

An Interview with Round Hill Community Church Greenwich, CT

www.roundhillcommunitychurch.org

"Imagination, not desperation!"

The Rev. Dr. Ed Horstmann was interviewed for this piece by our friends at Vibrant Faith. Round Hill Community Church was one of 24 churches in 8 denominations to participate in *Creating a Culture of Calling (C3)*, a research project conducted by Vibrant Faith in partnership with the Lilly Endowment, Inc.



For the past seven years, Ed has served as the Senior Pastor at Round Hill Community Church. Beforehand, he served an urban congregation in Hartford for fourteen years. In his role as pastor, he loves to see the way that imagination and creativity can inspire people of faith to embrace challenges and dreams that bring hope to the world. Reading and walking are the daily practices that most nourish Ed's spiritual life.

Round Hill Community Church is a self-governing, non-denominational body that seeks to foster a community of faith where people of all ages and backgrounds pursue spiritual growth; where God is worshipped in Word and praised in music; where friends are made and hurts are healed. The congregation strives to be a community where individuals commit their time and resources to education, fellowship, and to helping those in need among their church family and in the broader world. Through resources and opportunities, Round Hill Community Church equips people seeking to make Christian faith a way of life that engages heart, mind, soul, and strength and where faith, hope, justice, and love are valued, and above all, Jesus is Lord.



Describe the initiative that your congregation is participating in that promotes members living out their faith in daily life.

We were one of 24 churches that was involved in Lilly-funded project focused on "Creating a Culture of Calling," designed to help members understand and embrace their callings from God, and to live more fully into them, in their daily lives. The initiative included three convocations that gathered all 24 congregations. We were assigned a coach to walk alongside and resource team as we created experiments to infuse a culture of calling into our faith community.

What was the spark that caused you to go in this direction?

Our hope was to help our members discover, embrace, and more fully develop their callings in life and see God at work in the process.

How long was the initiative? Who has been involved? What transpired?

The four-year initiative involved our pastors, program staff, and a small group of leaders (C3 Team), who coordinated the learning opportunities and experiments that took place. The C3 Team usually met monthly, sometimes on-site and sometimes online, to set, implement and celebrate short-term wins related to quarterly goals that were set for the initiative.

Describe what happens

The C3 Team received onsite and online training, read a few books and articles on callings, and discerned and shared their callings in life. We started using and unpacking language related to callings in sermons, newsletters, Facebook posts, and leadership meetings. We invested time and energy into capturing people's faith stories, then sharing them in multiple communication platforms. Once a quarter, we reviewed our 90-day goals, listed our learnings, and then established new "faithful next steps" for our team and members.

What has been the response to what you are doing?

I believe that more of our members embraced the idea that we "all are called" by God to discover and develop one's gifts. What we talked about in meetings and how we measured ministry success changed as a result of callings language. We hosted sermon series and small group discussions that increased people's awareness about callings. It had a profound effect on our church's "going green" initiative. Our church felt called to be better stewards of God's creation, particularly related to the use of our church facilities.

Have you done any type of formal evaluation? If so, what?

The initiative includes a series of online surveys and small group surveys. Our C3 Team, and sometimes program staff and elected leaders, periodically asked church members and members in our community 1-3 questions, and then shared the responses they gathered at their upcoming meetings.

What would you change about it? What are your next steps? What advice would you offer?

The initiative provided good structure and support. They helped us contextualize the content and experiments to our setting. We continue to reinforce the initiative through our consistent use of language and storytelling activities. Some members of the C3 Team became part of *Green Church* project. We may invite people to discuss another book on callings in the future.

What advice would you give someone hoping to start a similar initiative in their congregation?

Ask yourself, "Are you ready to make this priority? What might we need to let go or defer to make space for a new initiative?" Invite people on your team that have gifts for dreaming, designing, delegating, and doing. You need idea people as well as implementers. Make gathering information from members an ongoing endeavor. Set short-term wins and celebrate your progress to maintain momentum. Learn from your failures and your successes.