

'The Call to Discipleship'

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Dear Friends

Welcome to this Local Arrangement service resource. The theme for this service is 'The Call to Discipleship'

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!

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

Chris Odell (Sheasby)

'The Call to Discipleship'

Opening Prayer Leader 1 Let us pray:

Lord we have heard you call us, heard you ask to enter our lives.

Lord, you are our God and Saviour: we come before you in worship and praise.

Lord, we have heard you call us to be your disciples, learning from you.

Lord, you are our leader and teacher: we come to listen to your living Word.

Lord, we have heard you call us to serve you lovingly in the world.

Lord, you are the Spirit of life and love: we come to offer our lives to you. In Jesus' Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: God is here, as we his people... *StF 25; H&P 653*

Prayer of Adoration: Leader 2 Let us pray:

Creator God,

For making the world to be our home and us in your image to love and serve you;

For calling us to be stewards of your creation: we praise and thank you.

Saving God

For coming to live our human life among us and to break through the barriers of sin;

For calling us to share your forgiving love with all: we praise and thank you.

Empowering God,

For filling us with love, joy and peace, with courage and strength;

For calling us to serve you, the Living God, with boldness: we praise and thank you. **Amen.**

Introduction: Leader 1 'The God who calls us'

Whether or not the New Year is a time when you make resolutions that you know from experience will be difficult to keep, this early time of the year still has a special quality about it. We start our new diaries, put up our new calendars, and start to plan the year ahead. The days are just beginning to get a little longer, and there are definite green stirrings in the garden. It is a time for looking forward, and a time for reflecting on our future lives. In the Church we look at Bible readings which tell how Jesus called his first disciples and what he called them to do. This helps us to think about our own calling and discipleship. What is the God who calls us saying to us, individually and as a church, about our life in 2015? In our service we will be thinking about the calls of the first disciples and what we can learn from them.

Reflection: 'Who was that...?' Reader 1

Who was that? Sheltering in that dark, dank cave, shivering with fear,

I heard the storm, felt the ground shake

And then a still, small voice. Who was that?

Who was that? Sitting in that gently rocking boat on the quiet lake,

Mending nets ready for the catch

I heard a clear, compelling, calling voice. Who was that?

Who was that? Deep in reflection and prayer, alone and yet not alone,

Wondering about my life,

I heard a new, loud, encouraging thought. Who was that?

Old Testament Reading: - from Psalm 139

Reader 2: Lord, you have examined me and you know me. You know everything I do; from far away you understand all my thoughts. You see me, whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions. Even before I speak, you already know what I will say. You are all round me on every side; you protect me with your power.

Your knowledge of me is too deep; it is beyond my understanding.

Reader 3: Where could I go to escape from you? Where could I get away from your presence? If I went up to heaven, you would be there; if I lay down in the world of the dead,

you would be there. If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest place in the west, you would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me. I could ask the darkness to hide me or the light round me to turn into night, but even darkness is not dark for you, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

Reader 2: You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because you are to be feared; all you do is strange and wonderful. I know it with all my heart. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there –you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began. O God, how difficult I find your thoughts; how many of them there are! If I counted them, they would be more than the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.

Reader 3: Examine me, O God, and know my mind; test me, and discover my thoughts. Find out if there is any evil in me and guide me in the everlasting way.

HYMN: Abba, Father, let me be **sung twice...* StF 439;MP 3

Gospel reading 1: Reader 4 - 'The First Disciples' – Matthew 4: 18 – 22

Reflection: Reader 1 – Andrew's Journal

Dear Diary, I little thought when I started keeping this journal a few weeks ago, what exciting and life-changing events I would have to record very shortly. I fully intend to keep this diary going, so that when I am old, God willing, I shall be able to read it and look back at these events with the benefit of hindsight. Perhaps then I might be able to understand what happened today.

It started like any other day. It was a calm, clear day, just right for fishing. Simon and I took our boat out on Lake Galilee. We were looking forward to a good catch and enjoying the warmth of the sun. The nets had been thrown out, when I glanced at the shore and saw a man walking there. The sun was so bright I couldn't see who it was. He waved and shouted a greeting. He called us to him. The water was shallow, so we walked through the sea to him. The man - who turned out to be one of our neighbours, Jesus, the son of Mary - looked us both straight in the eyes. 'Come with me and I will teach you to catch men' he said.

Well, what were we to make of that? I looked at Simon and he looked at me. *And together we just did it, we went with Jesus.* And later James and John joined us, too. I don't know why we all decided to suddenly up and change our lives like that. Perhaps one day I will. I only know that there is something about this Jesus that makes you want to follow him to the ends of the world, hang on his every word, and live as he wants you to live. I feel full of excitement and joy, yet also somehow peaceful. I'm looking forward to this new way of fishing with Jesus. What a day it's been! I'm looking forward to recording what learn tomorrow!

HYMN: Jesus calls us o'er the tumult... StF 250; H&P 141; MP 359

Gospel Reading 2: Reader 2 - 'The Outcast Disciple' Matthew 9: 9 – 12

Reflection: Reader 3 'The Eye Witness Account'

I was there, you know, when Jesus called next door. We weren't happy, living next door to that taxcollector. My friends and I, well, we don't want that kind of undesirable living in our neighbourhood.

It was bad enough having to pay tax to an occupying government without having to associate with the people profiting from it. So we didn't speak to that Matthew, or Levi or whatever he calls himself. Or his family. It wasn't any worse than that.

Then Jesus, a local lad, walked by, straight into Matthew's office, and said to the man, 'Follow me!'. It seemed he wanted him as a companion, even if no-one else did! And, would you believe it, Matthew stood up, left his work, and went with Mary's boy! I know all this, because I sit in the doorway most days, keeping an eye on things.

