

God's Call



Who is God calling us to be?

Lent 2024

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WAIAPU

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My hope is that through these reflections you may greet the Easter Dawn with a new sense of the love God has for you and for all the world.

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1 Welcome

Welcome to this study

This study has been designed to be undertaken in two different contexts: by groups meeting in parishes or other ministry units (for example, schools or workplaces), or by people on their own to do at home. You might want to do it as a family.



There'll be passages from the Bible to look at and questions to think about, and to answer in groups if that's the context you're using. Listen to the responses that others give, and rejoice in the diversity of views and experiences – it's one of the delights (and occasional difficulties) of church communities that we can be so different from one another, and yet come together to worship and pray and work, serving the communities around us.

There are six studies, which correspond to the six weeks of Lent. Each of these engages with some aspect of a call from God. Some of these are calls to the Church as a whole and to all Christians, others are a more individual call, to a particular role or life. As we go along, we'll meet a collection of people who have responded to God's call in the past.

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Welcome to Lent



Lent is the period of 40 days leading up to Easter. It begins on **Ash Wednesday**, the day when we're invited to receive on our foreheads a cross in ashes as we resolve to put aside the sins and failures of the past and seek a new beginning with God. Traditionally the ash is made from the burnt palm crosses of the year before. It

helps us to face up to our own mortality, as we're encouraged to reflect on the love and redemption offered to us by Christ.

On Ash Wednesday the priest invites us to “observe a holy Lent.” Lent is a time for intentional growing into God through reflecting on scripture, deepening community with other Christians, prayer, and reflecting on our identity as Christians through baptism. Observing Lent was first undertaken in the early church by those undergoing final preparation for joining the Christian community through baptism, which happened at Easter. It helps all of us to get ready to walk with Jesus through his betrayal, execution, and resurrection in the “Great Three Days” (from the evening of Maundy Thursday to Easter Day). Its 40 days parallels the 40 days of testing and trial that Jesus spent in the wilderness between his baptism and the beginning of his public ministry, and so it can be for us too a journey into the wilderness – a place of encounter with God.

Keeping Lent

It’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Lent is something we do as individuals, especially if we focus on something we’re “giving up for Lent.” It can help to see Lent as a community discipline, a time when together we take up or lay down certain practices, for example by attending a Lenten service or a study group. Or members of a ministry unit – or a family – might experiment with a new prayer practice or a service project. Traditionally Lent is a time for fasting and self denial, and also almsgiving (giving money or other things to those in need): what might you do together with others?

If you’re wanting to “give something up” for Lent, here are some suggestions for a different kind of fasting:

- from devices: putting aside your mobile phone for a period each day
- from noise – embracing silence instead, and listening out for God
- missing one meal a week and giving the money you would have spent on it to a charity
- from complaining or gossiping

❖ ***How do you react to some of these suggestions? What would you find hardest to give up for a period?***

❖ ***How do you want the world to be different, when Easter comes, because of how you have kept Lent?***

A useful reminder:

Lent is 40 days, but if you count up the days between Ash Wednesday and Easter there are 46 days – how does that work? The Sundays aren’t fast days – and that means that whatever you give up for Lent, you can do or have on a Sunday.



A text for Ash Wednesday: Joel 2:1-2,12-17

Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming, it is near—
a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!
Like blackness spread upon the mountains
 a great and powerful army comes;
their like has never been from of old,
 nor will be again after them in ages to come.

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart,
with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;
 rend your hearts and not your clothing.
Return to the LORD, your God,
 for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,
 and relents from punishing.
Who knows whether he will not turn and relent,
 and leave a blessing behind him,
a grain-offering and a drink-offering for the LORD, your God?



Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast;
call a solemn assembly; gather the people.
Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged;
gather the children, even infants at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar
 let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep.
Let them say, 'Spare your people, O LORD,
 and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations.
Why should it be said among the peoples,
 "Where is their God?" '

This passage from the prophet Joel is a call to draw closer to God, for a people who have experienced a catastrophe, described in chapter 1 as a devastating plague of locusts. The devastation is interpreted as "the day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15), a day of ultimate judgment that many associate with the end of the world. In response, the prophet calls for fasting and lamentation.

Joel calls for the whole community to gather – young and old alike – to recognise their need for repentance, to fast, weep, and ask for God’s mercy. There’s a focus not on externals but on what’s going on in people’s hearts – “don’t tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead.”

Joel speaks of the blessing that is possible for Israel, if only they would repent.



We often associate “repentance” with feeling sorry for things that we’ve done, but in the Bible, it’s more about turning away from evil, turning back to God. It’s about wanting to be faithful, accepting the challenge to live as God wants us to live. Here God’s people are called to a change of heart, to commit themselves again to follow God. This is a God who is gracious and abounding in steadfast love, a God who wants to welcome the people back. It’s to that God that the Church turns during Lent.

❖ ***What do you think of the communal nature of Joel’s call, the emphasis on the entire community gathering to seek God? Have you experienced anything like that?***

❖ ***How might you do Lent communally this year?***

Other texts for Ash Wednesday:

Isaiah 58:1-12

Psalm 51:1-17

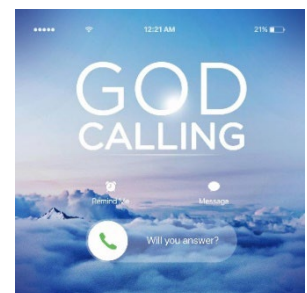
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Welcome to this theme

God’s Call

The idea for this study comes from a sense that many of us who’ve been around church for a while can feel disconnected from the idea of God’s call on us. If we think about this at all, it’s in the context of a lofty encounter with God that comes only to a very few people and leads to them either leaving for an overseas mission field or else to ordination. But the things God calls Christians to be and to do are much broader than that! Some calls involve the Church as a whole, and all of its members; others are specific to a person, sometimes just for a season in their life,



sometimes for longer. In these studies we'll look at a mixture of these, and in the process meet a collection of people who've sensed that call and what they did with it.

❖ *What's your initial reaction to this? Does it excite you?*

❖ *Have you ever sensed God calling you to something? And – whatever you answered – how do you feel about that?*

The Call to holiness

"As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:15-16)

The Church itself, and all who are part of it, are called to be holy, and to mirror the holiness of God.

❖ *That sounds like a big ask – what's your reaction to this?*

Biblical call stories involving God's holiness

Isaiah 6:1-8:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

Exodus 3:1-15

When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then he said, 'Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.'

When we say that God is holy we're acknowledging that God is Not. Like. Us. "To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One." (Isaiah 40:25) This can be an uncomfortable thing to think about. We're more used to images of God as loving parent, or shepherd, or pictures of Jesus teaching and healing, and we shy away from holiness, maybe because we don't understand it. One of the things we find in the creeds is a statement that the Church is Holy. It's holy because the Holy Spirit lives in its members, holy because the Spirit guides its mission. Holy because it is set apart – because we are set apart – to be signs of God and worshippers of God in the midst of the world around us. And the church is holy because its members are called to be holy, because its members are saints. That was how all the New Testament churches were described – as the saints that met in a particular place. That doesn't mean they

were perfect – anyone who has read any of the New Testament letters knows how far short of perfection those communities fell (just look at Corinth!).

- ❖ *How do you feel about the idea that we're called to be holy, to be saints?*
- ❖ *How might we help each other to grow in holiness? Any ideas?*
- ❖ *What does "the holiness of God" mean to you?*

Holiness is counter-cultural. Partly in the sense that holiness or wanting to be holy gets a bad press: imagine if you went to school or work and mentioned to someone that you'd been to a study looking at becoming holy! And partly in the sense that the rest of the world – the people and the institutions where God isn't on the radar – have a different set of values.

