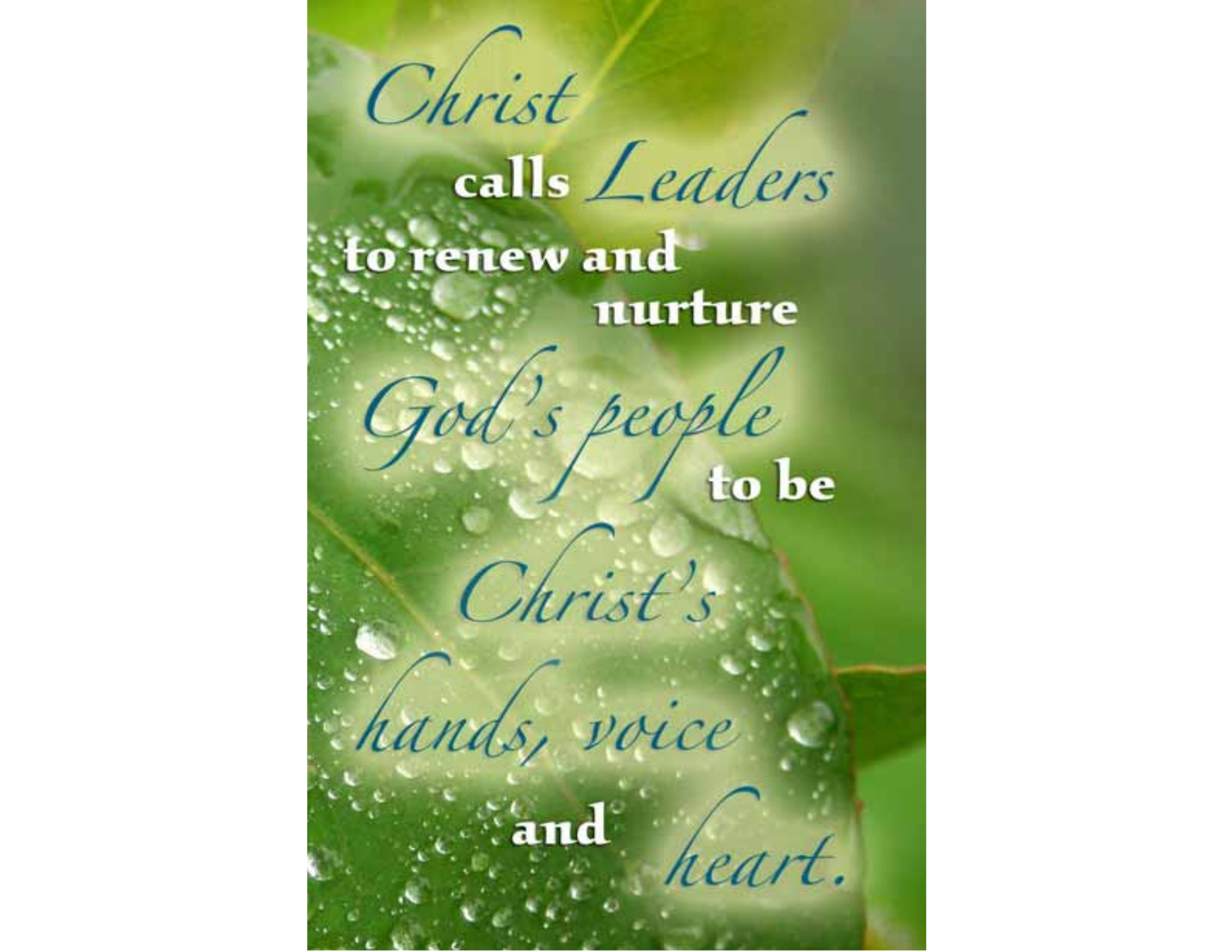


A close-up photograph of a vibrant green leaf, likely from a plant like a peace lily, covered in numerous clear, glistening water droplets. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, creating a serene and fresh atmosphere. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Christ
calls *Leaders*
to renew and
nurture

God's people **to be**

Christ's
hands, voice
and *heart.*

*AM I BEING CALLED?*¹

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

Every single one of us has a good work to do in life. The good work not only accomplishes something needed in the world, but completes something in us. When it is finished, a new work emerges that will help us to make green a desert place, as well as to scale another mountain in ourselves. The work we do in the world when it is true vocation always corresponds in some mysterious way to the work that goes on within² us.

God calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger³ meet.

