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CHARLENE RACHUY COX

# Vocare: A Spiritual Practice for the Spaces Between

I am writing this article looking out my home office window onto a canopy of old-growth trees. It is 8:00 p.m. on a late August day, and I am struck by two things. One, nighttime is rapidly falling, and two, there is a single patch of yellow near the crown of a sea of green. It is still summer, though there are no longer 15 hours of daylight in Minnesota. It is not yet autumn, though there are hints of it everywhere. The view from my window reminds me of what I already know: we live our lives in the spaces “between no longer and not yet.”<sup>1</sup>

I first came across this idea of the “space between” several years ago in a blog post by Nancy Levin. She writes, “Honor the space between no longer and not yet.”

Of the host of *spaces between* that existentially mark this present time, given my work at St. Olaf College as the Director of Programming, Engagement, and Innovation for Congregational Thriving, a few are critical to me: the space between no longer flourishing denominational churches and a *not yet* determined post-Christian church; the space between a no longer pre-George Floyd world and a *not yet* realized world of racial justice; the space between a no longer binary worldview and a *not yet* accomplished non-binary way of

being. Equally significant are the personal *spaces between* that mark all of our lives—spaces between jobs, relationships, and stages of life, spaces between joy and sorrow, history, and hope.

Levin reminds, however, that it is not just about recognizing these spaces between, but *honoring* them. One way to do this is to engage in spiritual practices that “deepen...relationships with the sacred and the world around”<sup>2</sup> us in ways that open us to the unique, creative possibilities that a particular *space between* affords. Such honoring is the purpose of the *Vocare* spiritual practice.

Developed as a part of the Nourishing Vocation Project, *Vocare* is a six-word spiritual practice designed to help individuals, small groups, and whole communities discern and live more fully into their various callings—personal and professional, public and private—so that life in the present can be lived more intentionally on purpose for the common good.



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In its most basic form, VOCARE invites reflection upon the following questions:

- V:** What do I **value**, and how am I living my values?
- O:** To what am I being asked to be **open**? How do I respond?
- C:** What voices, literal and metaphorical, are **calling** to me? Which ones do I listen to, and why? Which ones can I silence?
- A:** Where am I investing my attention? Does my **attention** align with my values?
- R:** What are my **regrets**? What insight do I gain from them, and how are they calling me to something new or different?
- E:** When, where, and how have I **experienced the presence of the sacred** in my everyday life? What does that experience say to me? What will I carry with me from this reflection?

Designed to be used across religious traditions, perspectives and worldviews, there are a variety of established *Vocare* experiences. These include guided meditations, Sing *Vocare!*, and Christian worship liturgies. Users of *Vocare* are encouraged to adapt its language to their worldview, make it their own, and engage it in a way that nourishes their own unique *spaces between no longer and not yet*.

More information can be found in the *Vocare* section of the Nourishing Vocation Project website: <https://tinyurl.com/288zenuh>

## Endnotes

1. Levin, Nancy. "Is It Time for a Graceful Exit? - Nancy Levin." *The Practice*, 24 June 2015, [nancylevin.com/is-it-time-for-a-graceful-exit/](http://nancylevin.com/is-it-time-for-a-graceful-exit/).
2. Brussat, Frederic and Mary Ann. "Spirituality & Practice." *What Are Spiritual Practices?*, Spirituality and Practice: Resources for Spiritual Journeys, 2006, [www.spiritualityandpractice.com/about/what-are-spiritual-practices](http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/about/what-are-spiritual-practices).