

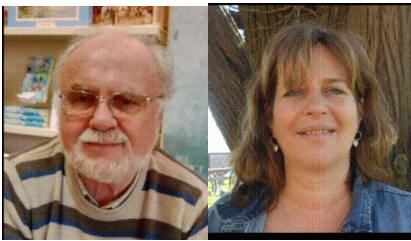
Worship for Trinity 3: 28 June 2020 including talk/sermon.

Welcome and Introduction DT

'In the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.'

In our worship today we continue with our 'called to be...' series focusing on called to be God's servant, and specifically, called to be ordained.

This weekend (and next) was to have seen lots of women and men ordained by bishops as deacons and priests in cathedrals right across the country. That was before Coronavirus interrupted our lives!



Amongst those ordained would have been our own Nicki Bullivant, who would have been ordained deacon today, Sunday 28 June, and our own David Rees who would have been priested yesterday, Sat 27 June. They will now wait a little longer to have hands laid on them by the Bishop, probably September.

Meanwhile David will continue his ministry as a deacon and Nicki, whilst remaining a member of the laity, **will** start her curacy here which is exciting.

Later on we will commission Nicki into this new ministry. We will also hear a little bit of her vocation story along with David and Emma.

Even if you are not called to ordination I hope you will be able to connect with what you hear today, and that you might be willing to say to God, "who are you calling me to be, Lord?" "what are you asking of me in my life?" "Speak, Lord for your servant is listening."

Confession

Love of Jesus Fill us. Holy Spirit Guide us. Will of the Father be done.

In the silence of our hearts, let us pray to the Lord, bringing our individual and corporate failures to respond to God's call and live to his praise and glory.

Lord our God, in our sin we have avoided your call. Our love for you is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early. Have mercy on us; deliver us from judgement; bind up our wounds and revive us; in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

May the God of love and power forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by his Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Collect

God our Father, Lord of all the world, through your Son you have called us into the fellowship of your universal Church: hear our prayer for your faithful people that in their vocation and ministry each may be an instrument of your love, and give to your servants the needful gifts of grace; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Our first reading is the call of Samuel. It's one of the few audible calls from God recorded in the Bible.

Reading

1 Samuel 3:1-10.

Mini Sermon

It is a privilege to hear stories of God working in people's lives.

Before coming to Gloucester Diocese, I was a parish priest and also vocations advisor and assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands in the Diocese of Llandaff. A major part of this role was having people from different parishes come to see me or me go and see them to hear, possibly for the first time, how they felt called by God. I would often be one of the first people they would talk to. With the exception of one or two individuals every person had a genuine desire to want to love the Lord and respond to him, and were really wanting to discern what it was that God was calling them to... ordination, readership, other lay ministry, a life of prayer, a specific missional or charitable work, or to carry on serving God where they were and in what they were already doing... in a deeper way, wanting to live out their baptismal calling.

There are certain things which are common when it comes to God's calling, in relation to ordination, but NOT exclusive to ordination:

1. **Sense of nudging or disturbance.**

Can't get away from it.

Something external drawing, something internal pulling. Something ignited inside. "What's going on?" It doesn't leave. It grows, it persists. "Maybe it is a calling?" "Is it me?" "Is it God?" "Is it human or divine?"

"This 'thing' that I cannot describe, seems to be growing. Am I going mad? Am I ill? Maybe it's mental breakdown. What's going on?"

I can remember very well that sense of something growing inside. And I remember trying to work out what was going on. Trying to discern the voice, the feeling, this growing inside.

Samuel had God speak to him in an audible voice! And that's rare! But God does speak to us, through Scripture... jumping out at us, preaching that cuts us to the heart, through circumstances, through mistakes, dreams and so on.

One of the most frequent ways God can speak to us is through other people. In my own faith journey things were turned on their head when a lady at my church, where as a student I was organist, came up to me after the Eucharist and said "David, I looked up at you during the sermon today and God told me you are going to be a priest". I said, "It would have been nice for him to tell me" to which she replied, "Maybe he just did".

God chose to use a little old lady to get through! I didn't want to hear it. This is not something I felt I wanted... I wouldn't know but maybe like an unwanted pregnancy? Like the picture on the screen I actually felt picked on.

That was my experience; others of course have a different response to God's call!