Writing to the Romans, Paul said: "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2)

- ❖ *What might this mean? What might a renewed mind look like?*

A holy community: Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.



Remember that the "you" in this is plural, not singular.

- ❖ *What would it be like to live in that sort of community?*
- ❖ *How would a community like that look from the outside?*

Meet some holy people



Brother Lawrence (1611-1691) was a humble cook in a monastery who continually “practiced the presence of God” while doing routine tasks in the kitchen. He would ask God to work with him, so that his work might be the very best, and he would offer that to God. “During my work, I would always

continue to speak to the Lord as though he were right with me, offering him my services and thanking him for his assistance. Also, at the end of my work, I used to examine it carefully. If I found good in it, I thanked God. If I noticed faults, I asked his forgiveness without being discouraged, and then went on with my work, still dwelling in him.” (*Practice of the Presence of God: The Best Rule of Holy Life*)

Julian of Norwich (1342-1416) was an English anchoress who lived in a cell attached to her church and was a spiritual counsellor to many. Her book, *The Revelations of Divine Love*, reveals great spiritual awareness and a trust in God’s love and goodness. She said, “He that made all things for love, by the same love keepeth them, and shall keep them without end.”



Wanting to live a holy life is about reclaiming our heritage as Christians. It’s always been there as something we’re called to do and to be – it’s just that we forget it, or put it into the too-hard basket, thinking that it’s impossible.

❖ ***Think of someone you know who is holy: what makes them so?***



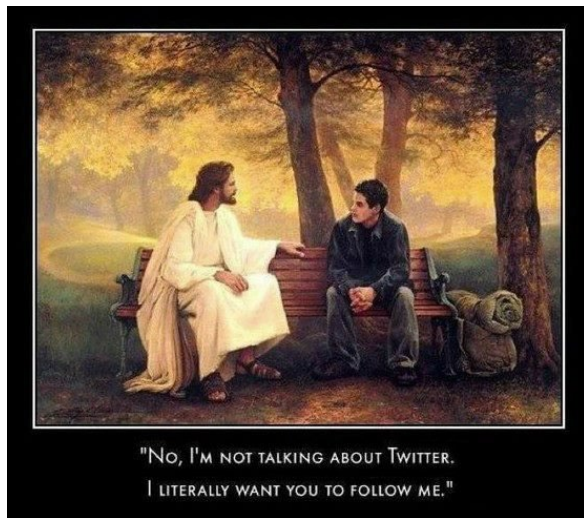
We are all called to be saints, St. Paul says, and we might as well get over our bourgeois fear of the name. We might also get used to recognizing the fact that there is some of the saint in all of us.

— Dorothy Day —

AZ QUOTES

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

2 A call to discipleship



All Christians are called to be disciples of Christ, and to live out that call in our daily lives. Before we start to think about what that might look like, and how we might recognise discipleship in ourselves and in those around us, let's think a little about what the word "disciple" means.

It comes from a Greek word meaning "learner"/ "pupil" and bound up with that is the idea of the relationship that happens between a pupil and their

teacher (more about that later). So discipleship begins with a relationship between us and Jesus. There are three key elements: following Jesus, learning, and passing it on – ie making other disciples.

We follow Jesus when we know him and recognise his call on our lives. We get a sense of what this looks like from the Gospels, for example in John 1 there's an account of two disciples who saw Jesus and followed after him, asked where he was staying, went there and remained with him for the rest of the day. (It's no accident that John puts this right at the beginning of the Gospel.) That they remained with Jesus is important – it's more than just turning up now and then. Archbishop Rowan Williams uses the image of a bird-watcher: sitting around, expecting to see something, being aware and attentive so as not to miss what God is doing. Following Jesus also means being willing to go where he goes – which is not always where we might want to go – and being with those whose company Jesus seeks (the excluded, the poor, the wretched) – again, this is not always those we would have chosen to be with. Sometimes, following Jesus can be costly.

❖ ***Think back: how and when did you first get to know Jesus? Who helped you to do this?***

❖ ***Has following Jesus ever cost you, or someone you know, something?***

The word disciple is, at its root, about learning – but that's not just the sort of learning that's associated with teaching a pupil in a school. One definition for the Greek word for "disciple" is "one who is rather constantly associated with

someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views.” This idea of being “constantly associated” with someone is important. A lot of discipleship is about relationship – and who a learner is is determined by their relationship with the Master, the one they’re following. Part of what’s involved here is being part of Jesus’ relationship with God – we are called/invited into being with the Father through the Son.

The life of a disciple is about getting to know more about God, about ourselves, and about the world around us. As we do that, we gradually grow towards spiritual maturity – but we can never say “we’ve arrived.” One way of looking at it is to think of a disciple as “a life-long learner of Jesus.”



- ❖ ***What is something you’ve learned about God, yourself, or the world around you that changed your life?***
- ❖ ***How does that idea of being “constantly associated” with Jesus sit with you? What might that feel like in practice?***

Passing it on, making other disciples, is also part of discipleship. We see this at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus tells his followers just before he leaves them:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Embedded in this is the idea that in order to teach someone, to help them become a disciple, we need to be one ourselves. It’s important to remember, though, that we don’t have to be an expert – and “making disciples” is certainly not a task only for those who are ordained. The 19th century preacher Charles Spurgeon said, “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.” Jesus disciplined people by inviting them into a relationship and by demonstrating things for them: they watched him heal people and then were sent to do it themselves, they saw him praying and asked him to teach them how to pray. He also challenged behaviours that were wrong or unhealthy, and

showed by his own example a better way to be. We often think of Paul as a travelling preacher – but so much of his ministry happened when he lived amongst a particular community. It comes down to relationships.

❖ *Who, by their example, has helped you to follow Jesus?*

❖ *Who might you help to do this?*

A biblical call story about discipleship

Mark 2:13–17



Jesus went out again beside the lake; the whole crowd gathered around him, and he taught them. As he was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

And as he sat at dinner in Levi’s house, many tax-collectors and sinners were also sitting with Jesus and his disciples—for there were many who followed him. When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax-collectors, they said to his disciples, “Why does he eat with tax-collectors and sinners?” When Jesus heard this, he said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

The Gospels give us lots of stories about Jesus calling various people to become his disciples. This one is very basic, and we’re told very little about what happened before or after this. All we know is that Levi became a disciple solely because of Jesus’ invitation to “follow me,” and that he was a tax collector. Tax collectors in that context were appointed by the Roman authorities to collect taxes for Rome; they were hated as collaborators who often charged their own people high fees which they kept for themselves. They were seen as sinners – so when Jesus goes to dinner at Levi’s house it was shocking. One of the key things about this story is that we don’t have to be perfect before we can become a disciple of Jesus: there is a place for sinners amongst those who follow Jesus. Which is just as well, since we are all sinners.

The story doesn’t tell us what happened to Levi. Although he’s sometimes identified with the apostle Matthew (also a tax collector) Mark’s list of the

Twelve doesn't include Levi, and his name isn't mentioned again in this Gospel. This is useful, as it stops us thinking of "the disciples" as if all of them were heroes instead of ordinary men, women, and children who experienced Jesus calling to them and tried their best to live it out.

