

Sunday 17th January 2021

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.
God is ever present, around us and within us,
though separate let us worship together in God.

Suggested Hymn Praise God, Creator, source of all being

Praise God, creator,
source of all being,
present around us,
and deep within.
When we are open,
accepting and loving,
we find connections,
journeys begin.

Praise God in singing,
dancing and playing,
showing God's wonders
through every word.
Sharing ideas,
new paths revealing,
journeys continue,
Spirit is heard.

Praise God for journeys,
leading us onward,
leading us inward,
broadening sight.
Praise God for loving
all of creation,
sustaining living
providing light.

Praise God in all things,
never forgetting,
love builds and fosters
oneness in all.
We are together,
held in creation,
bound in the Spirit,
part of the whole.

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Tune Bunessan

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Prayer

Loving God as we gather to worship you, we pause to reflect on all that has happened during the week, the high points and the low points, the times of rejoicing and the times of sadness. In all our lives there are facets of emotions and we give thanks that you are present in all these moments and your love surrounds us always, you are present in the rainbow of emotions we experience every day. We are part of your creation, part of your being and as we move and live and breathe your creation is at the heart of all we do. As we look at the beauty of your creation, we are inspired to create beauty in our lives, as we witness the cycle of your creation, we recognise the cycle of our lives, as we witness the destruction of your creation, we reflect upon the part we play and pray that we may find a better way to ensure the life of creation.

We acknowledge that we are not always as loving as we might be, our words and actions have sometimes been thoughtless or selfish, causing hurt. We are sorry and in the wonder of your mercy and unconditional love we respond, offering repentance committing to a more loving way through a selfless and thoughtful approach to relationships.

We offer you our thanks for all that fills our lives with joy and hope, and the challenges we face which help us grow in understanding and love. As Christians following the way of Jesus we give thanks for his life and ministry which are our map, and the hope we find in the resurrection and together share in the prayer he taught his disciples saying,
Our father

Reading 1 Samuel 3:1-10
John 1:43-51

Introduction

Both our readings are about receiving a call from God, but the circumstances are quite different. Samuel is a student in the temple, surrounded by the rituals, language, and worship of God. The men called to be disciples are working men, from different backgrounds and there is little mention of any

experience of temple practices. Samuel hears a voice calling him which he assumes is Eli until Eli himself realises what is happening and tells Samuel how to respond to the voice he hears. The disciples are invited to join Jesus in his pilgrimage, an invitation from a real person rather than an ethereal voice. Initially, Samuel hears something which frightens him, but Eli reassures him, and Samuel goes on to be a great prophet in Israel, but that does mean that he is still temple based for much of the time. The disciples join Jesus, training on the job as they travel around different territories, often feeling out of their depth.

Receiving a call can come to us in many ways and involve many different responses and actions. Every call is unique, but everyone is called to oneness in God and to explore with others what that means for humanity.

Watch a video where Stuart Townend describes the process that brought about a new song and consider if this is a call?

[Watch here](#)

Suggested hymn Come all you vagabonds

Listen [here](#)

Reflection

All the gospels refer to the call of the disciples, each in a slightly different way but John is the only gospel to give us this particular facet of the call, showing Jesus being aware of information he could not have known from experience. For years it has been understood as part of the mystery and 'magic' of Jesus. However, the more we learn about our quantum world the more we see things differently, and when we look deeper into the language and ideas of John's gospel we glimpse a knowledge that connects with our new understandings in a remarkable way. If, as quantum science is revealing, we are all connected through the field of energy which is creation then we have access to all the knowledge of creation, and by consciously acknowledging the connection we become aware at certain times and in certain situations of things we did not realise we knew. I once read that teachers do not teach information so much as teach children how to access information, and when I matriculated at Cambridge I remember the session we had where we were reminded that studying was about learning to access information and demonstrate an understanding of what we had learnt rather than remembering lists of facts provided for us. The journey of faith is like that, we worship together and study together sharing incites and encouraging each other to go deeper and learn more. The thing with faith is that most of what we learn, we access through a connection to the source of all being which we call God, and it is when we begin to question and wrestle with new ideas in the context of what we have believed that we grow in our humanity.