And after that, our worst suspicions about the tax collector were confirmed. After he'd invited Jesus to eat with him in his home,

all kinds of other undesirables would come and share meals with them – other tax collectors, women of dubious reputation, people a bit strange in the head, or handicapped in some way.

Well, we were forced to tell the Pharisees, because Jesus was lowering the tone of our neighbourhood! I saw them arrive and happened to hear them question some of the friends of Jesus. ‘Why does your master eat with such people?’ they said. Then I heard Jesus himself answer the question, ‘People who are well do not need a doctor, but only those who are sick’ he said. ‘I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts.’ Well, what do you make of that?

Prayer of Confession: Leader 2 Let us pray:

Loving God, you know how often we judge other people,
How we divide those we meet into ‘them’ and ‘us’!
We like to spend our time with those we know and understand
And find it hard to be ourselves with those we do not know,
Hard to befriend the stranger who is so unlike us.
We are sorry about this, because we learn from the gospels
That you came to call all sorts of people to follow you.
You did not reject the outcast or the unclean or the foreigner,
But welcomed them with love.
Forgive us our fear and narrow-mindedness, we pray,
And, through your Holy Spirit, give us the grace
To see and treat others as Jesus did. **Amen.**

Gospel Reading 3: Reader 4 -‘The Enthusiastic Disciple’ John 1: 43 – 50

Reflection: Reader 4 - ‘Philip’s Story’

When I met Jesus, I knew he was the One. He was what I had been looking for all my life. I’d heard about him from my friends Andrew and Simon, and was really keen to meet him. Then one day, all of a sudden, there he was. It was as if he had been looking for me, as well! I was so excited! And when he said ‘Come with me’, he made my day, or perhaps even my life! Of course I would go with him.

I had to go and tell my friend Nathanael, of course. You should always share your good news with your friends. ‘I’ve met him!’ I said ‘The One, the Messiah we’ve heard about in the Scriptures. And he’s asked *me*, your old friend Philip, to follow him! And, of course, I will.’ ‘Who is this amazing messiah?’ asked Nat, rather sceptically. I could see he thought this was just one of my enthusiasms and that he might have to reign me in. ‘Why, it’s Jesus of Nazareth.’ I replied. ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ he asked. ‘Come and see!’ I said, and took him to Jesus.

Jesus seemed to take to him straightaway. He never minded people who asked questions, I found later, but seemed to welcome it. Nat was very impressed that Jesus knew he had been sitting under a fig tree earlier, thinking this showed how special Jesus was. I think Jesus was surprised that Nat, the questioner, reacted like that, but he was delighted that Nat shared his thoughts so openly and honestly. As I’ve always said about Nat – you know where you are with him. And right now, we’re there together, members of the Jesus team. I’m so glad I helped make another follower for Jesus!

Prayer of Thanksgiving: Leader 2 Let us pray:

Loving God, we thank you for all those who have listened to your call,
Followed you faithfully, served you wholeheartedly
And witnessed to your truth, justice and love.
We thank you for the disciples
Who embraced the strange adventure of following Jesus.
We thank you for the evangelists
Who risked their lives to bring the good news of your saving love to all the world.
We thank you for all your saints:

For Christians of every era and in every place who have lived out your gospel
As shining lights in a dark world.
We remember those whom we have known who have shown us the way of love
And given us insights, comfort or challenge.
We thank you especially for those who have died,
And rejoice that in you we are all made one on earth and in heaven. In Jesus' Name, **Amen.**

HYMN: I want to walk with Jesus Christ... *MP 302 OR*
Master, speak, thy servant heareth... *StF 666; H&P 535;MP 459*

Offering and Prayer: (Leader 2) Let us pray:
Loving God, you have given us your Son Jesus
To be our Teacher, our Friend and our Saviour
And you have asked us to follow him every day of our lives.
Accept this, our offering of money
And with it our offering of ourselves
To share the Good News of Jesus with people everywhere, We ask this in his Name, **Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession: Leader 2
In this prayer there is a response – L: Speak, Lord: **R: your servants are listening.**
Let us pray:
Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves, but to you:
You call us by name; you say to us 'Follow me!'.

You call to us in the world.
You speak to us through the voices of prophets, politicians and poets.
We pray for those who challenge us by speaking out against injustice and oppression.
You speak to us through the voices of those with whom we work and socialize and live.
We pray for those whose talking with us challenges us to show your love in our everyday lives.
You speak to us through the voices of the needy, the unwanted, and the dispossessed.
We pray for the victims of greed and warfare who cry out to us for help.
Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves, but to you. Show us what we should do.
L: Speak, Lord: **R: your servants are listening.**
You call to us in the world.
You say to us 'Follow me ...' through a lifetime of loving and giving.
We pray for those who need our friendship: those who are neglected, needy, misunderstood.
You say to us 'Follow me...' into the dark places of suffering and fear.
We pray for those who need our support: those who are ill, sorrowful or anxious ...
You say to us 'Follow me...' into the kingdom of light and joy and peace.
We pray for those who need to hear the message of the hope to be found in Christ.
Loving God, we do not belong to ourselves, but to you. Show us what we should do.
L: Speak, Lord: **R: your servants are listening.**
In the name of Jesus Christ, our Leader, Teacher and Saviour, **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer:

HYMN: Lord of Creation....*StF 449;H&P 699; MP 440*

Prayer of Dismissal and blessing: Leader 1
Lord, you have called us to love and serve you;
And with your help we will.
Give us the wisdom to know what we should do,
The courage to keep on loving and giving,
And the faith that will see us through.
For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who died that we might truly live. **Amen.**