

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 18 May 2025 - The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Vocation Sunday Conversation Between Catherine Price (Licensed Lay Ministry) and Rev Dr Julie Norris (Director of Lay Ministry)

Julie: *When did you begin to think that that LLM ministry was God's calling to you? How did you come to see the Pastoral specialism as part of this? How does this fit together in practice?*

Catherine: *In 2019, I was nursing at Addenbrooke's. I asked a colleague who was a doctor and also ordained and working with the hospital chaplaincy, 'what can you offer as a chaplain that you can't offer as a doctor?'. Although he didn't really answer the question, that was the beginning of exploring vocations! The process took some time and my thinking alternated between whether to follow the LLM or ordained ministry pathway. In the end I felt it was important to maintain my nursing identity alongside improving my spiritual and theological understanding. Once I found out that there was a pastoral specialism, there wasn't any question that it was the right fit for me. The pastoral modules were particularly helpful in making us think about issues that we might have avoided but also continue to help inform pastoral encounters at a deeper level with a better theological underpinning.*

Julie: *When you trained you did a placement in a school. Can you tell us how you found this and what you learnt from it.*

Catherine: *By the time I was training as an LLM, I was already working in hospital chaplaincy. I knew I wanted to undertake a placement in another sort of chaplaincy, rather than in a church setting and was pleased to be able to be part of a school chaplaincy team for a couple of weeks. It was the first time I'd really been back in a high school setting since I left school and I was a little nervous about walking the wrong way down the corridor! Whilst I was there, I met with several students and had some in depth conversations about pastoral issues. I also attended confirmation classes, lunch clubs and assemblies. I learnt that pastoral care has significant similarities regardless of context. Even though most of my work is not with teenagers, there was a lot which was familiar about the challenges, hopes and fears they face. I was surprised how comfortable I became within the school context and I was genuinely sad to leave.*

Julie: *What would you say to someone who was just beginning to wonder if God was calling them to be an LLM and in particular an LLM with a Pastoral calling?*

Catherine: *There is much that is wonderful about the LLM journey. I really valued eating together and fellowship and learning more about the Bible, church history, spirituality and much more. However, I think it is important to make sure that you know what you are going to put down in order to pick it up. It is challenging, both in terms of reading and essay writing but also can challenge your own thinking. Although this is a good thing it is important to have the headspace to process that. When it comes to the pastoral specialism, I think it is likely that you already know if pastoral care is your thing. If not, maybe look at your bookshelf,*

ask people what they think you're good at and reflect on what aspects of church life brings you the most fulfilment.

Homily

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

[Baruch 3.9-15, 32-4.4 or Genesis 22.1-18]; Acts 11.1-18; Psalm 148 [or Psalm 148.1-6]; Revelation 21.1-6; John 13.31-35 **Acts must be read**

Today's homily has been written by Mrs Catherine Price who is an LLM specialising in Pastoral Care. Catherine is a nurse and has found some very helpful ways of integrating her pastoral skills and her call to serve God.

Homily

Today's passage from John's Gospel highlights the lesson that Jesus has been teaching, coming soon after he has practically demonstrated what it is to love one another. Leading by example, as is always his way, Jesus gets on the floor and washes his disciples' feet, much to their dismay. Although we know there is symbolism in what he does, here is the image of Jesus showing what it means to be a humble servant. But for many of us the prospect of intentionally getting on the floor to do anything, including washing feet, feels a little beyond us. However, there are several reasons why we shouldn't underestimate the value in what we can offer, including for our own benefit. Our brains are actually hardwired for being kind and the choices we make in doing something kindly improve our physical health and is widely recognised as a way to improve our mental wellbeing. In wider society, much is made of the idea of random acts of kindness, but there is nothing random about showing the love of God to others, which he can in turn use to bring about his purposes.