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. (1 Peter 4:10)

Do you know someone who is so excited about the work she does and attributes her reaction to the fact that she has been called by God to that particular vocation? Or perhaps you have met someone who has a very clear sense of where God is calling him and pursues his path with confidence and without anxiety. We perceive such people to be special people with a special call. But The Presbyterian Church in Canada doesn't believe that only certain people are called. In fact it believes the opposite - that all Christians are called.

The **primary vocation** of all Christians is to be in relationship with God through Christ. We delight in God's gracious love and respond in praise and gratitude. As the Shorter Catechism says, "Our chief end is to glorify and enjoy God forever."

In the context of this relationship God gives each of us a vocation that involves our total selves, who we are and our God-given gifts. Our **secondary vocation** is the exercise of these gifts in service to God.

All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As his body on earth we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head. (Living Faith 7.2.1)

How does one recognize a call?

A call has two elements - a sense of inner rightness and outer confirmation. Inner rightness is hard to define because different people experience it in different ways. One may try to describe it as restlessness, yearning, urging, or prompting that is answered by accepting this vocation. The outcome is a conviction in one's heart and mind that God is extending this invitation or a sense of God's leading and a willingness to be open to where God will lead.

Outer confirmation means that one's sense of call and one's gifts for this vocation are recognized and affirmed by others.

Could my Christian vocation be in secular employment?

For most Christians, the answer is yes. For most Christians, their primary arena for exercising their vocation is in the world and the exercise of their vocation in the church is in a voluntary capacity.

How will my call be different if I am called to work within the church's ministries?

Work within the church's ministries can be carried out as an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments, a designated diaconal minister, or a lay staff person. At the present time, The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a well-defined process of preparation and discernment by which individuals prepare for the first two roles, but no similar process for lay staff positions. However some aspects of the process for ordained and diaconal ministry (as outlined below) might provide useful guidance for persons seeking to serve as lay staff.

The call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry has some distinguishing features. First, the primary arena for exercising these vocations is in the church in a full-time or part-time capacity rather than in a voluntary capacity.

Secondly, for those who are testing a calling to ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry, our church has specified from where the outer confirmation must come. The call must be validated by the session of the home congregation, the presbytery and one of the church's theological colleges. The final confirmation of the call comes when a congregation or other agency of this church issues a call.

How can I be sure that I am being called to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry?

The exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments and diaconal ministry uses the following gifts, qualities or characteristics. Why not check over the list and see how well it describes you? You don't need to have a full measure of all of these characteristics but the more you have the stronger is the likelihood that ministry in the church is your calling. Some characteristics are considered essential; others are beneficial. A candidate might not possess all of these qualities at the beginning of the process but should show potential for developing them or have developed them by the end of the process.

- ✦ Christian faith
- ✦ An integration of faith and life
- ✦ A call to ministry
- ✦ Ability to express this faith and call in a way that is real, articulate and integrated
- ✦ Awareness of having gifts for ministry
- ✦ Awareness of having qualities or circumstances that may be obstacles to ministry
- ✦ A spiritual discipline
- ✦ An ability to create a support system for self

- Active involvement in a congregation of this church
- Tested and affirmed leadership in this church
- Acceptance of the Reformed understanding of the faith
- Acceptance of the diversity in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Understanding of the mission of the church
- Understanding of the role of minister (word and sacraments/diaconal)
- Integration of faith, view of the church and concept of ministry
- A realistic assessment of self
- Mental and emotional health
- Potential for growth
- Ability to relate to others and work with others
- Ability to give leadership
- Ability to handle conflict
- Ability to cope with stress
- Compassion
- A healthy attitude toward authority
- A good command of language
- Ability to study at a Master's level
- A capacity for critical reflection
- A plan to finance studies

Am I being called to a ministry in this church?

During the process of preparation and discernment, this will be an important question you and the church will have to answer.

¹ *The Candidacy Process of Preparation and Discernment for the Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*, pages 3-5.

