within the Church.

Calls occur within relational contexts: self to self, self to others, and self to God. God calls persons to particular positions in the Church through particular calling bodies. The Reformed theological tradition represented by John Calvin has identified several components of the call somewhat parallel to the relational contexts:

the inner or secret call evidenced by the individual's testimony to it;
the outer or public call evidenced by:

- the opening up of opportunities for the development of gifts;
- the provision of formal training;
- the recognition of competence;
- a search process involving a calling body;
- the confirmation of call by a governing body;
- an invitation to serve extended as the result of the decision of a calling body.

Calls require recognition and assessment of diverse circumstances, gifts, and needs. It is important for calling bodies to assess and identify gifts and needs, even as it is important for persons seeking calls to assess gifts and needs.

Calls result in leadership within particular contexts. Calls to church professionals are calls to leadership in calling bodies. Those called to positions of leadership exercise their gifts in fulfilling their calling.

Calls demand high expectations and accountability. Our denomination has established high standards for ordination and certification that church professionals must fulfill. Calling bodies are accountable as they assume obligations of support, compensation, employing equal opportunity standards, regular evaluation and feedback, etc.

Calls are facilitated by trained administrators and a staff equipped to match institutional/organizational needs and personal gifts.

Calls demonstrate that behavior shows belief, that one's practice reveals one's doctrine. Better matches will occur when sufficient attention is paid to the changing needs of calling bodies, and the leadership styles of persons called to lead in specific contexts.

IN REGARD TO LEADERSHIP

Leadership is both general and specific, universal and particular. God grants to all people leadership capabilities and skills. God gives specific leadership facilities and styles to particular individuals.

Human beings are created "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27). Reformed thinkers have identified that characteristic as the ability to live in relationship. Leadership is nothing more than a function of communicating with and relating to self, others, and God; leading is nothing less than the day-to-day relational behaviors one exerts with self, others, and God in particular contexts. Depending on the relational context, all persons utilize "leading behaviors." Leadership is a universal human capacity, a result of the relational nature of the "image of God" in human beings.

Leadership in the church is a particular kind of relating and communicating. Leaders of the church find their model for leading in the person of Jesus, who came "not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:28). Church leadership is uniform in its purity; all church leaders "share of the one spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) who has given them particular gifts to lead the church. Church leadership is plural in its specificity: a variety of leadership styles accompany a variety of offices and vocations in the church. This theology of leadership recognizes diverse circumstances, gifts, and needs. Leadership occurs within specific bodies and contexts.

Persons called to leadership in the Church:

- have a willingness to be accountable and subject to God, as well as to their sisters and brothers in Christ;
- are people who demonstrate a visible solidarity with those who follow them;
- are dependent upon a calling body which creates conditions that empower a particular individual's leadership;
- exemplify an unusual depth of self-understanding (one's personal history, one's strengths, weaknesses, abilities, disabilities);
- engage in training appropriate to particular offices and/or vocations;
- affirm the authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as well as the historic confessions of the Church.

The God we worship and seek to serve calls from the future, challenging us to allow "new occasions" to "teach new duties." God regularly summons us to find new structures and designs for the Church and its ministries. *Semper reformanda!*
