

Vocations Sunday 2023

The lectionary readings this year invite us to consider that our vocations do not happen in isolation, but as part of work that God has done and is doing.

Call to worship

We praise you this morning for you are the way the truth and the life.

You are the God who creates spaces and places for us.

You are the-One who sits on the throne, the

Cornerstone of our faith, The God of Love

Thank you that here in your house, you welcome us to come, as we are.

Amen

StF 25 God is Here! And we his people

Prayers of adoration inspired by Psalm 31:21 and Lord's Prayer

Praise be to the Lord,

for he showed us the wonders of his love

Our God is the creator.

Our God is the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Our God is merciful.

We worship and adore Him.

Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed us the wonders of his love

We praise you for your work demonstrated throughout creation.

We praise you for the life of the Son, Jesus Christ for his demonstration of your love in word and action.

We praise you that through Jesus' death and resurrection we are forgiven and invited to new life

Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed us the wonders of his love

We thank you for your Spirit living with us.

We thank you for the prompting of that still small voice in our lives, our churches and communities.

We thank you for continuing your work through us.

Praise be to the Lord,
for he showed us the wonders of his love

Father, Son and Holy Spirit we praise your holy name

Amen

Lord's Prayer

An all-age talk – What are the foundations we are built on?

(Below are some questions to ask the congregation. You might want to write on to boxes which you or others then build into a structure. Or you might have a PowerPoint ready with empty bricks, adding words on to bricks)

Both of the lectionary texts today talk about houses, and both invite us to consider that our vocations do not happen in isolation, but as part of the ongoing work that God has done and is doing.

Lots of things in life build on what has gone before –just like houses our vocation needs strong and solid foundations which are built first. Or put more simply houses need a strong base which is built on to. And so do we.

This is the same for those who are Christians. We have a solid base provided by Jesus, and the church that has gone before us and we build our lives on what we have learnt from his life, death and resurrection.

If Jesus is the foundations upon which we build our lives, then we need to know in what ways Jesus acted, so that we can copy Him.

Question – how did Jesus live? What did he do?

(Examples might include healing the sick, sharing with the poor, eating with people, talking to God, sharing stories to help people understand something, loving people)

These all sound like great examples.

If you are to build a house, building the solid foundations are important so that the walls can be built straight and so that the house will not topple over. We've discussed Jesus as a strong foundation, but the bricks used to build a house are important too.

Question- Think of people who have taught you how to be more like Jesus. *(Examples could be parents, grandparents, youth workers, ministers, Christians in the media, saints, missionaries, friends. If you are using building block or displaying this visually you may wish to stack these names on top of the previous examples which had been the foundation) If there is time, when some of the congregation share a name, you might want to ask 'what did this person do that taught you more about Jesus?'*

If Jesus is the foundation stone, then we might see every one of these people, who has taught us more about Jesus, as being the bricks of the house of God. The house of God might be a physical place, like a church, but it is also a community of believers.

The good news is that all of us here are also a part of this amazing building being built by God. We aren't Christians in isolation, but we are a community, building on the work of God that has gone before. That is not to say that we have to do the same tasks as those who built before us, we do have to be relevant to the world as it is now in 2023 and beyond, but the purpose is the same – that all may come to know the love of God.

Let's hear about this in our first bible reading:

1 Peter 2:2-10

StF 690 The church's one foundation

John 14-1-14

Sermon – chosen royal priesthood of ordinary people.

There are questions throughout the sermon and you may wish to allow space for quiet individual reflection, talk in small groups, or open conversation as a whole group.

There is a prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake

‘O Lord God, when thou givest to thy servants to endeavour any great matter, grant us also to know that it is not the beginning but the continuing of the same until it be thoroughly finished which yeildeth the true glory’

How amazing are these words? *Drake says in that poem “It is not the beginning but the continuing of the same”,* which brings about what Drake calls true glory – glory to God. Or as John says in our Bible reading, it is in following Jesus who is The Way, that the Father is revealed.

We might think we are not good enough to continue the work of Jesus, if so, do not worry, remember that in 1 Peter we read that we are a royal priesthood of ordinary people. Ordinary people like you and me are invited to continue on in the ways Jesus taught us.

We are not called as individuals in isolation, we are called as individuals to respond to the love of God, and part of that response calls us in to community with other ordinary people and together we are a royal priesthood.

The people of the church are called to continue the work started by God that flourished in Christ. “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12

We are continuing the work of God that God started in people who have gone before us.

On Saturday 6th May 2023, Charles III was crowned Monarch of United Kingdom, the Crown Dependencies, and the British Overseas Territories, and is now head of the commonwealth. Whatever your own view on monarchy, this is an interesting example for us as we explore the themes in our Bible passages this week. As we see this monarch, Charles III building on that which has come before, we ask, what are we called to do which builds on what God has done before in our communities?