Hearing a call is very much about connecting with something deep within our being, even if the actual call sometimes comes in a very physical way. I remember my tutor at Westminster telling us that his calls always came by post, an invitation or a letter from a friend pointing to an opportunity. We are not really told the circumstances that led to the first disciples responding to the invitation, which was verbal, and Samuel heard a voice, but many who follow a vocation will tell you that they always knew, or knew from an early age, the path they would follow in life. Many of us though, muddle along doing lots of different things before we recognise a call, or until the time is right for us to recognise a call and by that I do not mean sorting out other things in life to accommodate a call more that we have some growing to do before we are ready. I think that was the case for me, although I acknowledge now that I resisted a call for quite a while not having 'seen' it as a reality for me. I had some really valid reasons why ministry was not my call, I was heavily involved in church, leading worship, church secretary, leader of the toddler group but I could not see myself in the ordained ministry. It was not until someone I had only met once said 'you do know you are meant to be a minister', combined with the move to Yardley Hastings, that I acknowledged and began to explore the call to ministry. Before that I had thought I had a call to be a maths teacher and I had embarked upon a maths degree with the Open University; I remember sitting in community prayers at Yardley Hastings, feeling the tears run down my cheeks as I 'knew' that I had to give up my maths course, although at that point I did not know why, and it was three months later that the conversation with the stranger happened. Sometimes, we must let go of things in order to be in the right place to sense that voice within. We can be too busy to hear.

That call was the start of my journey but there are many other calls after that and there is always that puzzle, that conundrum of knowing which particular call you are to follow especially with ordained ministry as we recognise or have thrust upon us the time to change course. This is true for every individual there are times to change course and how do we know which course to follow, which call to answer? It is not always clear, and the process can be painful. I remember, when I was puzzling, being told by an 'experienced' minister that you just know when you find the right thing, and I believe that now, a connection is made and knowledge bubbles up with certainty and clarity. Many people talk about the sense of relief after making a decision and knowing that it has been the right decision even if it was not obvious at the time, that is the inner self aligning with the creative field. I knew when I found the location for my first ordained ministry, I knew when I first visited although it was not until I had not received an expected phone call that I recognised the knowledge. I knew when the time was right to leave that place although it saddened me greatly and telling them was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do, but a new call awaited me, my journey had to take a new direction and that was right. My journey from that second ministry was very painful and the path between there and here was tortuous but I know I am in the right place and I knew that after the preach with a view. Sometimes we must be honest with ourselves and recognise a call from within and equally recognise when something is not the right course of action which probably takes more courage.

This knowing comes through prayer. There are many definitions of prayer but I am referring to a prayer of deep connection which may or may not involve spoken words. For me, it nearly always involves a conversation, a talking out loud, a voicing of questions and a wrestling to derive an answer, to make sense of something. It is often upon first awakening or when I am sat alone (as I would seem to be talking to myself this is probably wise) and I let my mind drift to something which requires deep thought. In this way I have discovered knowledge of which I was unaware, ideas ready formulated for presentations and connections which can be startling. It is exciting and frightening at the same time which is a good description of awesome.

Samuel and the disciples discerned a call to change their lives, to move in a different direction. We all receive calls, they are not always as radical as for the disciples, but they are all a part of the growth into the fulness of our humanity, and I don't believe there is an age limit on such growth. A call may begin with a nigggle, a subconscious awareness that there is something you have to do, or it may come in a flash of inspiration. We can ignore a call, but they rarely go away. I do not believe God manipulates, God invites, and God's invitations are always loving, something that will benefit us personally and benefit others. In fact, a good test of a call is to ask how will this benefit others? We have been called into this communion, this fellowship together, but that is the start, discovering where we fit and what we are called to do within this communion is part of the journey and standing still is not an option. Even if there are challenges within life that restrict what you can do such as mobility issues, the call will be there and discovering the means to answer the call may open up a whole new aspect of life. The disciple answered the call, and I imagine there were times when they wondered if they had done the right thing, but did they regret the decision, I doubt it; answering a call is an enriching experience. What is God calling you to explore next?

