

**“Our Calling: Service”**  
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Dear Friends,

Welcome to this Local Arrangement service resource. It is the third of a set of four such services focussing on the four themes of the Methodist 'Our Calling' priorities, reaffirmed at the 2018 Methodist Conference. The theme for this service is “Our Calling: Service”.

Please feel free to 'customize' your service to your own congregation... e.g. ... The hymns are only suggestions - if your congregation knows others that fit in with the theme, especially any newer ones, feel free to use those. You will also need to prepare for the prayers of intercession, to reflect current concerns. This is *your congregation's* service of worship to God, so make it as individual as you think appropriate!

To enhance the visual content of the service, you might consider putting together either one or two displays, in the church or in a meeting room where you have refreshments. You could display pictures of members of the congregation or their relatives 'in service'. This phrase can be understood in any way you wish.... servants, members of the armed forces, workers in service industries, members of caring professions etc. etc. Another display could feature information about caring organisations that members work for or support, e.g. charity shops, campaigning organisations, help groups in the community. It is often surprising how little we know about what the other 'Servants of the Lord' are doing in their daily lives. These displays will need planning, organisation and publicity!

I have suggested that you use 2 leaders and 4 readers, .... but you can adjust this too.

More information about Our Calling can be found on the Methodist Church website:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/>

and

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/our-calling/responding-to-our-calling-questions-for-churches/>

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## “Our Calling: Service”

### **Introduction to the theme of the service: Leader 1**

Welcome to worship *this morning*. A few years ago the Methodist Church produced the statement ‘Our Calling’ in which they listed the four main callings of the Christian. They are: Worship; Learning and Caring; Service; and Evangelism. We have been asked to look again at how, as a Church, we might best respond to ‘Our Calling’ today. In our Own Arrangement services this year we will look at each calling in turn. Today we focus on our calling to be a serving people.

### **Call to Worship: Leader 1**

The God of Love has called us here,  
Asking to come into our lives as Saviour and Lord.  
Let us offer him this service of heartfelt worship and praise.

**HYMN:** Great God, your love has called us here....*StF 499; H&P 500*

### **Psalm/Prayer: Leaders 1 & 2** (*Leader 1 to read light type, Leader 2 the words in bold type*)

Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!

Praise the Lord, who has given you this world to be your home

Who provides you with green pasture and leads you to quiet pools,

Praise the Lord, who feeds you body, mind and soul!

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord -**

**You who feed family, friends and strangers,**

**You who prepare meals at church, make hot drinks, take soup to the homeless,**

**You who give money to help those who are hungry, wherever they may live.**

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!**

Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!

Praise the Lord, who protects and strengthens you,

Who walks with you through the darkness of fear and pain and loss.

Praise the Lord, who will let nothing separate you from his love!

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord -**

**You who offer friendship and understanding to those going through difficult times**

**You who visit a lonely neighbour, you who offer transport to hospital,**

**You who hold the hand of the dying and offer comfort to the bereaved,**

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!**

Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!

Praise the Lord, who fills the cup of life to the brim,

Who surrounds you with love and makes your hearts rejoice,

Praise the Lord, whose love for you is never ending

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord -**

**You who radiate kindness and concern to those around you,**

**You who work for peace and justice, for a better and happier world,**

**You who strive to share the joyous Good News of Jesus, by your words and your deeds.**

**Praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord!**

### **Comment: Leader 1**

The Our Calling statement reads ‘As a member of the Methodist Church I am called to service, by being a good neighbour in the community, challenging injustice and using my resources to support the Church in its mission in the world’. There’s a lot to think about there, but I wonder what the word ‘service’ means to you?

**Reading: Reader 1 –**

My name is Violet and I am a servant. I had little choice but to go into service, at the age of thirteen, when my village school had taught me ‘all they could’. My mother found me a place as a scullery maid at the local ‘big house’, so at least I wasn’t far from home. I was the lowest of the low, and spent long hours every day in the cold, damp scullery washing up and preparing vegetables. My hands were soon red raw. Everyone could tell me what to do, and even give me a clip round the ear if I left an eye in the potatoes I was peeling! I shared an unheated bedroom in the attic with the other girls and often cried myself to sleep from tiredness and missing my mother. I was just a tiny cog in the wheel of the machine that was the big house. No one even used my real name. But I had food and clothing, both of which were in short supply at home.

**Comment: Leader 1**

That was just one kind of service – there are so many more. But it does have some aspects in common with being a ‘Servant of the Lord’! Violet had no choice but to go into ‘service’ and to be ‘under orders’. We have no choice but to serve when God calls us up, has chosen us for a job, has something special he needs us to do or be. This kind of call is a common theme in the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament. The reading from Isaiah that we’re going to hear now describes the work of God’s servant. Whether that servant is Israel, Isaiah himself, or a coming Messiah no-one is certain, but his message is one of hope and challenge to each one of us, as we respond to God’s call on our lives....

**Reading: Reader 2 Isaiah 42: 1-7**

**HYMN:** Behold the servant of the Lord ...*StF 546; H&P 588*

**Reading: Reader 3 –**

Listen to the words of a prayer from the Covenant Service:

‘I am no longer my own, but yours. Your will, not mine, be done in all things, wherever you may place me, in all that I do and in all that I may endure; when there is work for me and when there is none;....when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking;....I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you,...