Question – What in the life of this community is happening because of the people who still are part of this church or were part of this church in the past?

An example might be that a parent and toddler group started because of one young mum from the church wanted to meet other parents so she invited people to meet once a week.

Everyone in this community of Christ is called to his work. Whatever stage of life, there is a part for us to play, and the part we play will change as we change.

Jesus, in the passage we read from John's gospel, was comforting his disciples. These were ordinary people who had witnessed extraordinary acts of God.

The book of 1 Peter is a letter, written to a dispersed Christian community in Asia Minor –which we now known as Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq, and this letter is reminding them to stand firm on the foundation of Christ in trying times and the face of persecution. The letter was to ordinary people facing unprecedented circumstances in their own time.

The letter talks of a royal priesthood, this language had once been exclusively used to describe the people of Israel, people who had been set apart, to show others something of the character of God. But now it is for all people to be able to share and witness in the work of God.

King Charles III has been crowned. He is set aside for a particular role, but the Christian message of a royal priesthood is that all of us, all us ordinary people, are set aside, show the world a little of what God is like. Jesus is the foundation and we are the bricks, we are set aside so that a house of justice and peace can be built.

Today is Vocations Sunday and we are celebrating our various vocations as a church.

The word Vocation comes from the Latin word vocare, to call, and means the work a person is called to by God. The tricky thing is knowing, or discerning, the voice of The Caller, the voice of God. It is often said that the kind of work God usually calls us to is the kind of work (a) that we need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done

This means that all of us have a vocation.

Our vocations do not happen in isolation, but as part of the continuance in the sharing of the work that God is doing. Together we are the bricks of the house, our vocations are the work of God continuing in ordinary people.

For some the continuing of this work might be looking at full time church ministry. And for all of us our vocation as the people of God means living out our faith in daily life. We might feel we are in the right place at the right time, or we might not, we might feel called by God to be alongside those in need and that might mean us making some changes to how we use our time or money. We might feel called by God from what we are doing now to something new. Whether we are in the right place or called to somewhere or something new, that can happen in school, at the factory or office, in charities, football clubs, pubs, cafes, and churches – anywhere. We might have a vocation in wider life and also a vocation in church life. For some continuing the work of God might include volunteering as the safeguarding officer, the treasurer, welcomer, flower arranger, or the maker of great cakes for tea and coffee after church.

We are *all* being built into the same spiritual house that is based on the solid foundation of Jesus, and our bricks sit alongside the work and witness of those who have come before us and are around us. We are all ordinary people, and yet we are all a royal priesthood, called to join in with the work of God in building His kingdom, of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, generosity, gentleness and self control.

Question - consider what you are doing to continue the work of God? Are you being nudged in a new direction?

Jesus was making known God's presence, God's greatness and mercy, God's grace and glory, God's persistent love on this earth. Jesus talks about the Son making known the Father's glory.

Jesus was making known that we could be in relationship with the creator of all earth and heavens and realms - That this is a God who is present in all of creation, including us

We may find it hard to follow the ways of Jesus, we may have messed up, but we are forgiven, loved and invited by a loving God to join the Holy Spirit to serve the world so that all may know the love of God.

In the letter we read, 1 Peter, the language was of coming from darkness to light. The light is both a personal relationship with God and also, the light of a just world where the kingdom of God is realised. Many of us know something of this light in our lives and the invitation is to live our lives so that others can be called out of darkness and know the light.

StF 706 Longing for light, we wait in darkness

Intercessions based on StF 409

Let us build a house where love can dwell, and all can safely live. We pray for peace in our world and communities [*pray for current world affairs*]

Make this a world where the love of Christ shall end divisions:

Foundation of our faith, **hear our prayer**

Let us build a house where prophets speak. We pray for those in leadership roles, in government, local authorities, churches, schools and businesses. May their words be strong and true, and may all they serve encounter your grace

Foundation of our faith, **hear our prayer**

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat; We pray for those who are hungry, hungry for food, hungry for company, hungry for answers, hungry for justice. May we share with them the feast that frees us:

Foundation of our faith, **hear our prayer**

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known. We pray for our community the place around this space, the people we know and love and those we find difficult to love. We pray for those who unwell, who are grieving and those known to us in the quietness of our hearts.

Foundation of our faith, **hear our prayer**

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace; let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, All are called by you

Foundation of our faith, **hear our prayer**

StF 94 – To God be the glory

Closing Prayer

As we end this time of worship God, bless each one of us, that we may be aware that that all we do in your name, is part of the continuance of the work that you, loving God has done and continues to do for us, and all we serve.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, forever more, Amen