❖ ***Levi's response to Jesus' invitation was very quick: what was it about Jesus that led him to get up and follow immediately?***

❖ ***What do you think Jesus meant by "those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners"?***

Other biblical call stories involving discipleship

Mark 1:16-20 (similarly Matthew 4:18-22)

Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John

Luke 5:1-11

Simon Peter (and also James and John)

John 1:35-51

Andrew and Simon Peter, Philip and Nathanael

John 4:1-42

The Samaritan woman

Mark 8:34-37

"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Another part of being a disciple is also connected with what we do, and that is making a difference in the world around us – building the kingdom of God, forgiving, loving, seeking justice, making peace. This comes out clearly in the Baptism liturgy and the commitments people make when they are confirmed or when they renew their baptismal promises.

God's call and Baptism

As we saw with Jesus' words at the end of Matthew's Gospel, the instruction to make disciples is linked closely with baptism. Baptism is, as the Catechism reminds us, "the sacrament by which we are made children of God, members of Christ's body the church, and heirs of the Kingdom of God." (ANZPB/HKMOA, 933) The baptismal liturgy itself begins like this:

God's Call

The bishop or priest says

E te whanau a te Karaiti / Dear friends in Christ,
God is love, God gives us life.
We love because God first loves us.
In baptism God declares that love;
In Christ God calls us to respond.



Everything – our wanting to become disciples, and the baptism which leads us further into that life – starts with God calling us. The initiative is God's, and we're invited to respond. Baptism has been part of the Church since the very beginning, and believers' children are also baptised (at least since 215 CE and probably earlier). In the early Church it was no mere formality, but a rite which demanded something from those who sought it – hence the long period of preparation before someone was baptised, culminating with the season of Lent. Baptism is a sign of belonging to a community, and affirms the faith of the community as well as of the individual. It reminds us that God's action in our lives will be a life-long process, as our sense of discipleship deepens.



When someone is baptised the community of faith commits to sharing with them "what we ourselves have received: a delight in prayer, a love for the word of God, a desire to follow the way of Christ, and food for the journey. This is a commitment to being disciples *together* – a reminder that this isn't something we can do on our own. Baptism is the foundation for our ministry within the Church and outside it – on every day of the week.

- ❖ ***What does baptism mean to you?***
- ❖ ***How can we encourage ourselves/each other to value and celebrate our baptism?***
- ❖ ***Do you know the anniversary of your baptism? Why not find out and celebrate it!***

Community and Discipleship

Discipleship isn't something we can do on our own. Being part of a community – in a parish, or in a Christian group in a school or workplace – matters enormously, as there we seek the company of others who are also trying to live as servants of Christ. A ministry unit can become a learning community, as each of us tries to learn how to be a disciple, and as the community as a whole discovers how to be a place in the world where the love of God can come alive. But, as we know, being part of a community of people who are different from us isn't always (ever?) easy. Sometimes, when difficulties arise, it helps to ask ourselves "what is Christ giving me through this person or community?"



Another useful thing to think about is "what can help sustain us as disciples of Christ?" This is where spiritual practices or disciplines come in, ways in which we can connect with God and allow God to continue to shape us. Richard Foster, has called these "God's means of grace: the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us." Some people use Lent to try out a new spiritual practice, as Lent encourages us to slow down and pay attention to our own spirits and to God's Spirit working in us.

Another writer on discipleship, Alan Knox, sees it as "helping each other follow Jesus." "Helping" because the real work is done by God, and we help each other because this is mutual (reciprocal) work: we all need help – and we can all help others. "Follow" because it's not a passive adventure or a mental exercise, it's a way of life, and "Jesus" because we want people to follow Jesus – not us – and because we might not all follow Jesus in the same way.

- ❖ ***What do you think of "helping each other follow Jesus" as a way of describing discipleship?***
- ❖ ***What spiritual practices are sustaining you at the moment?***

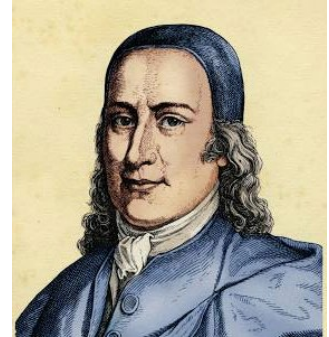
Meet some disciples



St Clare of Assisi (1194-1253) was one of the first followers of St Francis of Assisi. She had heard Francis preaching in the streets of Assisi and was deeply moved by his words. She left her home (sneaking out at night) to follow Francis, who received her into religious life. Clare went on to found the Order of Poor Ladies for women who chose to embrace

monastic life in the Franciscan vision, and was the first woman to write a Rule for a monastery. Clare said, "Let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds."

Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) was a German religious and social reformer and leader of the Moravian Church. He contributed hugely to missiology with his awareness of cross-cultural mission as a fundamental task of the church. As a child he had prayed and read Scripture, but his real awakening came when as a young man on the Grand Tour he saw a portrait of the thorn-crowned Jesus with an inscription "I have done this for you; what have you done for me?" Zinzendorf said to himself, "I have loved Him for a long time, but I have never actually done anything for Him. From now on I will do whatever He leads me to do."



C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) was a British writer, literary scholar, and Anglican lay theologian. He had abandoned any Christian faith in his teens, but began to explore Christianity again in his early thirties and became an active member of the Church of England. In addition to his academic work, Lewis used his abilities as a writer and communicator to defend the

Christian faith. His well-loved works include the Narnia Stories, *The Screwtape Letters* and *A Grief Observed*. He said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen - not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

❖ ***Think of someone you know who embodies the life of a disciple: what makes them so?***

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

3 A call to service



All who are baptised are called to worship and serve God – as the baptism liturgy itself reminds us (ANZPB/HKMOA, 390). We serve God as part of our response to God’s love and grace: in a sense all of our lives we are responding to something that God has initiated. One of the ways

in which we do this is through the ministry we undertake. All disciples of Christ, without exception, are invited into ministry (ie “ministry” is not just “ordained ministry”): we can sometimes offer several different kinds of ministry in the course of a lifetime. Ministry is linked to service – as the Catechism tells us:

“What is the purpose of ministry? It is to continue Jesus’ servant ministry in the world by witnessing to God’s reconciling love, to bring in the Kingdom of God, to build up the body of Christ, and to glorify God’s holy name.” (ANZPB/HKMOA, 932) So part of our call to service is a call to do what Jesus himself did when he lived on earth.

❖ ***Is the idea of “ministry” being about far more than ordination a new one for you? What difference does this make, to understand that every Christian is called to some sort of ministry?***

❖ ***What ministries have you been part of during your lifetime?***

Jesus’ ministry

Jesus was clear that service was a big part of why he lived, and that it should be equally important to all of his followers. Speaking to his disciples (some of whom had just asked to be given places of honour!) he told them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:42-45. “Son of Man” was a title Jesus used for himself.) Jesus not only insisted on this new way of being – a counter-cultural way which wasn’t marked by a hunger for high status and great power – he also modelled it himself. In human terms he didn’t have any power and authority, and explicitly rejected the power that

was offered to him by the devil when he was tempted in the wilderness (see Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13). He set aside his divine status and came to the world as a human being to dedicate his life to serving people by loving, teaching, and healing them. And he washed feet.

❖ ***“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant” – how is the Church, and its members, doing at this? How good are we at imitating Jesus?***

A text about service

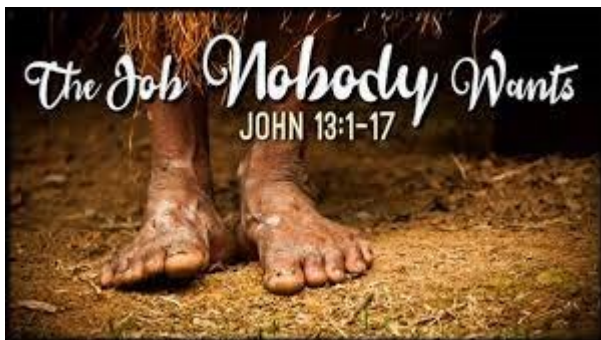
John 13: 1-17

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, 'Lord, are you going to wash my feet?' Jesus answered, 'You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.' Peter said to him, 'You will never wash my feet.' Jesus answered, 'Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.' Simon Peter said to him, 'Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!' Jesus said to him, 'One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.' For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'



After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'

Back in Jesus' time people walked a lot along dusty roads and through open fields, and these were the same places as animals walked, so the washing and drying of feet before reclining at dinner was more than a useful social courtesy.



