

Service for Central Hall on Jan 17th 2021 (prepared by Deacon Sheila Dawson & Bill Holdforth)

“ Listening to God’s call and responding to him by serving.”

**Call to worship:** In psalm 37 5-7 NLT we find these words “Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. 6He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun. Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act”.

We join together to worship our Lord who showers blessings on us all so we sing “**10000 reasons**” Press ctrl and click (300) 10,000 Reasons | Virtual Church Choir & band | OneSound & National Methodist Choir GB with NMYBB - YouTube

**Prayers of praise and thanksgiving:** Loving God, we don’t always find it easy to praise you even though we know that you truly deserve it... As we come before you now help us to quieten our minds, and to sense your holy presence with us... Please remind us of your goodness & power, your compassion & protection, your wisdom and guidance - demonstrated down the ages but, also, freely given to us today... We thank you that you love us just as we are... We thank you for the many blessings that you lavish upon us every day... We thank you that you are the God who repeatedly calls us... We ask that You give us a glimpse of Your holiness and glory this morning... Help us to love you more... And please help us to listen to what you are saying to us personally... We offer our prayers in the name of Jesus, our Lord, Saviour, and friend. Amen.

**READING** :Samuel 3 1-10 15-18

Part 1 Too busy to recognise God’s call.

Samuel dedicated by his mother to serve in the temple busy in helping the high priest Eli. Did not expect God to speak to him . He was so busy that he missed God’s call, It took the guidance of Eli for Samuel to become open to God’s prompting in his dreams and vision.

Similarly for us today we are very busy and often miss God’s prompting. It is often the support , nurture and fellowship of fellow Christians that enables us to become aware of God’s will for our lives. In this pandemic we are desperately seeking how to witness. We are. Looking for ways to support and help each other . We quickly Dash off to do what we think God wants us to do. Forgetting to make time to pause and listen to God. There is a tendency to follow our Man made priorities rather than God’s priorities. God has a purpose for each and every one of us in sharing his love and growing His kingdom calling us to live out his values..

We are going to reflect on Samuel calling and what ours may be as we listen to Matt Beckingham sing a song called “Our Calling” Ctrk + click (300) Our Calling | Lyrics - YouTube

Not recognising God's voice ,or even his hand in what is around us is something I am sure we all experience. I have asked Deacon Sheila to share the circumstances around how she discerned her own initial calling to be a deacon .

Part 2 God's tick list- Testimony (Deacon Sheila): One day, whilst I was working as a Meth Lay Worker, a friend dropped a little book entitled 'Dare to be a Deacon' into my bag. I had never heard of Methodist Deacons but discovered that I 'ticked all the boxes' of what a deacon is called to do and be: 'Support the weak; Bind up the broken; Gather in the outcast; Welcome the stranger; Seek the lost...' These words resonated so deeply within me that I went to talk with my minister about it the next day. Although I had been a Christian for over 40 years and responded to several different calls on my life God clearly spoke to me about ordained ministry through the words of that little book! I subsequently trained & was ordained as a Methodist Deacon in 2015.

We sing about being open to God in stf **Hymn 666 Master speak, thy servant heareth.**

ctrl + click (300) Master, Speak! Thy Servant Heareth [with lyrics for congregations] - YouTube

We often fail to recognise God's voice and for that we offer up our **prayer of confession**

Lord , , you have called us by name. You will not let us sit idly by. We often wake up in the middle of the night with things on our mind without remembering your wonders . (Think of examples God's wonder around you in your life)

You will not let us hide away scared of the next step. You summon us out of the shadows to be changed by your love ( In silent prayer ask God to change those things in your world that need to be changed .)

You will not let us bury our secrets in the business of everyday life. You unearth our fears and prompts us to face up to them.( bring before God the things that scare you )

Forgive us, God, when we either fail to speak out or to share your love. Reveal to us the words and actions you want from us your children. In Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance (inspired by Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18)

Brother's and sister's in Christ, Our God knows us by name. Our God knows what we fear. Our God has a purpose for all of us his children. God's works are revealed again to us and to others each day. Always remember that he walks with us for in Christ we are made new . Amen thanks be to God. We share together in the Lords prayer .

**READING** : John 1 43-51

Part 3 "Called to serve and share Gods' values"

Jesus is calling his disciples to him so that they become an active part of planting God's Kingdom and sharing God's love . We heard from Sheila how in today's busy world God still calls us to serve him and to sow the seeds of Kingdom values in the lives of those we encounter.