The church of England's vocations website used to be called 'Call Waiting.' I thought that was a great name, evoking that idea of God being on the line wanted to speak with us.

Most of us will have experience the mobile phone call coming in... and have had to make a decision to answer or decline. "God's calling" "How will we respond?"

2. Responding.

When we think that God may be calling us to ordained ministry, or other ministries, jobs, tasks, to prayer or to follow him we face the question, 'how do I respond?'

We start by testing it. Praying and sharing what's going on over time.

And it can take time for us to respond. (it can be a very long time... like David Rees' story...)

If it is God calling, we find the call growing inside of us and having to decide whether we yield to what is growing inside. DO I accept it? Embrace it? Nurture it?

As we go through a process of acceptance... yielding, and surrendering, abandoning oneself to the love and will of God, and find that our desires may start to shift towards God, the things of God, and to fulfilling what it is God is calling us to, even though it might seem a little ridiculous.

I never wanted to be a public figure speaking in front of lots of people! But that desire to want to do God's will has shifted me to do it!

Very often God's call is not so much about "Oh I like this, or I want to do this... so I must be called to it", but "I think God may desire this for me... and it's becoming my desire because of my love for him."

3. **Disturbance and response.** Then comes the training & equipping. ... a lifelong endeavour. Being open, teachable, to be formed into the people God wants us to be, to be equipped to carry out the things he wants us to undertake; to have our own abilities put into his hands, and our own inabilities put firmly into his hands. In my Bible I have written

"I need the Spirit's strength to begin, continue and finish the work God has given me to do."

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:13 E.g. online recordings!!!

"Success depends not on the capabilities of those chosen but on the wisdom, power and faithfulness of him who chooses."

I don't know whether this is something people will want to hear or not, but as we respond to God's call on our lives, as a disciple, a deacon or as a priest God's love reaches out to us more and more, and calls for more and more of a response... and he further moulds and shapes our lives.

Might God be disturbing you, prodding you, nudging you... your spirit? Ask yourself, "Is your love Lord calling out to me and drawing some kind of new or deeper response from me in my life?"

Perhaps you could respond like Samuel, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening!"

Commissioning of Nicki for her ministry amongst us as Curate

After 3 years of training and formation whilst working full time as a nurse and living life with husband Nick and the family, Nicki Bullivant now formally starts her ministry here in the 3 Parishes.

I'm delighted to have Nicki as a curate with all her gifts and skills and delighted that she's starting her curacy now...!

Nicki will continue to work as a nurse, and as a volunteer chaplain at Gloucester Royal, whilst giving Thursdays and Sundays to the Parish here.

So we're going to be commissioning Nicki into her curacy now, and I'm delighted that we're joined by Nicki's husband Nick, and friend Roz together with David Rees who is continuing as a deacon & curate (he'll be priested in Sept hopefully), and Janice, who is beginning the 4th and final year of her curacy!

DT (addressing those gathered and those watching on YouTube... please respond!!!): Nicki has been called to minister as Curate in the Parishes of Tidenham, St Briavels with Hewelsfield & Brockweir. Will you, as the people of God support and pray for her in this ministry?

All: With the help of God, we will.

DT (addressing Nicki): Nicki, do you believe that God has called you to this ministry?

Nicki: I do.

DT: Will you, as long as you are engaged in this ministry, seek to perform it prayerfully and in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration with those who minister in this place?

Nicki: With the help of God, I will.

DT: Will you seek to develop the faith, gifts and skills God has given you as you share in Christ's mission and ministry?

Nicki: With the help of God, I will.

DT: Nicki, I commission you as a fellow minister in this place, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May God grant you grace, wisdom and joy as you live out this calling.

All: Amen.

silence

DT: May you have the grace and wisdom to act kindly, learning to distinguish between what is personal and what is not. May you never put yourself at the centre of things. May you act not from arrogance but out of service. May you work on yourself building up and refining the ways of your mind. May you learn to cultivate the art of presence in order to engage with those who meet you. When someone fails or disappoints you may the graciousness with which you engage be their stairway to renewal and refinement. May you treasure the gifts of the mind through reading and creative thinking so that you continue to be a servant of the frontier where the new will draw its enrichment from the old, and you never become a functionary. May you know the wisdom of deep listening, the healing of wholesome words, the encouragement of the appreciative gaze, the decorum of held dignity, the springtime of the bleak question. May you have a mind that loves frontiers so that you can evoke the bright fields that lie beyond the view of the regular eye. May you have good friends to mirror your blind spots. May leadership be for you a true adventure of growth, in Jesus' name:

All: Amen

Prayers

DT: As we ponder God's call; in the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to the Father.

