

**Dear Pastor and MentorConnect Participant,**



Almost ten years ago I felt a call from God to move to MO and attend Urshan Graduate School of Theology (UGST). I had been attending my home church in Lansing, MI under the direction of Pastor David Stephens for nearly twenty-five years. I was on staff at the church as a visitor and outreach coordinator, served as a youth leader, led small groups, led worship and preached sermonettes, and taught several home Bible Studies. I had a burden for ministry, to serve and be used by God. When I felt the call to attend seminary I was unsure, because I was a woman. For most of my life I had desired to be a pastor's wife and be active in ministry, yet I did not know God was calling me to be a minister. I was shy and came from a broken home, and I had no idea God wanted to use my story and testimony for His glory. It was during my time at UGST I felt the call to become a licensed minister and to follow God's call on my life, even though I did not know many women ministers and was unsure of the path ahead. Yet, I trusted God and walked under the leadership in my life who encouraged me to get my license. I was under the direction of Pastor Garry Tracy as both my pastor and still my presbyter. I have also had several professors serve as mentors in my life who have taught me and have encouraged me to pursue God's call on my life: David Norris, Cindy Miller, James Littles, Jeff Brickle, Daniel Segraves, and Joey Peyton. I also consider Sister Claudette Walker, Nancy Norris, Kathryn Stephens, and Rose Dunham some of my greatest mentors who have taught me so much about serving and following God's call. My husband Luke Schmalz is also a licensed minister. I appreciate his support more than anything, and am so blessed by the legacy and love for God and ministry his father Michael Schmalz instilled in him. Currently, we attend Pentecostal Lighthouse, a small church in St. Louis, pastored by Jeff Snyder. We felt called to go and support this pastor and church with encouragement and any type of support needed. We feel a call to pastoral ministry, and at this time both work in the field of hospital and hospice chaplaincy. I work at Barnes Jewish Hospital as a CPE Supervisory Candidate and staff chaplain. In 2016, I was asked to serve on the newly formed Women in Ministry Network, UPCI. Part of this was because of my burden to help other women in their calling.

In 2013, I started Women of Vision Leadership. It began from a vision God gave me. It started as an online blog. God later gave me a vision to write small group material, hold small groups for local women in St. Louis, start the MentorConnect program, have a small retreat, and continue to support women in their calling and ministry through encouraging words on our Facebook Page and the website (<http://crystalschmalz.com/home/>). In the first year of the blog, nearly 20,000 people viewed the online blog articles. Now, in 2017 we have surpassed 300,000 views and the website has been viewed in over 160 countries. In 2016, we held our first small retreat, and 26 women from around the country came and heard Apostolic teaching on how to be a female leader and how to follow after God's call. I often get messages from women around the country who are hungry to follow God's call and are looking for support and encouragement. I have even received messages from missionaries and pastor's wives who are lonely and often feel isolated in their calling. I try to support these women on a one on one basis by offering a listening ear and prayer. My goal with MentorConnect is to help support, encourage, and build the Kingdom of God by offering intentional mentoring and training to female leaders. I do not consider myself in a pastoral role with these women, but more of a friend and mentor relationship. I encourage each of these women to speak with their local pastor and to be accountable to the authority God has placed in their lives.

One reason why Women of Vision Leadership and our MentorConnect program exists is to help support the Oneness Pentecostal message, and to encourage revival in these end times. It is also a

structured mentoring program which helps women who might slip away from solid doctrine and truth. My goal is to support the Oneness Pentecostal message and doctrine as taught in our UPCI Articles of Faith. As a licensed minister I hold myself accountable to this doctrine, and encourage women to be accountable through licensure with the UPCI.

Mentor Connect is a program which I have designed to help connect women to another woman in leadership or active ministry. The program is designed to be an added blessing, and is not designed to take the place of local pastoral ministry. I encourage each participant to talk with their pastor before becoming a part of the program, to get their blessing and approval. We have connected about thirty women to other women mentors in the past couple of years. God is working through these relationships. I believe the work of the Holy Spirit is helping these young and older women stay connected and in the Church. I have seen so many of my generation leave the Church and I believe we need to reclaim our Pentecostal heritage and keep our faith! We need to be firm in our Pentecostal doctrine, in the truth, and be ready for the Apostolic revival God is sending every day! If we want to continue to build and grow, we need to be intentional about mentoring a younger generation and allowing God to grow them into the leaders God is calling them to become.

I have often heard from male ministers their frustration in trying to mentor women in their church. They do not know where to start. There are often very few women who have their licenses in the district, and they are sometimes unaware of the needs of women in ministry. Mentor Connect helps mentor these women and provides a friendship with another woman to help them pray, be accountable in their conduct and ministry, and get connected with other women who share a vision for church growth and leadership. Mentors connect with mentees once a month either by email, phone, text message, or a card in the mail. Mentors are also available to listen in moments of crisis and spiritual distress.

In the future I hope to grow Women of Vision Leadership and continue to support the UPCI Women in Ministry Network. I want to include video testimonies and sermons on the blog, create scholarships for women who want to attend Bible College and Seminary, help support pastor's wives, and help local churches and districts start programs to help encourage training and mentoring of female leaders interested in pursuing ministry. I have experienced that most of the ministry I provide at this time is supporting women one by one. I have held conferences, yet most of my ministry has been writing a card to a woman, sending an email of encouragement, answering questions, listening to stories, sharing a meal together, praying together, and mentoring women one by one. I truly believe God sends the harvest, and we plant seeds and water the ground. In many ways I do a lot of behind the scenes work, organizing, and offering support. I am interested in speaking and preaching out more, should God open those doors.

Please prayerfully consider having your female leaders and those interested in pursuing ministry get involved in this program. You can view more information on the webpage (<http://crystalschmalz.com/mentor-connect/>), and I would certainly be willing to talk with you over the phone if you have any questions. I want to thank you for your ministry and thank you for the time you spend every day investing in your church.

Sincerely,

*Crystal Schmalz*

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