It was utterly necessary, and it was a job done by slaves or lowly servants. Jesus is fully aware of the status and authority he has, but in spite of this he gets up from the table, takes off his outer robe, ties a towel around himself, and pours water into a basin. He washes and dries the feet of his followers. Peter is right to

be horrified at Jesus performing such a menial task, and if we're not horrified on Peter's behalf, we miss the point of what Jesus did that night.

Jesus' action shows us someone who loved. After all, he'd spent three years walking around Galilee and Jerusalem with these people, he knew them and loved them, and he is about to go away. And his action is an example of humility, an example of service; it shows someone who didn't care about status. And yet, Jesus is acutely aware of the messages he's sending about status. Jesus accepts that he is rightly called "Master" / "Lord," and when he says that servants are not greater than their master the actual word used is "slaves." Elsewhere (John 15:12-15) he transforms "slaves" to "friends" because he has shared with them what he is doing. Is there an implication in this event, I wonder, that we are friends of Jesus when we are willing to act as servants to one another?

John's Gospel gives us the foot-washing as the key event of the Last Supper, whereas the other three Gospels don't mention it but instead concentrate on Jesus' actions with bread and wine, which we regard as the institution of the Eucharist. Foot-washing is one of the traditional elements of the Maundy Thursday rituals.

- ❖ ***What's your reaction to Jesus washing his disciples' feet? How would you have felt if you were one of them there that night?***
- ❖ ***If you have taken part in foot-washing on Maundy Thursday, which do you find it easier to do: to wash someone else's feet, or to have your own feet washed? What might that say to you?***
- ❖ ***Jesus commanded us to do Eucharist together, and that happens frequently (often once or twice weekly in many parishes); he also commanded us to wash one another's feet, and yet we only do that once a year. What would it do if we washed feet once a week?***

A biblical call story about service

Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will

be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there



will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

The visit of the angel to Mary is usually seen as coming into the "birth announcement" genre (there are a number of examples of this, particularly in the Old Testament) but it's also a call story. It follows the traditional pattern of a call narrative: a greeting, a startled reaction by the person being called, encouragement not to fear, a divine commission, an objection (Mary's here is pretty brief – Moses' goes on for a whole chapter), a reassurance, and the offer of a confirming sign. Then comes the final response where the person accepts the call God is placing on their life.

Here Mary is being called to a particular task, the bearing and raising of Jesus. This is a call she accepts, with the words, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Two things stand out here: while the angel's greeting ("favoured one ... the Lord is with you") registers Mary's importance, her own words are far more humble: she identifies herself as the servant – literally the word is "slave" – of the Lord. And the wish that what happens to her be according to God's word parallels that of Jesus in

Gethsemane: “Not my will but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42) Mary is not simply Jesus’ mother: she is also a role model for all followers of Jesus: a servant of God who embodies faith and faithfulness.

- ❖ *How do you see Mary as a servant?*
- ❖ *Biblical call stories typically include the person initially objecting to what they’re being asked to do: have you ever objected to something God was calling you to do?*

Other biblical examples of service

Luke 10:29-37 The parable of the Good Samaritan
What might the Samaritan’s actions (and the non-actions of the priest and the Levite) tell us about service?

Acts 9:36-43 Tabitha/Dorcas
Dorcas was a widow who cared for others in practical ways, eg making garments. How are we using our time and our skills to serve others?

Acts 6:1-6 The first deacons
The early church appointed people to look after food distribution so that the Twelve could concentrate on preaching and teaching. What might this division of labour tell us about service?

Luke 10:38-42 Martha and Mary
One way of reading this is to see Martha as a deacon (serving at table) and Mary as occupied with the word: how might this affect our reaction to this incident?

The 3rd Mark: Loving Service



The Five Marks of Mission express the Anglican Communion’s common commitment to, and understanding of, God’s holistic and integral mission. The third of these is “To respond to human need by loving service” and this puts service at the heart of our faith. We’re all called to put love into action by caring for those in need.

There are many church (and other) organisations who do this – as do marae all over Aotearoa. Current examples include **City Missions** in a number of places

around New Zealand who support those in need with food support, help with emergency accommodation and housing, advocacy, health care, and social work support.

The social services arm of the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu, **Anglican Care Waiapu**, operates services and programmes in the Bay of Plenty, Tairāwhiti, and Hawke's Bay, partnering with local parishes and communities. Their mahi includes early childhood education, family services, programmes for older people, and grief services – all part of living into their mission “Living the gospel through loving service.”



- ❖ *What service organisations are you familiar with?*
- ❖ *Not everyone joins an organisation. What types of service can we do on our own?*

Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

- ❖ *There's a mutuality in this hymn by Richard Gillard – people serve one another. What might that be saying?*

Meet some servants



Suzanne Aubert (Meri Hōhepa/Mother Mary Joseph Aubert) (1835-1926) was a religious sister who came to New Zealand from her native France. She worked with Māori (including in Hawkes Bay) and in Hiruharama – Jerusalem, and later settled in Wellington. She founded the order The Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion, who opened homes for the incurably ill and disabled children and provided nursing homes. The Sisters of Compassion continue to work actively towards the relief of human suffering in a variety of fields. She said, “A kind heart is the joy of everyone who comes in contact with it.”

Edric Baker (1941-2015) (Daktar Bhai) was a New Zealand physician who worked for many years in Bangladesh. He was committed to the provision of health services for the poor and the marginalised. He established the Kailakuri Health Care Centre in an isolated rural area in northern Bangladesh in 1983, and served there for the rest of his life. He died on 1 September 2015 (and is buried behind the house he lived in there), but the Centre continues to function as before – a testament to his work. A team of 90 staff – most without formal qualifications – serve 28,000 patients per year.



Jimmy Carter (1924-present) is a long-term volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. He and his (late) wife Rosalynn serve as advocates, active fundraisers and hands-on construction volunteers with the charity. He was the 39th President of the United States (1977-1981) and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for working to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, advance democracy and human rights, and promote economic and social development. He said, “My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference.”

- ❖ *Think of someone you know who embodies the life of a servant: what makes them so?*
- ❖ *If you are doing this study with others, would your group like to take part in a service project this Lent? What might you choose?*

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

4 A call to a prophetic life



All of God's people are called to be holy, to be disciples, to serve. Some are called to be prophets, to listen and be attentive to what God is saying and then to announce God's words to the people.

A large part of the Bible is linked to the work of prophets: in addition to the books of the Old Testament written by specific prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Hosea, etc), there are descriptions of prophetic ministry elsewhere – to the people of ancient Israel (for example, Elijah and Elisha, Moses, and Deborah), and also to the early Church. John the Baptist is a prophetic figure in the Gospels, as are Simeon and Anna in Luke 2.

