

Who
me

29th April 2012

Vocations Sunday

Contents include stories, drama,
suggestions for junior church,
prayers, hymns and readings

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Introduction

God calls people to various ministries. Sometimes we try and ignore the call, sometimes we don't want to believe the call, sometimes we follow. Vocations Sunday gives the whole church an opportunity to explore the question 'Who, me?'

Within our churches today we have people who have followed the call and are serving in many ways. We ask that you open your ears, eyes and hearts to discern if God is calling you today.

What does God call us to?

There are a variety of areas in which we may be called by God to serve. Some are within the life of a local congregation, some are in our communities. Some are called to a ministry in the secular world, such as chaplaincy. See the following three stories from people who heard and responded to the call.

Hospital Chaplaincy

When did I first feel called to do hospital chaplaincy? My background has been in working in animal welfare/nursing and later on supporting my partner through mental illness.

I was asked to join the hospitals' Chaplaincy Team as a volunteer working alongside Lay Pastoral Assistants from other churches and also helping out and assisting with services on Sunday mornings on a rota.

A vacancy appeared at the hospital for an Assistant Chaplain. It was explained that I didn't need to be ordained. I applied for the post and was offered the placement of one session a week visiting Free Church patients. Two years later the role changed, and I was given the opportunity to work on call covering the lead Chaplain's day off and annual leave. This led to covering regularly on call at weekends and nights.

I always felt I wasn't qualified enough to do this ministry, but God had other ideas and was also one step ahead of me, opening doors for me and leading me into different situations. It has been a wonderful journey; a humbling experience and a great privilege to be asked to accompany patients and their families on their journey of physical and spiritual distress, bringing them into the presence of God.

Penny

A Minister's story

I left school at 16 with no qualifications and floated around from job to job. I never felt comfortable and had a nagging feeling that God was calling me to something specific. I felt the call to ministry when, as a 19yr old I worked as a volunteer with 'Time for God'. I pursued the call which led me into conversations with a number of people, and eventually plucked up the courage to talk to my Moderator. After a fairly rocky road and seven years later I left theological college. In 20 plus years of ministry I have experienced the highs and lows of my calling. God still surprises and challenges me. In that time I have changed and the church has changed. What is round the corner? Only God knows.

An Ordinand's story

"Is it I lord?

Here I am lord,

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go lord if you lead me

I will hold your people in my heart".

Have you ever found yourself singing,

"It's not me Lord!

I'm not here Lord;

I'm not listening in the night...

I'm not going... so don't lead me...

And I'm not always very keen on your people either....."

If so, then it's quite clear that God has some form of ministry in mind for you!

Think of the heroes of old, Gideon (hiding in a wine press), Moses (I can't speak) Jonah (taxi!). God likes to call us all, but he seems to take special joy in hounding those of us who don't want to, can't, don't feel up to the job or are just plain running in the other direction!

For me the excuses for not obeying the call to ministry were many and various, and for twenty years I found perfectly good reasons for not offering myself for service.

But God does not shut up and go away. His love for us and his desire to see us put the best in and get the best out of our Christian life means that in the end there are no excuses.

So stop making excuses, we need you!

The candidating process will help to refine what God is calling you to. If God is calling you there will be many obstacles, but in the end no obstacle that will stand in the way.

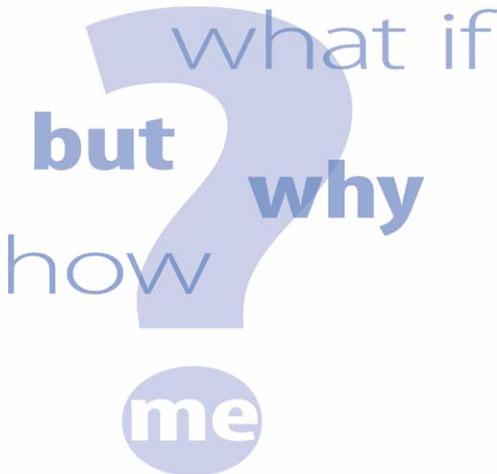


Offer what you have, the gifts God has given. You may be called to eldership, to preaching, to caring, to full-time ministry, to part-time ministry.

There is no such thing as a Christian without a calling. Do God's work - find out what you are called to!

And for those of you who can sing the words straight, without any hesitation, you know what that means don't you? Yes; God is calling and you've already said yes!

Nicky Gilbert, final months of training for ministry in non-stipendiary service at Westminster College.



