

Nearly half of seminary students say someone else suggested ministry before they ever seriously considered it.

WHAT WE STUDIED

Drawing from 36 in-depth interviews with first year Masters of Divinity students, we explored how other people facilitated a sense of calling for students prior to starting seminary.



SIX TYPES OF PEOPLE EMERGED AS PLAYING A FORMATIVE ROLE IN ONE'S CALL NARRATIVE:



THE INSTIGATOR

Someone who prompts, initiates, or initially encourages one's calling.

THE EXEMPLAR

Someone who models the way, making paths seem possible and/or appealing.

THE INTERPRETER

Someone who shapes how one makes meaning of experiences and feelings.

THE AFFIRMER

Someone who reinforces the reality and validity of being called.

THE CO-DISCERNER

Someone who serves as a conversation partner in how to enact next steps.

THE CHALLENGER

Someone who rejects, dismisses, or denies one's sense of call.



WHAT WE FOUND

47% of students mentioned someone else suggested ministry before they considered it seriously for themselves.

Men were more likely to name an exemplar (75%) than women (50%). In nearly all cases the gender of the exemplars matched one's own.

While only a few students mentioned challengers, more women (20%) reported their presence than men (6%).

WHAT IT MEANS

The call to ministry, while deeply spiritual, is a social enterprise, too—which might prompt you to reflect on your own vocational path. Do you see any of these types of people at work in your story?



*from Johnston, Erin, and David Eagle, "Expanding the Horizontal Call: A Typology of Social Influence on the Call to Ministry," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (2022) 0(0): 1-21.