The ministry of a prophet

The prophets of ancient Israel were diverse bunch of people, both men and women and of all ages, with different characters and functions. Some were called “seers” – “one who sees”; the later and more common word for a prophet, *nabi*, is related to the word “to speak.” A prophet is someone who sees things others can't see and who says things others can't say, who speaks on behalf of someone else – on behalf of God. It's a ministry of communication. Sometimes this involves *foretelling*, declaring future events – ones that would definitely come to pass or things that would happen unless the people repented (an example is Jonah's proclamation that Ninevah would be destroyed in 40 days – only the city repented and was saved, Jonah 3). At other times it was more *forthtelling*, addressing specific social, political, and religious circumstances in ancient Israel and offering a critique which came from God.

Sometimes it was a bit of both, as when the prophet Huldah was consulted over a book – “the book of the law” – that was found during repairs to the temple during the reign of king Josiah, a time when Judah had very much lost its way. (We're told Huldah was the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe – sounds like a two-career couple.) Huldah's message was tough, calling the people to account because they had abandoned God: God would bring disaster on the people, but not on Josiah – because he had humbled himself and asked

for God's forgiveness he would die in peace; all the bad events would happen after his death (see 2 Kings 22: 10-20). The prophet Elijah also offered this combination of foretelling and forthtelling (see 1 Kings 16-22).

We also encounter prophetic ministry in the New Testament, where it's included in a list of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:10), and mentioned several times in the book of Acts, for example Philip's daughters in Acts 21. There it related to receiving and communicating spontaneous revelations from God, words which needed testing or evaluation by other prophets before they could be received as the word of the Lord.



Someone like Ezekiel, who was active in the period of the Exile, was called to be a prophet of reality, helping the exiles in Babylon and those left in Jerusalem to understand that the destruction of Jerusalem was somehow God's judgement on the nation. But he was also called to be a prophet of hope, offering a vision of new life, of restoration and renewal.

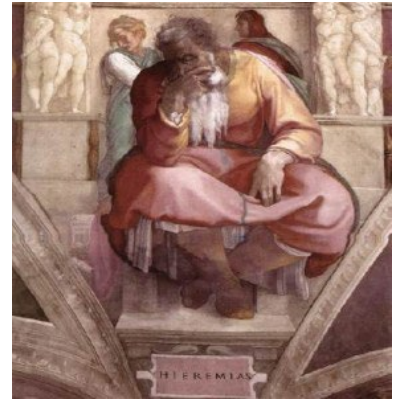
- ❖ *Which Old Testament prophets are you familiar with? Do you have a favourite?*
- ❖ *Were you surprised to see women like Huldah and Deborah and, in the New Testament, Anna and Philip's four daughters numbered amongst the prophets? Does it make a difference knowing that women as well as men can be prophets?*
- ❖ *Ezekiel's calling to offer both reality and hope: where do we need that combination today?*

A biblical call story about the prophetic life

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,
'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'
Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak,

for I am only a boy.’ But the Lord said to me,
 ‘Do not say, “I am only a boy”;
 for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
 and you shall speak whatever I command you.
 Do not be afraid of them,
 for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.’
 Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth;
 and the Lord said to me,
 ‘Now I have put my words in your mouth.
 See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
 to pluck up and to pull down,
 to destroy and to overthrow,
 to build and to plant.’



Jeremiah was active in the period leading up to and during the Exile, beginning to prophesy in 627-626 BCE (Jer. 1:1-3) and continuing until after the deportations of people to Babylon in 598 and 597 BCE. These were some of the darkest days in Judah's history. Jeremiah was called to confront a corrupt political system and an immoral society that really didn't want to hear what he had to say. To say his life was tough is something of an understatement. He was mocked, beaten, imprisoned, insulted by others who claimed to be prophets, had people plotting to kill him, and was thrown into a well. There was physical suffering and also the mental and spiritual burden of his care for a people who just wanted him to shut up and go away.

This passage recounts Jeremiah's call, at a young age, to be a spokesperson for God. It follows the traditional pattern of a call narrative, including resistance to the call and then reassurance from God. There's a strong sense of divine commissioning and empowering, but the rest of the book goes on to show how this call was severely tested by a number of crises that occurred over the course of his life and ministry. Jeremiah's task was a two-sided one, involving both judgement and hope for his society: to pluck up and pull down, destroy and overthrow, but also to build and plant.

- ❖ ***It's clear that a prophet's life is a difficult one: why would anyone want this job? Would you? Why do you think Jeremiah said yes to this call?***
- ❖ ***Jeremiah raises an objection (an excuse?): "I'm no good at speaking and I'm too young." What excuses have you used to avoid doing something you were asked/called to do?***

Other biblical call stories of prophets

Isaiah 6:1-13

Note the difficult message Isaiah is asked to deliver.

Ezekiel 1:1-2:10

Includes descriptions of strange creatures and a vision of a sweet-tasting scroll that Ezekiel was given to eat.

Amos 7:14-15

A shepherd taken away from his flock to speak on behalf of God.

Modern day prophets

The prophets of former times gave voice to the demands of justice and spoke out on behalf of the marginalised and the forgotten. Sometimes they used prophetic actions as well as words to get their point across. The prophetic role



is also needed today, so that people can be urged to see things in a new light, to feel the weight of injustice and to take action against it. To be a prophet requires both courage and imagination, as what is often needed is an indictment of the way things are AND a vision for how things ought to be. Retired Archbishop Winston Halapua, who has campaigned vigorously for climate justice,

grounded on his Moana theology of the ocean, is one who exemplifies this work. He has also addressed the issue of gender-based violence in Polynesian communities, and supported multi-ethnic education in Fiji.

❖ ***Climate justice is one area where prophets are needed today. What other issues do you believe should be addressed?***

❖ ***Do you feel called to work in any of these areas?***

A prophetic Church

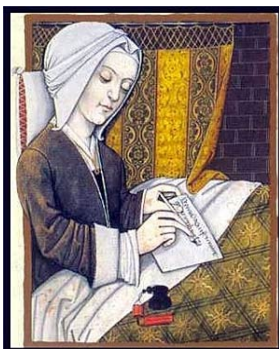
Not everyone may be called to a prophetic ministry – though there were Moses' words: "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!" (Numbers 11:29) We could say, however, that the Church as a whole *is* called to be prophetic, to be a counter-cultural community which is clearly different from the surrounding society and its institutions. It's part of the Church's role to challenge the way our societies see the world and

what they value. There is a role for the public ministry of the Church and its members in addressing social issues clearly and urgently and calling for change. One example was the 1998 Hīkoi of Hope, in which Anglicans at every level of the church, from ordinary churchgoers to bishops, were involved in planning and leading the march, which drew public attention to the needs of unemployed and impoverished New Zealanders. The Hīkoi advocated for the creation of real jobs, affordable housing, better public health care, accessible education, and benefit and wage levels that lift people out of poverty.



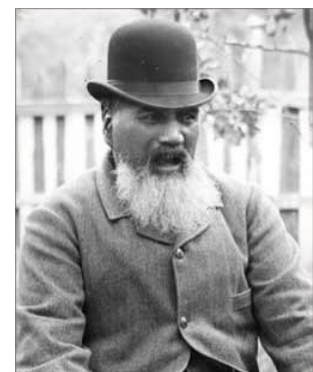
- ❖ *Where do you see the Church exercising a prophetic role today?*
- ❖ *Where would you like to see it doing this?*
- ❖ *What's your reaction to Moses' words "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets"?*

Meet some prophets



Mechthild of Magdeburg (1210-1297) was a prophet and mystic who was part of a group of Beguines, women who lived in communities under temporary vows and devoted their lives to caring for the sick and the poor. She had a number of powerful religious experiences, starting from the age of 12, which were dominated by the idea of "all things in God and God in all things." Her sharp criticisms of abuses in the church – of church dignitaries and the religious laxity of the time – led to opposition and accusations of heresy (being a woman in a male-dominated world increased her difficulties). She joined the Cistercian nunnery at Helfte where she received protection and support in the final years of her life.