Suggested hymn God who has called us

God who has called us to live by your grace,
brought us together in this time and space
help us to learn from each other, and share
in acting and thinking, in worship and prayer.

Scriptures and stories give shape to your call,
strangers remind us your love includes all.
Teach us to listen, with broadening mind,
for in many voices your wisdom we find.

As trust grows deeper, and we lose our fear,
passion for freedom and justice grows clear.
Give us the courage to make our dreams true,
building a place of belonging in you.

All that you give us, you call us to share,
in risk and struggle, your vision to dare.
Building and growing, and learning your ways
make us a body that lives to your praise.

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Tune Slane Listen [here](#)

Reflection on Psalm 139, through the lens of quantum science.

I am part of all creation,
my words, my actions, my thoughts,
my hopes and dreams
are shared with all that is.

This knowledge is beyond my imagination, for now,
but I am called to share its knowing,
to be a conscious part of all that is.

There is no hiding in the knowing
for we are all one.

There is no escaping,
except through denial and rejection -
the creation of my own reality apart from oneness.

Creation has formed me.

The atoms that give me form are a part of all that is,
all that has been and all that will be.

I share them with everything and everyone
within this world and beyond.

I am wonderfully and fearfully made
as is everyone and everything
in the sphere of creative energy.

We are what has always been
the source of all being
the past, present and future,
a reality beyond our humble imagination
yet we are called into this other reality,
into the knowing.

The knowing calls everyone
but some are afraid,
fearing that which they see as unknown,
when there is nothing unknown in oneness.
This fear opposes the love that is oneness,
this fear creates divisions and hurt and anger,
but love can drive out fear
and in the oneness, the knowing,
there is only love.

A different way of living,
a different way of seeing,
a different way of being,
we are known,
and we are called into oneness.
To be is to be one.

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Reflective hymn Bless the Lord my Soul

[Listen here](#)

Prayers

Eternal God, source of all being, we offer this prayer and our willingness to listen. Your creation groans as humanity's dominion changes to domination. We recognise our mistakes; we acknowledge our times of selfishness which have led to these mistakes and we pray for the strength and love to change our ways and work to limit our effect on our planet.

Loving God, in the chaos that is living may we hear your call and know the way.

We see evidence all around of people hurting; people caught in injustice fuelled violence, people suffering the results of prejudice, people who are victims of abuse and bullying. In communion, we

pray for oneness, for tolerance and justice, and recognise we have a part to play. Open our hearts to hear your call and follow the Jesus way of selfless love. Open our minds to hear the call of those in need and inspire us to find creative solutions which will change lives.

Loving God, in the chaos that is living may we hear your call and know the way.

We pray for friends and family, neighbours and colleagues, recognising that we are all fearful and frustrated and many are feeling isolated by the restrictions of the pandemic. Together, as church, we can make a difference. May we encourage one another, share with one another, and respond in love to the needs we see around us, praying connectively to discover a creative solution.

Loving God, in the chaos that is living may we hear your call and know the way.

Silence to share personal concerns and listen.

Loving God, in the chaos that is living may we hear your call and know the way.

In oneness we pray. Amen.

Offertory

As we continue to worship apart but together, we pledge our commitment to sharing in the work of our church through our continued offering and by exploring new ways of living generously, and may we know your blessing on all we do. Amen

Suggested hymn

Will you come and follow me

[Listen here](#)

Blessing

May the blessing that is the knowledge of God, source of all being, the love of God discovered through Jesus and the inspiration of the Spirit which binds us together be with us on our journey this day and every day. Amen.