

Call to worship (inspired by Psalm 138)

O Lord our God, we come together with songs of praise in our hearts,
because of your constant love and faithfulness.

Even though we struggle with life's issues, your kindness blesses us.

Listening God, we come together with prayers of thanks in our hearts,
because you hear and answer our prayers.

Even though life is sometimes difficult, your strength blesses us.

Welcoming God, we come together in respectful worship filling our minds,
because your faithful love continues forever.

**Even though we are fragile people
who sometimes feel lost and abandoned,
God's love blesses us and never changes.**

Thanks and praise be to our glorious God for ever and ever. Amen.

written by Joan Stott

Hymn We come to you who called Tune *Nun danket* at R&S 72

We come to you who called both Abraham
and Sarah,
that we may journey, too,
with you as guide and carer;
old comforts leave behind,
risk all to follow you,
exploring by your side,
each day our whole lives through.

We come to you who came
to live and die among us,
that we, by grace, might live
the life your death has won us;
that, leaving self behind,
for others now we'll care;
with you we'll walk each day,
each pain and pleasure share.

We come to you who saved
slave peoples from oppression,
that justice here and now
might be our bold obsession;
the manna of your love
must feed us, keep us strong,
through wastelands yet unknown,
'til right has conquered wrong.

We come to you who sent
disciples to each nation,
that we, in turn, might go
to live out your salvation;
'til here, on city streets,
and all across this land
our liveliness declares
your kingdom is at hand!

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Talk Sandy

Opening Prayer

We gather to give thanks to You, O God,
We will sing Your praises before all creation, and rejoice in Your steadfast love!
You have created us O Holy One, and made us for Yourself,
In You we become everything You have made us to be!

You call us, wanderer of seashores and pathways,
inviting us to sail out of our smug harbours
into the uncharted waters of faith,
to wander off from our predictable paths to follow You
into the unpredictable footsteps of your kingdom;
to leave the comfort of our homes and accompany
You into the uncomfortable neighbourhoods we usually avoid.

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As we wait, in our simple yet uncertain lives,
speak to us, Spirit of Grace: of that hope which is our anchor;
of that peace which is our rock; of that grace which is our refuge. **Amen**

Gifts

Holy One, all that we have comes from you. Accept our gifts for your work in the world,
and to you be the glory and praise always. **Amen**

Hymn Will your anchor hold R&S 598 **we will sing verses 1 and 2 with refrain, and then verse one again. NOT verses 3 & 4.** If there are no children, we will sing it as normal.

1 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
when the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift, or firm remain?

Refrain:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll;
fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!*

2 Will your anchor hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers roar and the reef is near?
While the surges rage, and the wild winds blow,
shall the angry waves your boat o'erflow?

Refrain and repeat verse 1

Children leave for Sunday Club. Say the Grace (if there are children going out)

Bible readings: **Psalm 138**
 Luke 5:1-11

The first thing I note about today's gospel reading is that Jesus doesn't like the crowd pressing in on him. He looks and sees some empty boats on the shoreline, and he asks Simon, one of the fishermen, to take him in the boat a little way out so that he can talk to the people without being surrounded by them. This is not the only time Jesus escapes crowds. In fact, last week's gospel reading, which you didn't listen to here as John didn't follow the lectionary, ended with Jesus passing through the crowd in his hometown of Nazareth, the crowd who were trying to throw him off a cliff because they didn't like what he said. Another, well-known example is after the feeding of the five thousand when Jesus dismisses the crowd and goes up a mountain alone to pray. The vast majority of ministers are introverts, which means not that we don't like people, but that we get our energy from spending time alone and often can't stand being around a large number of people for too long. It seems that Jesus was an introvert too. That's certainly Good News to me!

The next thing that is interesting is that from the boat, Jesus taught the crowds, although Luke doesn't tell us what this teaching was about. Context is everything. In the other

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gospels, Matthew and Mark, which mention Jesus finding his first disciples, Jesus is simply walking by the sea when he sees Simon and his brother and then the sons of Zebedee and he says 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men' and they immediately leave what they are doing and follow Jesus. No further comment, they just up and leave their livelihoods and families and follow Jesus.

Here in Luke, the call of these fishermen comes in the midst of learning from Jesus' teaching and in witnessing an act of God – the sudden abundance of fish after a time of scarcity and emptiness. The men had fished all night and caught nothing, but as soon as Jesus says the word there are so many fish that their nets are beginning to break and they need to call other boats to come and help them. After Jesus has finished teaching, he turns the conversation to focus on Simon and his nets, setting up the act of God. Simon's reply acknowledges the reality of limits and scarcity – that they have worked all night with no result, but also his willingness to listen and try again – 'yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' The response to Simon's willingness to try again is immediate; suddenly they have more fish than two boats can bear. I'm sure many of you are old enough to have been told as children, "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again"? It is good to know when to stop flogging an old horse, but it is also important not to accept defeat and to keep on trying, especially when urged to do so by Jesus.

The act of God here, this sudden multitude of fish, is characterized by abundance and provision. A large catch of fish represents stability and care, support, and having enough. It is a physical manifestation of having one's needs met. Also, the size of the catch indicates provision beyond the immediate moment. This is food enough to sell so that the fishermen will have resources beyond today. They will have money to buy other things they need. They can eat again tomorrow. And, the food that is sold becomes food for others. So, while the large catch of fish conveys provision and plenty for Simon and the others, it also signals a world beyond these fishermen and their immediate needs. This miracle looks beyond individual needs being met, to community needs being met. But this provision of plenty is not where the story ends. Jesus, after providing this gift of plenty and even excess, tells the disciples that they are being called. In some ways, this call is similar to their present work; in other ways, it is different. The image of fishing is still used, but now it involves people. The climax of the story is the call of the first disciples, not the abundance of fish. In their new role, the disciples will gather the people by sharing the message from and about Jesus. They will follow Jesus while leading and serving others.