Te Whiti o Rongomai (c1831-1907) (Ngāti Awa), was a Māori spiritual leader and founder of the village of Parihaka. He was educated by missionaries and developed a strong love for the Bible. During the turbulent 1860s he sought a peaceful means of fostering Māori claims. Parihaka became a centre of peaceful resistance and a rallying point for many Māori as Te Whiti encouraged his people to resist peacefully the unjust occupation of confiscated land. This led to conflict with the government. On 5 November 1881 armed constabulary entered



Parihaka and were met by children chanting songs. Te Whiti and his assistant Tohu Kākahi were arrested and imprisoned without trial for a year. Later he continued the campaign of civil disobedience and was imprisoned again. He died on 18 November 1907.



Martin Luther King, Jr (1929-1968) was a leader in the US Civil Rights Movement. In 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, he led a peaceful protest against racial segregation on the buses. King advocated peaceful resistance, saying, “Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Ghandi furnished the method.” Demonstrators staged sit-

ins, boycotts and marches, the most famous being the march on Washington in August 1963, where he drew on biblical language to articulate a dream of a better world. “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.” In 1964 Congress moved to prohibit racial discrimination, and King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Four years later he was shot dead by a sniper.

Dorothy Day (1897-1980) has been described as the conscience of American Catholicism, “with a dual passion for social justice and intimacy with God.” After a wild youth, she became a Roman Catholic without abandoning her social and anarchist activism. During the Depression she grappled with the question of how she could reconcile becoming a member of a church often equated with the wealthy with the call she felt to do something for the poor? Together with fellow activist Peter Maurin she established the Catholic Worker Movement, a pacifist movement that combines direct aid for the poor and the homeless with nonviolent direct action on their behalf. Dorothy Day said, “I really only love God as much as I love the person I love the least.”



❖ ***Think of someone you know who embodies the life of a prophet: what makes them so?***

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

5 A call to a vocation



“Vocation” simply means a calling. The problem is that the idea of a Christian vocation easily gets funnelled into discussion of ordination, religious orders, or licenced lay ministry. There’s even a “Religious Vocation Sunday” set down in our Lectionary for the third Sunday in August. Who knew that? And why isn’t any vocation a “religious vocation”? Because vocation isn’t just about ordination and the various ordained ministries, just as “ministry” isn’t just about what happens in and around a church building, especially with the liturgical rosters. It’s much bigger than this and is more about the roles we take on in our work (paid or unpaid) and what we do with our lives. Steven Garber has this to say:

The word vocation is a rich one, having to address the wholeness of life, the range of relationships and responsibilities. Work, yes, but also families, and neighbors, and citizenship, locally and globally – all of this and more is seen as vocation, that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God. It is never the same word as occupation, just as calling is never the same word as career. Sometimes, by grace, the words and the realities they represent do overlap, even significantly; sometimes, in the incompleteness of life in a fallen world, there is not much overlap at all.

Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation*

- ❖ ***What’s your reaction to this?***
- ❖ ***What do you see as differences between “calling” and “career”?***
- ❖ ***Have you experienced an overlap between these two in what you do or have done?***

This is about the valuing of all work, of the way in which the daily round can be full of holy significance and a way of living out our faith. Back around 420 CE, St Augustine saw work in a variety of secular occupations as something undertaken “for the claims of human society,” to benefit those around us. The work we do each day, using the gifts that God has given us, can be taken and transformed by that same God and used to bring closer the coming of the kingdom.

This idea of work as a vocation isn't just limited to what is sometimes referred to as "the caring professions" – it could be anything we feel drawn to do which has for us a larger, spiritual, significance. Steven Garber again:

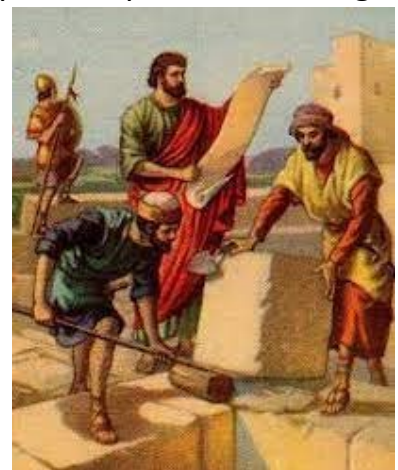
It is true that whether our vocations are as butchers, bakers, or candlestick-makers – or people drawn into the worlds of business or law, agriculture or education, architecture or construction, journalism or international development, healthcare or the arts – in our own different ways we are responsible, for love's sake, for the way the world is and ought to be. We are called to be common grace for the common good.

❖ ***What might "called to be common grace for the common good" look like in practice?***

Vocation in the Bible – workplace stories

The Bible gives us a series of episodes where people are called to specific "religious" roles, and we've looked at a number of them in this study series, such as the calls of various prophets. But we also see people acting in other occupations, with God speaking to and through them in their everyday working lives. This is an important reminder (if one is ever needed) that it's not only professional religious people whom God uses.

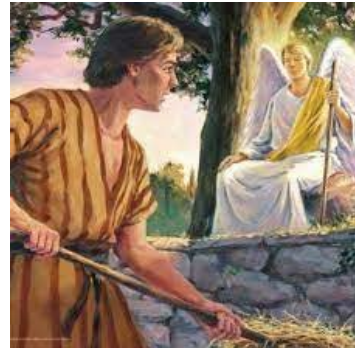
In the Old Testament (in the books of Genesis, Daniel, and Esther) we see Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai taking on high administrative and political positions, acting as deputies to Pharaoh or to kings, and they did this in foreign environments where the Hebrews were a minority people. There is Nehemiah – who started out as cup bearer to king Artaxerxes of Persia – managing the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of Jerusalem when people returned there after the Exile. Some were called as judges (Deborah, Samson, Jephthah) or rulers, including Solomon, Josiah, and Esther ("For just such a time as this" Esther 4:14). David was called away from his sheep to become king of Israel, but countless others continued as shepherds, grew crops, tended vines and made wine – indeed the whole sacrificial system of the temple could not have functioned without them. The woman of valour in Proverbs 31 creates and sells various kinds of merchandise, alongside running a household.



A biblical call story for a judge

Judges 6:11-17, 22-24

Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior.' Gideon answered him, 'But sir, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our ancestors recounted to us, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" But now the Lord has cast us off, and given us into the hand of Midian.' Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; I hereby commission you.' He responded, 'But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.' The Lord said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them.' Then he said to him, 'If now I have found favour with you, then show me a sign that it is you who speak with me. ... Then Gideon perceived that it was the angel of the Lord; and Gideon said, 'Help me, Lord God! For I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face.' But the Lord said to him, 'Peace be to you; do not fear, you shall not die.' Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it, The Lord is peace.



The book of Judges gives us a repeated pattern: for a while, Israel served God and all was well, until the people began to worship the gods of the surrounding Canaanite community and then were oppressed and enslaved. Then Israel cried out to God, and God raised up a judge, and Israel was delivered – only then the cycle would be repeated yet again. Gideon was one of these judges – which was a military as well as a judicial function.

It's really clear that Gideon was far from being a mighty warrior – in fact, he was quite timid. We met him threshing his wheat in the bottom of a wine press so he wouldn't get caught, and then he's asking for sign after sign, including the famous episode of putting out a fleece to see if it alone would get wet (Judges 6:36-40). But he was the one God called to destroy the pagan altar and lead his people in battle; ultimately Israel defeated their enemies and the land was at peace for the rest of Gideon's life. The story of Gideon is one of someone experiencing God's strength in the middle of their own weakness.