**Prayer of Confession: Leader 2**

Lord, you call us to serve you, and we do try,  
But can get disillusioned with ourselves, with other people, and even with you.  
Sometimes we alienate the people who love us by giving too much of ourselves to serving others.  
Sometimes we get over-tired and stressed trying to do more than we really can.  
Things do not work out as we intended and we are misunderstood or treated with suspicion.  
We lose patience with those we are trying to help, or those who work alongside us  
And we feel we are letting you down.

Lord, you call us to serve you, and we do try, but sometimes we get disillusioned.

Lord, we know that our way of seeing things is not yours.

Remind us again that you have not called us to an easy way of life,  
but to tread the path of suffering love which is the path to salvation.

Forgive us, love us, fill us with your spirit of hope and joy and peace

So that we may do valiantly and serve you faithfully to the end.

In the name of our Saviour, who said ‘Your sins are forgiven’ and ‘Come, follow me’. **Amen.**

**Comment: Leader 1**

Violet found being a servant in the ‘big house’ hard work. Being a servant in the household of God is hard work, too. It can take a great deal of time and thought and leave us drained at the end of the day. But then, giving our lives to Jesus was never going to be an easy call, as giving his life for us was no easy call for him...

**Reading: Reader 4** – Philippians 2: 5-11

**Offering:**

**Prayer: Leader 2:**

Lord, in Jesus you gave yourself to us.  
Help us to give ourselves, all that we have, all that we do  
And all that we are to serve your kingdom of love. **Amen.**

**HYMN:** From heaven you came, helpless babe...*StF 272; MP 162.*

**Reading: Reader 1** - Mark 10: 42 -45

**Reading: Reader 2** – John 13: 12 – 15 *commencing ‘After Jesus had washed the disciples’ feet..’*

**Comment: Leader 1**

The work that Violet had to do was hard and her efforts undervalued. She felt like a nameless cog in the machine. But the changes in society that followed the First World War meant that far fewer young women and men had to ‘go into service’. And many of the great houses and gardens fell into disrepair. The families who owned them could not manage without their servants... The Master needs each one of us. He is a Master who does know us by name. He is a Master who came to live alongside us, rolling up his sleeves to show us how his work should be done. He is fair, he is loving, he is generous and he is kind. And he calls us as his servants to work to run our home, the world, his way – so that all may now his justice, his love, his generosity and his care.

**Prayer of Commitment: Leader 2**

‘As members of the Methodist Church we are called to service, by being good neighbours in the community, challenging injustice and using our resources to support the Church in its mission in the world’.

Let us spend a few minutes in silent prayer as we commit ourselves to Christ’s service. **SILENCE**

**HYMN:** Brother, sister, let me serve you...*StF 611; OR Jesu, Jesu...StF 249; H&P 145*

**Comment: Leader 1**

The life of a servant like Violet might seem to us to have been little short of bondage. Sometimes people who are busy ‘workers’ in the church can feel trapped in a treadmill, and a little resentful. And those who are unable to do what they once did feel they no longer qualify as ‘Servants of the Lord’. But are we going wrong somewhere, in our attitude or response to what God is asking of us? Didn’t Jesus say ‘My yoke is easy and my burden light.’ ?

**Reading: Reader 2** – From Micah 6

“What shall I bring to the Lord, the God of heaven, when I come to worship him? ...What he requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.”

**Reflection: Reader 3**

A prayer of St Augustine:

Lord, you are the light of the minds who know you,  
the life of the souls who love you,  
and the strength of the souls who serve you.  
Help us to know you that we may truly love you,  
so to love you that we may fully serve You,  
whose service is perfect freedom. Through Christ our Lord, Amen

**Comment: Leader 1**

As the Lord's Servants, whatever service we can or cannot render him and our sisters and brothers, we are called to offer prayers on behalf of the world, the church and those in need.

**Prayers of Intercession: Leader 2** There is a response in this prayer -

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Let us pray:

Lord, you showed yourself, in Christ, our humble Saviour, to be a servant God;  
And you call us to be a servant people, servants to the whole world  
Lord, we serve you as we pray for our world, for .....

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Lord, in Christ you showed yourself servant God to those in need,  
you fed those hungry in body or soul,  
And you call us, your followers, to do the same.

Lord, we serve you as we pray for those who hunger for food or love.

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Lord, in Christ you showed yourself servant God to the ill and distressed;  
And you have given the spirit of healing love to your followers.

Lord, we serve you as we pray for those who are ill or sad, for...

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Lord, in Christ you showed yourself to be the Servant God.

You were a messenger of peace and hope, preaching to all who needed Good News  
And offering them Life in all its fullness.

Lord, we serve you as we pray for those who seek you.

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Lord, in Christ you showed yourself to be the Servant God.

You washed the feet of your disciples and called them friends.

You told them to love and serve one another as you had them.

Lord, we serve you as we pray for one another's needs.

L: This is our prayer: **R: Help us to know and to do your will.**

Lord, we thank you that we are not only your servants,

But your children, heirs to your kingdom of love and joy,

Through Jesus Christ, our Servant, Brother and Saviour, **Amen.**

**The Lord's Prayer**

**HYMN:** The Church of Christ in every age...*StF 415;H&P 804*

**Blessing:**

Let us go out with joy to serve the Lord

As we share his love with all

And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Rest and remain upon each one of us

Now and evermore, **Amen.**