

VOCATIONS SUNDAY PRAYER RESOURCES

PRAYER SESSION 1: VOCATION AMIDST CHANGE

Praying for those whose vocational journeys are taking on new and unexpected directions.

Opening Prayer (see session 1 video)

Loving God, we thank you for all those who faithfully open themselves to following your call in their lives. As we remember those in discernment and training who are experiencing disruption and confusion, we ask that you would give us sympathetic and hopeful hearts, that together with them, we may find new ways of listening and being, and that we all may trust that even amidst chaos, your call remains the still, constant whisper. Amen.

Song [‘Have thine own way, Lord’](#) (Click title for link)

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord:

“Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.”

So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel.

But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.”

Jeremiah 18:1-6 NIV

Life has changed for all of us almost beyond recognition. If we cast our minds back just a few months to New Year, it’s strange to think of all the things we were hoping for and expecting from this year. Never did we imagine the situation we’re in now, or all the ways it would impact on our plans. Like the clay being shaped and reshaped in the potter’s hand, it feels like our lives are being thrown all over the place, pushed and prodded by an infection we can’t see.

Especially is this true for all those who are trying to discern their vocation, trying to follow God’s call on their lives, and committing their paths to training for ministry. All

across the country, there are people enquiring about vocations, there are young people participating in ministry experience schemes, people preparing for BAPs, ordinands, novices and postulants of religious communities, curates, readers in training, lay leaders in training - hundreds of people who are suddenly finding their path of discernment change direction, finding themselves being reshaped in ways unimagined.

But even in these strange times where our paths have changed direction, our plans for the future uncertain, where we are relearning how to discern and how to listen, even now, when we are forced more than ever before to resign ourselves to being the clay, we must also remember that the hand shaping us is God's. Much as it seems that everything in our lives is being shaped by coronavirus, it is only in the loving hands of God that we are formed and reformed, and find our vocation.

Play dough recipe (5 mins):

5 tbsp flour

1tbsp salt

30ml warm water 1/2 tbsp vegetable oil

Food colouring

Mix the flour and salt together in a small bowl. Measure out 30ml of water and add the food colouring and oil.

Mix the wet ingredients into the dry. Add more flour or water if needed.

Tip out onto a floured surface and knead the dough for a few minutes until it is smooth and pliable.

Store in an airtight container/sealed bag.



Prayer activity

You will need whatever kind of malleable substance you have available to you - clay, play dough (see recipe above), plasticine, a patch of soil in your garden, paper, or simply your imagination.

Take the 'clay' in your hands. Dwell on the fact that we are clay, held in God's hands. Play around with the clay - mould it into a shape, perhaps a pot, or a bowl, or something that symbolises vocation to you. Press it back into its original shape, and mould something new. See what you can make from it - can you make one shape, then transform it into something else?

Watch your hands as you work, and observe how the 'clay' reacts to your shaping. Imagine your hands as God's, and imagine how it feels to be moulded and remoulded, as the clay.

As you work with the 'clay', pray for those who are in discernment or training, and for all the unexpected strains and stresses they are facing on their vocational journey.

Pray for those who feel disorientated, and who may be doubting God's call because of the uncertainty we are all surrounded by.

Pray for anyone you know personally who is exploring vocation, that they would still be able to access the guidance they need.

Pray that those exploring vocation would know God's hands shaping and moulding them through the confusion and disruption of the COVID pandemic.

Pray that we all would know ourselves to be clay held in God's loving hands.

PRAYER SESSION 2: WHAT IS GOD CALLING ME TO?

Listening for what callings may be emerging for us in this extraordinary and strange season.

Opening Prayer (see session 2 video)

Loving God,

You have known and loved us from before the foundations of the earth.

You have created us and given each of us unique and special gifts.

Whatever season or circumstances we may find ourselves in,

give us the grace to hear and respond to your Spirit's call upon our lives:

to know you and to love you, to follow you and to serve you.

In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ,

Amen.

Where you are (however unchosen)

is the place of blessing.

How you are (however broken)

is the place of grace.

Who you are, in your Becoming

is your place in the Kingdom.

Margaret Silf, Landmarks

Song [Eric Whitacre, Alleluia](#) (Click title for link)

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24, MSG

God, investigate my life; get all the facts first-hand.
I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.
You know when I leave and when I get back; I'm never out of your sight.
You know everything I'm going to say before I start the first sentence.
I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too - your reassuring presence, coming and going.
This is too much, too wonderful - I can't take it all in!
Is there any place I can go to avoid your Spirit? To be out of your sight?
If I climb to the sky, you're there! If I go underground, you're there!
If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon,
You'd find me in a minute - you're already there waiting!
Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark!
At night I'm immersed in the light!"
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;
night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.
Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breath-taking!
Body and soul, I am marvellously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.
Your thoughts - how rare, how beautiful!
God, I'll never comprehend them!
I couldn't even begin to count them - any more than I could count the sand of the sea.
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you!
Investigate my life, O God, find out everything about me;
Cross-examine and test me, get a clear picture of what I'm about;
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong - then guide me on the road to eternal life.

