

Michele Bachmann's calling

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

June 2, 2011

After President Obama's inauguration in 2009, I [wrote about](#) going to a DC church that weekend at which I heard him referred to from the pulpit as a prophet called by God. Love the president or hate him, that's a troubling category mistake.

Now Rep. Michele Bachmann [says she feels a "calling" to run for president](#). The congresswoman told a public television program in Iowa that she "had this calling and tugging on [her] heart that this is the right thing to do."

That's some religiously loaded language, though Bachmann doesn't actually say that it's God who's doing the calling and the heart-tugging. Perhaps there's nothing more here than garden-variety pandering to the many conservative evangelicals who will be caucusing in Iowa before we know it.

But what if Bachmann really believes that she has a calling to run for president? It's common to use language of vocation and calling to speak of secular pursuits along with religious ones. Is there any particular problem with speaking this way about running for political office?

Bachmann doesn't go so far as to say God wants her to *win* the nomination or the presidency. Though some of her supporters might make that leap, for many that would be a far more problematic claim.

For those of us who don't share Bachmann's views, is there space in our understanding of calling to believe that she might be called to run for president even as we're called to vote against her? Or does that reduce the concept of calling to nothing?