Janice: For Nicki, David and Emma who have shared their stories with us today, that God would lead them, inspire them, equip them and protect them in his love and power. Lord, hear our cry.

Roz: For those who were to have been ordained this weekend, that their commitment to Christ and sense of calling to ordained ministry would deepen during this time of waiting. Lord, hear our cry.

David R: For all the members of the Church... that we may discover our vocation and ministry, and that we may serve the Lord wholeheartedly in truth and love. Lord, hear our cry.

Nick: For all those with ministries of preaching and pastoral care whether as part of the church gathered or scattered, that they may witness faithfully to the love of God in deed and word. Lord, hear our cry.

Nicki: For the unity of the Church, that we may be one in Christ, according to his will, and that locally we may live life together in the flow of God's love. Lord, hear our cry.

David R: For those who do not yet believe, that they may receive the light of the gospel, and for those whose faith has grown cold, that their hearts may be 'strangely warmed'! Lord, hear our cry.

Roz: For the poor and the hungry, for the homeless and the oppressed, for all prisoners and captives, and for our brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith. Lord, hear our cry.

Janice: For our nation, for all in need of God's help... especially our leaders in all sectors of society we pray to the Lord.

And for the sick and suffering, for the aged and infirm, the lonely and neglected, and for all who remember and care for them... for healing and peace. Lord, hear our cry.

DT: We cry out to the Lord, because he is our Father and we are his children...

As God's children let us join together here and at home in saying...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is kingdom, the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

God continues to call people to ordained ministry which comes in many shapes and forms... including deacon, priest, pioneer, teacher, evangelist, chaplain (e.g. hospital, prison, sports, forces etc...), full time, part time, voluntary and paid. Maybe that could be you watching? If you feel nudged by God... get in touch with me or a member of the team here or in your local church.

However, it's really important to stress God's call extends well beyond ordination!

God calls people to all kinds of ministries, tasks, situations and relationships, **all** of which have equal value! Sadly for many years calling and vocation has been thought of in ways all too narrow and hierarchical.

Calling can be specific or general. I have not only been called to be a deacon and priest; I am called to be a husband and father; I am called to be a friend and colleague; I am called to be a disciple; I am called to use my time, talents and resources in all kinds of ways day by day. I am called to be human in relationship

with God, with other people and with creation itself! I am called to be... And we will be exploring these things over the coming weeks!

Just before the blessing and dismissal I want to sign post you to the weekly briefing on email and the website. There's a lot of new information there about church buildings being open, prayer spaces in the churchyards, opportunities to gather in small groups to worship, interesting lectures and online gatherings & resources.

To pick up 2 things. Firstly, so many of us are missing church family. If you can possibly take a photo of you and anyone in your household and send them in electronically to Jane Penny, it would be lovely to see the church family. If you're meeting up with others socially then take one of each other and send them in. When we have enough photos we'll put a prayerful montage together.

Secondly, for the online worship next Sunday 5th July we would like to have recorded a BIG CLAP from the Parish to join in with the national day of celebration for the NHS and other front line workers. If you or someone you know is able, please record yourself or someone else clapping for 1 min or take a photo of yourself holding a rainbow picture or cardboard message of thanks. (And please smile!!! Don't forget to smile!). If you are also able to offer to visit others on their doorstep to record them clapping or take photos please contact Janice (contact details below) Please send all contributions to Alex White... his email is on the briefing alexwhitemultimusic@gmail.com by Weds 1st July, thanks you.

The Blessing and Dismissal

DT: People of God, Christ invites each of us to faithful discipleship and service. We are all called to different ministries as we seek to live God's love. As we have commissioned Nicki today, will you, with her, and as baptised disciples of Christ, renew your commitment to the loving service of God, of one another and of all people?

All: With the help of God, we will.

DT: God the Holy Spirit, who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord, empower you and fill you with Christ's peace.

All: Amen.

DT: And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be amongst you and those you love and remain with you always.

All: Amen

Nicki: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. In the name of Christ.

All: Amen.