We are told so little about these men and what motivated them. What was so special about Jesus? What was so amazing about his teaching that made them want to follow him? Or

was it simply that they thought with Jesus they would never go hungry? What do we know about Jesus that gives meaning to this call that comes not just to the first disciples, but also to us? The way this “fishing for people” unfolds in Luke’s Gospel is not coercive or domineering. It is personal, relational work, where healing and plenty mark the encounters of the disciples with Jesus and with God’s people. The interplay between teaching, healing, and call continues.

The story in Luke before what we heard today says Jesus was teaching and then he healed people, and once the crowd heard about it, they brought more and more people to be healed. The story immediately after today’s has Jesus healing a man with leprosy. And then another story about teaching and healing a paralyzed man. With Jesus teaching and healing and service go together. Words and action. And so it was with the first disciples and so it is with us.

Last week at Bridgwater, we talked about prophets – what is a prophet, what should they talk about, are we prophets of God today? Today, along with the first disciples, we are asked to be fishers of people. What does that mean? It does not mean aiming to catch as many people for the church as possible. It does not mean heaving in heavy nets of new members – over-fishing and depleting fish stocks. But it does mean being as welcoming as possible; as friendly as possible, as open as possible. It means being like Simon – listening to the word of God and acting on it; being willing to try again when something we’ve already tried didn’t work. It means trying new things that might attract more fish. It means doing new things with our building – yes, doing the repairs that are needed, like fishermen repair their nets, but they also prepare the nets for future years, making them stronger – in our case making our building more sustainable and eco-friendly and creating new spaces to do exciting new activities so that we won’t have to go out and drag people in on fishing hooks – they will want to come because we have something they want to be a part of.

Hymn Lord, you have come to the seashore Tune Church Hymnary 532

1. Lord, you have come to the seashore,
neither searching for
the rich nor the wise,
desiring only that I should follow.

*O, Lord, with your eyes set upon me,
gently smiling, you have spoken my name;
all I longed for I have
found by the water,
at your side, I will seek other shores.*

2. Lord, see my goods, my possessions;
in my boat you find no power, no wealth.
Will you accept, then,
my nets and labour?

3. Lord, take my hands and direct them.
Help me spend myself
in seeking the lost,
returning love for the love you gave me.

4. Lord, as I drift on the waters,
be the resting place
of my restless heart,
my life's companion,
my friend and refuge.

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Prayers of intercession

The buzz of the world interrupts our lives and fills our ears
Call us into Your way of life, O God
The complaints of others settle in our mind and cloud our vision
Lead us into Your vision of life, O God
The cries of the poor, the oppressed and the outcast pierce our hearts
Guide us in Your example of living for others, O God
Fill our hearts, fill our eyes, fill our ears with Your love,
And let us be Your hands and feet in the world.

Today we pray for our Queen, Elizabeth on the 70th anniversary of her succession to the throne.
Grant her continued wisdom and good health in her life of service to the nation.

We pray for the Church: that she may be a beacon of hope throughout the world, reminding us all of our responsibility to care for and protect God's precious gift of creation. In this 50th year, we pray especially for the United Reformed Church and all her moderators, ministers and lay workers.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world, our common home: that through God's grace we may hear its cry of the damage done and be moved to protect it for future generations to enjoy.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for those people who are already facing droughts, floods and storms: that God may grant them strength and hope for the future as they work to adapt to the changing climate.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local church and community: that through the grace of God we may hear the urgent cry of the earth and of the poor and be inspired to respond at this crucial time. We pray that we will be guided by openness, flexibility and wisdom and we discern your will for our church and our building here in Rayleigh, that in your grace we may reach out to the wider community.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for the world we live in: that God may open our eyes to recognise the goodness of all creation and help us to do what we can to restore and care for the wonderful gift that we have been given.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for world leaders: that God may grant them wisdom to make just decisions which respect the earth and all that lives in it, especially those who are poorest and most vulnerable. We pray especially for Europe, Ukraine and Russia, that there will be a peaceful resolution to disagreements and a de-escalation of aggression. We also pray for the people of Tonga as they begin to recover from the tsunami.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

We pray for our local community: that through God's grace we may be good neighbours to each other and to the whole of creation, restoring and caring for all that God has made.

Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

In the silence we bring to mind those known to us who particularly need your grace and healing at this time...
Lord, in your mercy...**hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we ask all this in the name of Christ, our redeemer.

Holy God, we ask all this by the Holy Spirit who activates your love in us.

Holy God we ask all this that your love may be like seed scattered—
manifesting in small and unexpected ways—the greatness of You.

May your love take root in our lives, and may we walk in faith. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Hymn Will you come and follow me R&S 558

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
Will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown
In you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind
If I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
And never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
Should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
In you and you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through my sight and touch and sound
In you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true
When you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
And never be the same.
In your company I'll go
Where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.

Words by John Bell and Graham Maule

Blessing

Go with confidence into the days ahead,
trusting in God's unfailing love and faithfulness.
God will not abandon you,
for you are the work of God's hands
created by the Holy One
whose love endures forever.
So go in joy to love and serve the Lord!
And the blessing of God the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be with you now and ever more. Amen

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