

Initiatives in VocationCARE Shape Transformative Leaders for Church and Society

ATLANTA – July 8, 2011 – [The Fund for Theological Education \(FTE\)](#) has awarded \$60,000 in new grants to support six congregations and church-related organizations in their creation of innovative ways to cultivate future leaders and the communities that support them.

These programs are the newest additions to more than 65 other congregations and church-related organizations as grantees of the ecumenical partnership of Calling Congregations, an initiative by FTE to encourage vocational discovery and leadership capacity among young people and adults in local churches.

New grantees are in the category of [VocationCARE practice](#).

“VocationCARE is a conversation-based model that helps individuals and communities discern their call by rekindling that urgent longing to actively participate in Christ’s redeeming purpose in the world,” said Courtney Cowart, Director of Congregational Learning at FTE.

While unique to each church, tradition and context, these practices of VocationCARE name four distinct communal ways by which all Christians grow together into a life “worthy of the calling to which we have been called together with one another” (Ephesians 4:2).

Under the acronym of CARE, FTE has named these practices as:

- **C**reate space to explore Christian vocation together;
- **A**sk self-awakening questions together;
- **R**eflect theologically on self and community;
- **E**nact ministry opportunities.

Grantees will undertake this discipline of practice over an 18-month period using one of these four identified CARE practices as a guiding practice for their initiatives. Projects commit to nurturing vocation and leadership in young people and call older adults in these communities to commit to supporting youth and young adults in exploring their call.

“VocationCARE is emblematic of FTE’s intent to partner with congregations and other ministry contexts as generative places for new leaders for church and society,” said Jim Goodmann, Director of Congregational Grants at FTE.

Grantees for Spring 2011 include:

[House for All Sinners and Saints](#), Denver CO - an emerging ELCA congregation in Denver that is "creating space to explore vocation for all ages" and "reflecting together theologically on self and community." HFASS is well connected to the ELCA Urban Service Corps, Rainbow Alley (GLBTQ) and other service volunteer and social action groups in the Denver area.

[Knox Presbyterian Church](#), Naperville, IL - for *Mentors for God’s Team*; coordinated clergy and lay leadership in a project aiming to affect the formation of those “at a critical point in their continued commitment to Christ: college students.” Mentoring system with a research/advisory presence from the Princeton Youth Forum.

[Mere Christianity Forum at Furman University](#), Greenville, SC - for *The Servant Scholars Internship Program*. Furman University students live in intentional Christian community; reflect theologically on vocation, poverty, and community; and directly serve persons living in poverty through internships in vital social service agencies in the Greenville SC area. Focus: *Asking Self-Awakening Questions*

[St Mark’s Lutheran Church-by-the-Narrows](#), Tacoma, WA - for *Hearing and Answering Christ’s Call*. ELCA congregation engages a series of VocationCARE retreats for post-confirmation teenagers, young adults, people who are considering professional ministry and people near the age of retirement. Each group will engage a design process in the context of these retreats for sustainable implementation. Individual stories of call from people of all ages will be videotaped for a "St. Mark’s Story Corps" project.

[Third Baptist Church of Chicago](#) - *The Samuel and Eli Project: Listening to Serve God*. An African American congregation undertaking an initiative that will engage high school aged youth with adult mentors from the congregation, known as Lead *Listening Learners* (L3 Mentors), to "explore, learn and practice spiritual disciplines that will help participants hear and discern God’s call to Christian service." Focus: *Create Space to Explore Christian Service*.

[Virginia Conference, United Methodist Church](#) – Conference-wide engagement of VocationCARE that is directed toward the mentor-candidate relationship of the United Methodist Ordination process of the Virginia Conference, ten initially targeted congregations, and several conference board leadership teams. Initial two-day training by FTE/VocationCARE is supplemented by coaching system in

each district of the Conference for candidacy mentoring and the engagement of mentoring relationships for young people in conference and congregational ministries.

Each of the awarded projects has a prior history of practice or initiative in intentionally visiting the vocation of their congregation or ministry context and of the young people within them. An additional round of awards will be made for [VocationCARE practice grants](#) in the spring of 2012.

Calling Congregations seeks to establish a national network of congregational and church-related partners committed to the cause of raising future pastoral leaders. Programming includes regional workshops and trainings; a national conference; teaching tools; Web-based resources and other support.

Grants will also be awarded for [Pastoral Internships](#) in the Fall of 2011. Letters of Intent for these are due on **September 1, 2011**. For more information about grants to congregations and church-related organizations, visit: www.fteleaders.org/calling or [visit our site map](#) to see what previous grantees are doing.

The Fund for Theological Education is a national ecumenical organization dedicated to supporting a new generation of talented, diverse Christian leaders who renew the church and change the world through vocations in pastoral ministry and theological education. For more information, visit www.fteleaders.org.

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