If we go back to our Methodist roots , the early church drew closer to God supporting each other physically and spiritually. They developed an approach based on developing social justice that enabled people to get to a place where they recognise that all people are important to God . They reach a point where people felt they Matter and they belong.. Through that fellowship they start to grasp the beliefs of the church and deepen their individual relationship with God. In the pressures of this ongoing pandemic ,The church today reaching out to share kingdom values is an important part of the nurturing process.

Jesus called Phillip. He immediately goes of and called Nathaniel to come and meet Jesus But Jesus already knew Nathaniel ., He knew his strengths, he knew his weaknesses and he called him to follow him .

Jesus is loved just as he is. Just as Jesus loves and knows each one of us calling us to follow him , wanting us to be his active hands .WE are called to support those in need through prayer , through creating opportunities for them to get to know his love and by providing the support they need .

Last week in the Covenant Service you shared Wesley's prayers a very challenging prayer based on putting the one we love first calling for us to put everything at His disposal and giving him all authority

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 troubled and when I am at peace. Your will be done when I am valued and when I am disregarded; when I find fulfilment and when it is lacking; when I have all things, and when I have nothing. I willingly offer all I have and am to serve you, as and where you choose. Glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours.

WE are people of a promise who know that God has promised to walk with us in all things. He gives us all a range of different gifts and blessing to use in his service to grow the kingdom in many different ways . But we have to pause and listen to his prompting to establish just how to use those gifts.

Discernment is a difficult thing to do it requires making quality time for God who speaks in many different ways . When we were planning this service Sheila talked about how God had spoken to her in her dreams.

For me this was similar to the person who set up the wellspring café in Earlsdon who was inspired by a God given Dream . So I asked her if she was willing to share it with us all and she has agreed.

Part 4 - Dreams and visions (Deacon Sheila): A few nights ago I had a horrible dream, but woke myself up through repeatedly shouting 'Help me Lord!' Realising I had had a nightmare but believing the words of Psalm 139 (that the Lord will never leave me) to be true I was able to fall straight back into a peaceful sleep!

God sometimes speaks to me through my imagination. Last week I had a very clear vision of myself doing some gardening with Jesus. (It was like watching a video playing in my mind). Jesus gave me 3 different seeds to plant: The first seed looked like a big conker and (Jesus said) would grow into a ministry in a particular place; the 2nd was shaped like an almond and (Jesus told me) was called 'compassion'; and the 3rd was a tiny black seed, which represented another ministry in a different place. Jesus also gave me a gift of sparkling light, which represented the promise of His presence with me and the lightness of walking in step with Him. NB I still have quite a lot of prayer and discernment to bring to this vision, but I am absolutely certain that God was speaking to me through it.

God speaks in many different ways so that we can live out his love. We sing stf 662

**Hymn stf 662: Have you heard God's voice** as sung by Matt Beckingham. Ctrl + click (300) Have you heard God's voice? (Will you walk the path that will cost you much?) | Matt Beckingham - YouTube

**Prayers of intercession:** Compassionate God we hold before you the people and situations that are weighing heavily on our hearts at this time, asking that you will touch each individual with your love: Those impacted by the coronavirus... Those who make important decisions... Our Church family & members of other Churches ... Our families & friends, neighbours & communities, our country and all nations... Please minister to each one, providing for their needs, and showering your love and blessing upon them all... Finally we bring our personal needs & concerns before you, LORD... Please surround us with your presence, fill us with your love & power, and speak to us... May your kingdom come and your will be done in our lives, in you Church, and in the world. For we pray in the name of Jesus, and for his glory, Amen.

As we approach a new normal post lockdown ,we as a church family have an Opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with those around us.. At the Central Hall through each of us engaging with City of Culture activities there will be the opportunity to get alongside a wide range of new people sharing God's love in practical ways. This gives us the opportunity AS a church to ask ourselves 2 challenging questions :-

How is God calling us the people of the Central hall to be his people in this new normal ?

In what ways can we live out the promises contained in Wesley's covenant Prayer to help grow the kingdom?

Our final hymn reminds us of keeping Christ at the centre v3 says "o let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still , Lord speak and make me listen o guardian of my soul "

we sing **stf 563 "O Jesus I have promised."** Ctrl +click (skip ad) (300) O Jesus I have promised - YouTube

**Blessing:** God sends us out to be , healing hands to the world's brokenness. Jesus calls us as sisters and brothers, to accept others as completely as we have been embraced. The Spirit is at work through us, wherever we are – at work, at home, in lockdown , in contact electronically with our communities.

We are called to walk forward as God's people Living in the blessing of Father Son and Holy Spirit sharing his love with all . Amen