For all of us the ways which we can offer love to one another may change through the various seasons of our lives. It might feel we have limits in what we can do in comparison to many we see in church life. It may be easy to feel, for many reasons, that we can't do much, so I wonder if it helps to ask ourselves *what can I do?* rather than focus on what we can't, when we are thinking about expressing God's love. Because while we still have the ability to pray for someone else or to offer a smile of encouragement, we can continue to be a blessing to one another; there is little more moving, humbling, and precious than visiting to pray for a gravely ill person and unexpectedly find them praying for you.

Loving one another is also about receiving love from others. This can be easier said than done. As we remember Jesus' example in the washing of the disciple's feet, it echoes the beautiful example of Mary anointing of Jesus' feet with perfume a few chapters before in John's Gospel. Despite the outcry from those present at the time, it was an outpouring of love that Jesus humbly chose to accept. As the story develops and Jesus moves to wash his disciples' feet, there is another outcry. This time from Peter in his horror that Jesus would do this for him. Perhaps we can relate, for I wonder if some of us, like Peter, are reluctant to receive love? It might be that we understand the importance of giving love, but the receiving feels much more challenging. We hold firm to the principle of St Francis, that 'it is better to give than to

receive', by which we interpret that it is best to avoid receiving. Although it is a way of life that we might be able to live out for a time, it may not always be possible. Our abilities, health and situations change during the various seasons of our lives. If circumstances change, it is important to remember that, even if we don't have the ability to do anything, other than being cared for, we are still enabling the love of God to be declared and shown in ways which might otherwise not happen. It can be difficult to accept but I wonder if this is something we know to be true from our own experiences with those we have come across along the way? For whether it was a tiny child, a profoundly sick relative or a longed for pet, we know that our giving of love, including to those who may not be able to overtly offer love back, has the ability to change and transform us for the better. Our choosing to receive love can be a rich blessing to those who offer it. Jesus calls us all to serve one another and to love one another. To both humbly give love and to humbly receive love. For by this we honour the way Jesus is through the way we are, and it is by this that everyone will know that we are his disciples.

Ways to Engage all Generations

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

Wondering Questions: Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how _____ felt or I wonder how _____ felt when _____ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about _____?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why _____ said _____?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

Suggested intercessions

Loving God

We thank you for showing us through Jesus what it means to love one another in humility. We pray for our own church, for wisdom, strength, and inspiration for those involved in leadership and in all the activities of your church in this place. Inspire and guide us all of how best to show your love in our community and to one another. We pray for the wider church, for areas of disagreement and conflict. Help a way to be found through and may the loudest voice be the call to love one another. We bring before you those who are involved in identifying and appointing those in positions of leadership in the Anglican Church. Be alongside

them in their discussions and decisions that they may increase their sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and find your peace in the journey.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Loving God

We lift to you those affected by ongoing unease, destruction, and war across the globe. We remember before you the [...*Middle East, Ukraine, Russia, Yemen, Syria, and the Democratic Republic of Congo*]. We lift to you those across the world who have the power to make a difference and ask for your love, prompting, discernment and guidance. We pray for those involved in fragile diplomacy and pray for wisdom and decision making that will help support the most vulnerable in your world. In our country, we pray for our health service, our education system, our justice system and our defence services. Give wisdom to the decision makers, help them to find possibilities in situations which feel impossible.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Loving God

We pray for all those who are in need at this time, those who struggle with their health, in body or mind, and those who support and care for them. We remember those who have died and those who mourn them. [*In a moment of silence*] we raise before you those on our hearts from our community....
May they know your love and comfort and your presence close beside them at this time. Guide us that we may know how best to care and love them.
Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer
Amen

Suggested hymns/songs

Servant King by Graham Kendrick
All the room was hushed and still (love each other) by Graham Kendrick
Make me a channel of your peace
Joyful joyful we adore you by Henry Van Dyke
Brother, Sister let me serve you by Richard Gillard
Blest be the tie that binds by John Fawcett
O love of God, how strong and true by Horatius Bonar
Breathe on me breath of God by Edwin Hatch
O for a heart to praise my God by Charles Wesley
Love divine, all loves excelling by Charles Wesley
O love that will not let me go by George Matheson

Activities to accompany the service

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>
(weekly@ lectionary resource)