Activities

List ways of service and ministry of people in your church today. You may be surprised at what you find, and the number of people whom your church's ministry is reaching. Remember, people also minister in many ways in our communities as well, and in doing this exercise you may also see the gaps that need filling. Is God calling you to fill one of them?

'Peter's call'

with apologies to Wild Goose Publications!

Peter) ER, Jesus?

Jesus) Yes Peter?

P) You know you said we should follow you....

J) Yeeees!!

P) How do you mean?

J) How do you mean, 'How do I mean?'

P) What do you mean by 'follow'?

J) Well... where I go, you go... What I do, you do...

P) But do we always have to follow you?

J) I can't see where we are going with this...

P) Exactly!

J) Exactly what?

P) *I can't see where we're going!*

J) Oh I see...

P) But I don't...

- J) You don't have to see where we're going... that's why it's called 'following'!
- P) But what if we get separated and I get lost?
- J) Then you weren't following very closely were you?
- P) (Ignoring Him) If I knew where we were going, if we got separated I could meet you there...
- J) Meet me where?
- P) The place we're going...
- J) But we're not going to a place...
- P) Then why are we walking?!
- J) Well, ok, we are going to a place, but that's not what's important.
- P) You mean *where's* important!
- J) I mean *where* is not important.
- P) So why am I walking with you?
- J) (Sighs) It's the 'with' that's important.
- P) I'm not following...
- J) I can see that!
- P) No, I mean, what do you mean?...I'm walking with you, following you, beside you, not going anywhere, but still going....How will I know when I arrive?
- J) I'll be there to meet you!
- P) Oh dear!
- J) Ok be like that, I won't meet you..... I'm only teasing... I'm looking forward to you arriving...
- P) You are difficult to follow...

- J) (Laughing) Yes I know!
- Don't worry, just walk with me, get to know me, then just as you get used to things... they will change!
- P) But I *don't* change.
- J) Walk with me, do the things you see me do, greet people, love people, tell them I love them, don't worry too much about where you find yourself, there'll be plenty to do... Come with me, companions are always welcome.
- P) So we'll be ok, it'll be an easy journey?
- J) I wouldn't count on that! But I will always be there!
- P) Where?
- J) Don't start that again...
- P) Only teasing!
- J) That's quite enough of that... where shall we go for lunch?
- P) I'll follow you ...

Contributed by Nicky Gilbert

Vocation ideas for working with children and young people

Hearing Learning Following Serving

Thinking about children and young people especially...

Here are some ideas to enable and encourage children and young people to explore their vocation, using any of the above themes:

Talk to them about how God called you in your youth, dispel the idea that it is an adult territory, God calls you when you are older etc.

Mentoring programmes are superb for travelling alongside young people who are exploring their vocations.



Ideas for each theme

Hearing – Bible stories such as ‘Samuel hears God’

Learning and following – Ensure that your church’s programmes for children and young people are of a quality that trains disciples ready for action.

Serving – Encourage and enable children and young people to get involved actively in all areas of church work so that they can learn about different roles and explore early callings, eg: ministers, youth workers, catering, caretakers and more.

Invite people in your congregation who have followed a calling, be it paid or voluntary, ordained or lay e.g. lay preacher, youth worker, church secretary or treasurer, children’s worker. Interview them if they are willing, and let people hear their stories.

Prayers

Loving God, as you have called people throughout the ages, we give thanks for those called to serve you today. As we read stories throughout the Bible we are reminded of the 'call' that went out to unsuspecting people. May we be alive and aware of your 'calling' today.

Lord God, you called your disciples, call us now.

Open our eyes, that we may see you.

Open our ears, that we may hear you.

Open our hearts, that we may love you and follow you.

Amen



Pray for children and young people, that they will listen and hear and follow.

Pray for all those involved in Christian education.

Pray for all serve the church.

Pray for guidance and discernment in lives as we follow our calling.

Suggested hymns – from Rejoice & Sing

Jesus call us o'er the tumult 355

Brother, Sister, let me serve you 474

Be thou my vision 489

Dear master in whose life I see 493

O Jesus I have promised 509

Seek ye first 512

Lead us Heavenly Father lead us 543

Will you come and follow me 558

Go forth and tell 574

Lord speak to me 613

Suggested readings

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Psalm 27

Isaiah 6

Jeremiah 1: 4-19

Matthew 4 :18-23

Ephesians 1:3-14