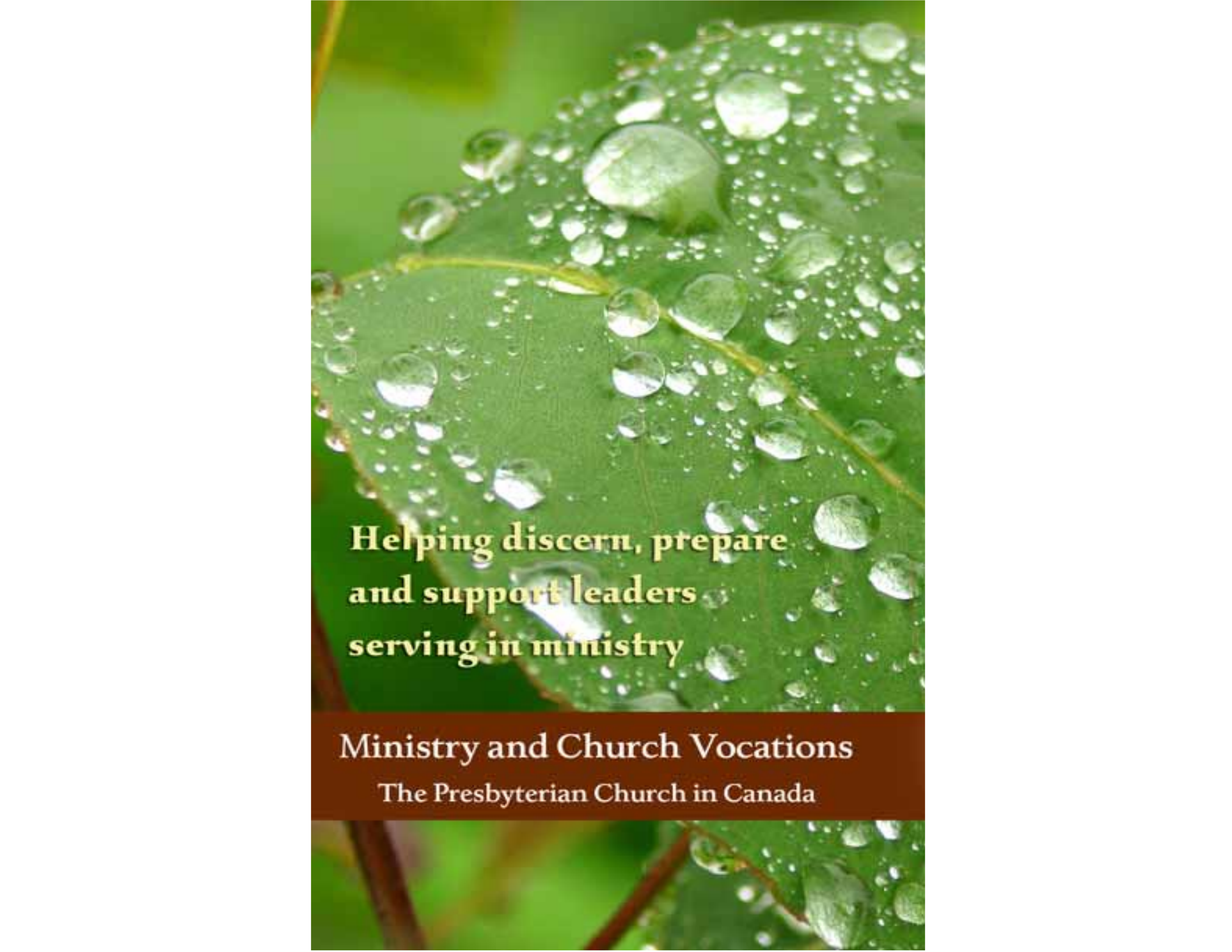
² Elizabeth O'Connor, *Cry Pain, Cry Hope*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), p.14. Used with permission.

³ Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking. A Theological ABC*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p.95. Used with permission.

Preparing for Ordained or Diaconal Ministry: an Overview

1. Member of PCC congregation for at least 1 year
2. Approved by the session of your congregation
3. Certified by your presbytery as a candidate for ministry
4. Recertified as a candidate for ministry annually by your presbytery
5. Attended a guidance conference and completed psychological testing (costs covered by the church)
6. Completed a university undergraduate degree (3-year or 4-year). A B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) with courses in English (or French), History and Philosophy gives the best foundation for the M.Div. program
7. Completed an M.Div. (Master of Divinity) degree (3-year) in a PCC theological college (Knox College in Toronto, Presbyterian College in Montreal or Vancouver School of Theology); full-time or part-time study
8. Examined and certified as a candidate for ordination or designation for diaconal ministry by your presbytery
9. Granted by a PCC theological college the diploma indicating readiness for ministry
10. Offered and accepted a position in the ministries of The PCC, with the approval of your presbytery
11. Ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designated as a Diaconal Minister

For the process in full, see *The Candidacy Process of Preparation and Discernment for The Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*. (On www.presbyterian.ca, choose “Resources”, then “On-line Resources”, then “Ministry”.)



**Helping discern, prepare
and support leaders
serving in ministry**

Ministry and Church Vocations

The Presbyterian Church in Canada