- ❖ *Gideon sensed God's call but, conscious of his weaknesses, kept making excuses. When have you done something similar?*
- ❖ *How does it help to remember that many of the biblical figures we admire "did it scared" and acted in spite of their fears and concerns?*
- ❖ *When have you needed God's help and strength to carry out a task or take on a role?*

Other biblical call stories featuring work

Genesis 2:8-9,15

God putting the human one in the garden to till it and keep it. Gardening and landscaping: the first occupations mentioned in the Bible.

Exodus 1:1-11

Bezalel and Oholiab called to be artists and craftspeople.

In the New Testament we find other occupations. Lydia, in Acts 16, was a business-woman in Philippi, a dealer in purple cloth (an expensive commodity), and there's no indication that she left her business when she came to faith and had a church meeting in her house; likewise the Philippian jailer in the same chapter presumably continued being a jailer.



And let's not forget that for most of his life Jesus worked not as a rabbi but at a much more ordinary job: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:3) In the usual chronology, Jesus was in "full time ministry" for three years – but doing other work for far longer. And many of his parables come out of the working lives of people.

A text about work

Matthew 13:44-50

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind;

when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here we have the buying and selling of a field, a merchant who trades in fine pearls, and fishers sorting their catch – all used creatively to get people thinking about what God’s reign is like.

❖ *What does the variety of occupations in the Bible say to us?*

❖ *How might your occupation be used in a parable?*

A Theology of Work

Another part of the celebration, indeed the hallowing, of work in the Bible is that the images used of God are often occupational ones: shepherd, potter/craft worker, architect, weaver, gardener, artist. Work is part of God’s nature – and so is part of ours as well: we’re workers made in the image of a God who works. Indeed, God created humanity to work – and especially to work in partnership with God – and to balance that work with sabbath rest.

Writer Dorothy L Sayers said that work should be looked upon, not as “a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money,” but as a way of life in which the nature of humanity “should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfil itself to the glory of God.”

Because of this, all work can be God’s work and has value and significance, no matter the status of the one working. Our calling is primarily to follow Christ, to live as God’s people. Our work is an expression of this, and we can look for ways of connecting our work with our calling to follow Christ. And “work” here need not be paid work – it can include looking after a family, or gardening: whatever occupies our days.

❖ *Does thinking of God as a worker – and us as workers made in the image of God – change your view of work?*

❖ *How do you find fulfilment “to the glory of God” in the work you do each day? Is the thought that it might relate to God’s glory a new one for you?*

❖ *How does your work connect with your calling to follow Christ?*

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to "give us this day our daily bread." And God does – by means of the farmer who planted and harvested the grain, the baker who made the flour into bread, the person who prepared the meal, and also the agricultural scientists, truck drivers, factory workers, wholesale distributors, and supermarket check-out person – who all have a hand in it.



Meet some workers



Thomas More (1478-1536) was a lawyer and scholar who served in a number of posts and lastly as Lord Chancellor (a high-ranking public servant) to Henry VIII. He opposed Henry's separation from the Catholic Church, and the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, and was eventually executed for treason. He was the author of *Utopia*, about an ideal island state.

Susannah Wesley (1669-1742) was a mother – of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. She home-schooled her 10 surviving children (others had died in infancy) and believed in educating girls to the same standard as boys. When she couldn't find textbooks for teaching her children, she wrote her own, and also led a Sunday school – initially for her own family and then for many neighbours. She kept a regular Bible study and time of prayer for over 50 years, praying, in the middle of a busy household, with her apron over her head to give herself some quiet and privacy.



Francis S. Collins (1950 – present) is an American scientist who invented positional cloning and took part in the discovery of the genes for cystic fibrosis, Huntington's disease, and neurofibromatosis. He directed the National Human Genome Research Institute for 15 years, leading the Human Genome Project. In his youth he was an atheist, then agnostic, and then converted to Christianity. He has described the experience of sequencing the human genome as "both a stunning scientific achievement and an occasion of worship."

Allen Catherine Kagina (1961-present) is a Ugandan administrator and corporate executive. Since 2015 she's been the executive director of the Uganda National Roads Authority (UNRA), and before that she served as the Commissioner General of the Uganda Revenue Authority – transforming that body from a corrupt institution to one which was open and well-run. She identifies as a born-again Christian and says about her busy life, “because I am born-again I lean on God, I pray and have a good prayer team; this helps me cope.”



❖ *Think of someone you know who sees their daily work as something they do for God, as a vocation: what makes them see it that way?*

❖ *Steven Garber sees vocation as “that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God” – so what is your vocation?*

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

6 A call to an ordained life



All baptised Christians are called to a ministry of some kind. For most, this will be a lay ministry, living out their lives as disciples in any number of ways, both outside and inside the Church. Some men and women, however, will be called to the ordained life, exercising the ministry of a deacon, a priest, or a bishop. They fulfil this ministry on behalf of the whole Church, and in order to enable the whole mission of the Church.

Ordained ministry is lived out in one of the threefold orders (deacon, priest, or bishop). A deacon is called to be a servant, both within the church and in the wider community. They serve in Christ's name, and as they do that they remind the whole church that serving others is fundamental to all ministry. Priests are called to build up the body of Christ through the ministry of Word and Sacrament, pastoral care and teaching. They preside at the Eucharist and administer the sacraments, strengthening the baptised and encouraging them in their discipleship. The call of a bishop is to be a leader and a shepherd within their diocese. They're called to be pastors and shepherds of Christ's flock, teaching the faith, and being a focus of the church's unity and mission in the world.

Bishop John Pritchard says that the central concerns of ordained ministry are "the glory of God, the pain of the world, and the renewal of the Church" and this captures really well the idea of something that is lived not for oneself but for others. And seeing ordained ministry as something undertaken not for the individuals themselves but on behalf of the church as a whole can remind us of the way that *anyone's* ministry is about other people.

❖ ***Think about the ministry of the whole church – how is that also on behalf of others? Who is the church's ministry for?***

So ordination is about "a life lived" – about who you are – before it's concerned with what you do. Within the three orders of ordained ministry clergy can serve in different roles – as vicars, chaplains (in organisations like schools, hospitals,

various workplaces and the military), community workers, or teachers for example. I've sometimes said that those different roles are like a variety of "hats" that you can put on or take off at various times in the course of your working life, but that the order of ministry you inhabit is more like your skin – always and deeply a part of who you are.

- ❖ ***Think of the clergy in your ministry unit, or others you have known: what different roles have they exercised over their lives?***
- ❖ ***How does the difference between role and order play out when clergy retire from an active ministry role?***

A biblical call story

The Call of Peter Luke 5:1-11

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.



In Luke's Gospel this wasn't Simon's first encounter with Jesus: Jesus had already been to his house and healed his mother-in-law from a fever. Perhaps this previous meeting was what encouraged Simon to let Jesus use his boat as a teaching platform and then to put out into the deep water and let down his nets for a catch – which probably seemed a futile exercise after a night's unsuccessful fishing. Several things stand out here – not just the vast amount of fish that was caught but Simon's sense of fear and wonder and the feeling that he is in the presence of divine power. Also the way that the prior experience and expertise of Simon and the others isn't forgotten, but will be transformed in this new ministry: "from now on you will be catching people." We can see too in this passage the move from "Simon" to "Peter" – often in the Bible a new role comes with a new name. So there's continuity (fishing for people) and newness (a different name).

This was Peter's first call. A second call came much later, after his threefold denial that he even knew Jesus, and restored Peter – especially in his own understanding – to his ministry as one of the leadership in the early church.

