Volition and Vocation: The Interplay of Intention and Passion in Discernment
REA Collaborative Session 2017 –Outline
Lead by: Denise Janssen, Jessica Young Brown, and Lakisha R. Lockhart
with The Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University

Precis/Abstract
Presenters seek to survey the role of volition in the quest for vocation, with particular interest in the developmental transition from adolescence to adulthood. They will investigate the connections between volition and vocation, and how passion mediates this relationship. The session will explore processes that might lead to a disconnect between passion and action in the context of ministry, and the influence of this phenomenon on vocation. Presenters will probe the ways adolescents and emerging adults might answer a call to action as a way to live out passion and vocation. The session proposed will create an experience that engages and challenges participants on cognitive, affective, behavioral, and volitional levels through mini-presentations, reflection, and playful activities.

I. Introduction – Toward Definitions of Vocation and Volition
a. We begin with a conversation about the terms “vocation” and “volition.” Rather than narrowly defining each term, we will use faith practices (holy conversation) to attempt to synthesize the meanings and implications of each term. Here are a few thoughts to start the conversation:
   i. Some define vocation as “the point at which God’s call on our lives allows us to make a substantive impact in the world around us.”
   ii. Vocation encompasses our own relationship with God, along with our gifts, abilities, experiences, and our relationships with others
   iii. Parker Palmer, in Let Your Life Speak, offers: “…Today I understand vocation quite differently – not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice “out there” calling me to be something I am not. It comes from a voice “in here” calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.”
   iv. Nancy Oliver, in her poem, “The Summer Day,” writes: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”
   v. FTE’s VocationCARE manual offers the following ideas: “…VocationCARE practices offer a series of actions to take … lead[ing] to a type of spiritual meeting place — a place of divine mystery, with the primary mystery being our own lives. Doing this work helps reveal how our individual and collective lives participate in the life and will of God. Simply put, VocationCARE wakes us up to the creative action of God in our lives — and, together, guides us to discern how we are called to live in the world.” Might there be some synthesis of the ideas of vocation and volition present here?
   vi. For some, volition is will or motivation to do the work set out for us. For others, it is intention, action, determination, passion.
   vii. We will explore antecedents and components of volition and its function in the vocational discernment process.
II. **How we Change and Grow**
   a. We will explore the nature of human behavior, typically in times of change, and transition. We explore vocation as a call to action, and how understanding patterns in change behavior can illuminate this process. We will invite participants to reflect on their own vocation journeys to mine for tools for supporting the process of vocation in others.

III. **“Sound of the Genuine”**
   a. We will reflect on Howard Thurman’s “The Sound of the Genuine” as we explore the inward, introspective process of vocation, which we contend is a necessary precursor for the outward work of vocation. We will encourage participants to reflect on how their own cultural background and experience play a role in the way they understand and talk about vocation.

**Outcomes:**
- Participants will build their knowledge about how psychological theories of behavior change impact vocational decisions
- Participants will engage in theological reflection about their own vocational journey with specific attention to cultural context
- Participants will develop and explore strategies for aiding others, particularly emerging adults, in the process of theological exploration

**Some Works Consulted**
Dean, Kenda Creasy. *How Youth Ministry Can Change Theological Education – If We Let It* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016).
Oliver, Nancy. “The Summer Day.”
Romans 7:13-23 *New Revised Standard Version*