- ❖ ***How have your previous experiences prepared you for the ministry you are exercising now?***
- ❖ ***What is new about your current ministry?***
- ❖ ***When someone is ordained, what are some markers of their new role? What continues?***

Other biblical call stories

1 Samuel 3:1-10

Samuel was called at a young age, and became a priest and a judge. Note how the older Eli helped him discern that it was the voice of God calling to him in the night. *Which of our young people might God be calling?*

John 21: 15-19

Simon Peter called again, after Jesus' death and resurrection. The command to "feed my lambs / tend my sheep / feed my sheep" assures him that his past denials of Jesus do not disqualify him from a ministry of leadership.

Acts 1:13-26

The church calls Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle.

Bi-Vocational Ministry

Some clergy exercise a bi-vocational ministry – being called to work both within the church and in a different occupation. Sometimes both ministries might be “church” ones – for example working for some days in the week within a parish and for the rest of the time in a diocesan or chaplaincy role. Just as often, the priest or deacon might be working within a secular organisation, or be self-employed, as an accountant or a doctor for example. This is not just about non-stipendiary ministry (those not dependent on the church for their primary income) but about choosing to work both for the church and in a secular role.



St Paul, with his tent-making, is an early example of this model of ministry (see Acts 18:1-4). This is not just Paul – and Priscilla and Aquila, who were also tent-makers and leaders – earning money by making tents in order to support himself for his “real ministry.” He’s witnessing to Christ and spreading the gospel when he is tent-making and when he is preaching in synagogues and public places.

And he also used his earnings to benefit the Christian community.

Teresa Morgan, a classics professor at Oxford and a priest in the Church of England has this to say:

I didn't see myself as a priest in my parish and a lecturer at work, but as living one life of faith in several places. Bit by bit, a few ideas began to germinate about how someone might be a priest in and for their working community. ... It seemed to me that ministering at work should be more about “showing” than “telling.” Day by day I would try to be attentive to the people around me, especially if they were in need of practical help, encouragement or just a listening ear. I would speak out and act, if necessary, against inequality, unkindness or injustice. I would try to live in harmony with my colleagues and students, and to foster forgiveness and reconciliation whenever we fell out. I would say everyday to God, “not my will but yours be done,” and wait and see what God did with my obedience.

Within the Diocese of Waiapu (and elsewhere in this province) there are a number of clergy engaged in bi-vocational ministry, with roles in both parishes and businesses or other organisations (the Hato Hone St John Ambulance service, for example).

❖ ***What might be some of the advantages of bi-vocational ministry for the Church?***

❖ *What about any disadvantages?*

Are you called to the ordained life?

Most Christians are called to serve God as lay people, both outside and inside the church. Some people, however, are called to ordination. Sometimes a sense of call develops within the person, and sometimes the possibility of ordination is suggested by someone else who knows them well. If you find yourself in that position, the diocese has a process in which the church works with the person to discern whether that is the right path for them.

The process begins when a person indicates a desire to explore a sense of vocation to the ordained life. After talking to their vicar (or to another priest in non-vicar-led parishes), they have an initial conversation with the Ministry Educator, who collects background information about their history, time in the Anglican church, experience of call, outworking of that call, and the ministry they are currently exercising. Then the Bishop reviews all the information and determines whether or not the person will proceed to the Application phase, in which a formal application (including the writing of a spiritual autobiography) is made. The following stages involve interviews by a number of Bishop's Ministry Advisors and a psychologist, and a residential weekend – which is in Auckland, as Waiapu runs a joint process for the discernment of candidates for the ordained ministries of vocational deacon or priest, working together with the dioceses of Auckland and Waikato-Taranaki. At each phase, the Bishop makes a decision whether it's appropriate for an applicant to proceed to the next stage. If a call to ordination is discerned the person proceeds to training and formation, which includes some theological study.



❖ *Are you, perhaps, called to the ordained life?*

Meet some clergy



Octavius Hadfield (1814-1904), Bishop. Hadfield came to New Zealand in 1839 as a missionary. He was the first priest to be ordained in New Zealand and worked for a while at Waimate North, learning the Māori language. He responded to a request for a missionary for the Kāpiti coast and there earned the respect of both Māori and Pākehā. In 1844 Hadfield's health broke down and for four years he was seriously ill in Wellington, during which he was often consulted by Governor

George Grey. He spoke out on behalf of Māori especially over the war which began in Waitara in 1860. He became the second bishop of Wellington, and later served as primate.

Roto Waitoa (d 1866), Priest, was the first Māori ordained in New Zealand. He came from the Ngāti Raukawa of Otaki, and was baptised by Octavius Hadfield in 1841. He became Bishop Selwyn's constant companion on journeys around New Zealand and studied at St John's College. Waitoa was ordained deacon by Selwyn in 1853, and served on the East Coast. He was priested by Bishop William Williams of Waiapu in 1860 at Tūranga (Gisborne). He was noted for his knowledge, sincerity, and humility.



Cherie Baker (1928-2014), Priest, was one of the first four Anglican women ordained to the priesthood in New Zealand, on 3 December 1977 (hers was in Waiapu Cathedral). Born in England, her journey included running a large farm after the untimely death of her husband. She found fulfilment in God's service and faced a number of challenges as one of the pioneers of women's priestly ministry. In one of her poems she wrote, "Dear Lord, I am here. Use me as you will. I am yours."

Doreen Swinburne (1930-2022), Vocational Deacon. Deacons have a community-facing ministry or service, and Doreen embodied this, serving in a number of roles and locations, including Mt Maunganui where she was chaplain in a retirement village. She described the vocation of a deacon as "to dance on the edge"—like a picture of a cup or bowl. "The inside would be the institutional church and the area around the outside the world. Trying to navigate the edge would take a great deal of balancing ..."



❖ *Think of someone you know who lives the ordained life: how did they get to that point? What is their call story?*

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

Closing Reflections

This study has looked at a number of ways that God can call us. Each of these is more about “being” than “doing”: less “what is God calling me to do?” and more “how is God calling me to be?” We’ve looked together at the call to holiness, to discipleship, to service, to a prophetic life, to a vocation, and to the ordained life. Some of those are common to all Christians: God invites us *all* to be holy, to be disciples, to be servants.

- ❖ ***How do you embody
holiness
discipleship
service?
(Try to be as specific as you can.)***

Perhaps not everyone is called to a prophetic life (do you agree with that?) but the Church as a whole is. And over the course of our lives we can do many different kinds of work, sometimes for money, sometimes not.

- ❖ ***How are you part of the Church’s prophetic life?***
- ❖ ***How is your work – whether paid or unpaid, whether lay or ordained – part of your call to follow Christ?***

It’s worth remembering that most of God’s mission occurs as disciples serve their callings outside of the gathered church community.

- ❖ ***How does your calling further God’s mission?***
- ❖ ***As this study draws to a close, how has it changed you?***
- ❖ ***What do you want to think more about?***

THOUGHTS / QUESTIONS

Closing Worship

You might like to close each session by praying together. Here are some possible prayers.

God of the desert,
as we follow Jesus into the unknown,
may we recognise the tempter when he comes;
let it be your bread we eat,
your world we serve and you alone we worship.
this we ask through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

God, you are working still,
breaking down and building up;
open our eyes to discern your hands
so that we may take our place
as labourers together with you.
Hear this prayer for your love's sake. Amen.

God,
give us work till our life shall end,
and life till our work is done. Amen.

**E tō mātou Matua i te rangi
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.
Murua ō mātou hara,
Me mātou hoki e muru nei
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha, me te korōria,
Āke ake ake. Āmine.**