Psalm 139:1-18, 23-24, NRSVA

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.
Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is
as light to you.
For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's
womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.
My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven
in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.
In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as
yet existed.
How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with
you.
Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

It might seem strange and even inappropriate to some people that we should be thinking about vocation whilst still very much in the midst of the grief and loss, the fear and anxieties and the enormous challenges of this current Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic season.

But in the midst of the seismic events and tsunami of emotions, of the ground being tragically 'turned over' in people's lives, perhaps for many of us it's a time when we naturally find ourselves asking big questions about life. Not least "What is God calling me to be and to do?", not only "for such a time as this", but also in whatever strange new world may eventually begin to emerge from this global crisis.

What things will have been left behind as the sun sets? What will the new landscape look like that the new dawn breaks upon? What will our place in the picture be?

I believe that the essence of who we are and the gifts God has given us find expression throughout the unfolding of our lives and there will always be distinctive threads running through the fabric.

I also believe that rather than being fixed and static, vocation can be likened to a journey that emerges through the different stages and circumstances of our lives. Through the hard and difficult times, the dark valleys – as well as in the green pastures and beside the quiet waters.

So what might we be looking to see emerging in our own lives and in the lives of those around us, as we navigate the dangerous rapids of this time and begin to look to the future?

As +Philip recently asked, “Who might God be calling into a fresh expression and dimension of ministry through all this? Who might feel a call to step out into the new landscape of mission that might emerge as we are called to reach the young, serve the poor and care for the earth?”

Prayer activity

During this first section of prayer, I invite you to take a little time to consider your own vocational journey and what may be beginning to emerge for you personally, during this extraordinary season. You may like to pray with Psalm 139, either using *Lectio Divina* or through your imagination (simple guidelines below).

I then invite you to take some time to look outwards: to pray for those known to you who may also be asking some of these big questions at the moment (or who will do so in the future). To pray generally that even in the midst of these troubled and anxious times, the Holy Spirit will be stirring up Kingdom vocations and calling many to work in many different ways in the harvest fields that will emerge.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a meditative way of reading a passage of scripture - prayerful reading. So before you begin, take a moment to still yourself and quiet your mind. *Lectio* contains four steps: read, reflect, respond, rest.

Read: Read the passage through slowly a few times. Notice any words or phrases that stand out to you.

Reflect: Reflect on the words or phrases that grabbed your attention and allow God to speak to you through them. Ponder what their significance might be in your life.

Respond: Respond to what God has spoken through these words by having a conversation with God in prayer about what has arisen for you.

Rest: Rest in silence with God and allow what has spoken to you to sink deeper. You may wish to write down your experience so you can return to it in future.

Imaginative Prayer

Begin by stilling yourself and becoming aware of God's presence. Try to set aside the things that are on your mind, then read through the passage a few times. Now close your eyes and imagine yourself into the scene.

Consider what you can see and hear, what you can smell, taste, or touch. Consider where you place yourself - do you see the scene happening around you, or are you an onlooker?

Notice how you feel. Is there a particular part of the passage which draws you? Is there something which resonates deeply? Where do you feel joy or pain, confusion or surprise? What do you sense God saying you to through the passage?

When you feel ready, move into conversation with Jesus, as with a good friend, about your experience. What has spoken to you? What has felt significant or challenging? Listen to his replies, and let the conversation flow in whatever way feels natural to you.

PRAYER SESSION 3: THE VOCATION OF THE CHURCH

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

Opening Prayer (see session 3 video)

Lord Jesus Christ,
You brought healing, hope, and faith to those you met,
And have called us each by name to follow in your Way.
Call us afresh and equip us for this season.
When we are weary, strengthen us.
When we are disheartened, encourage us.
When we are adrift, root us.
Pour your Holy Spirit upon your people
That our lives may be living testimonies to you, our God.
Amen.

Song ['Build your kingdom here'](#) (Click title for link)

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16

In this strange time of isolation it's easy to feel alone and dislocated from other Christians. But although we are spread out, the church is present in every village, valley and coastline from Lands End to Torpoint. We are in every community, every work place, every school. The buildings are closed but the church is everywhere: in foodbanks, hospitals, funerals, feeding the hungry, comforting the lonely, praying with the bereaved.

All of us are striving to follow God's call on our lives in this season of anxiety, fear and unpredictability. What does it mean to sing the Lord's song in this strange land?

Many are finding new opportunities to connect with local communities and serve those in need. Others are struggling to adapt to new ways of doing ministry and the loss of physical gatherings. Our leaders are seeking to respond with wisdom and responsibility in a rapidly changing context. What does it look like to serve the poor when we are in isolation? How do we proclaim the good news of God's hope from our homes?

This is a time for us to pray for the people of God as we respond to God's call on our lives for this season.

Prayer activity

Fill a large bowl with water.
Find something you don't mind getting wet – a flower, a collection of small stones, or some lighted tealight candles.



Place a petal, stone or candle into the water. Watch the ripples flow outwards.
Pray for local, diocesan and national church leaders: for energy, vision, wisdom.
Pray for all those who are touched by their ministry.

Place a petal, stone or candle into the water. Watch the ripples flow outwards.
Pray for Christians in the health service: for strength, protection, insight.
Pray for all those who are touched by their ministry.

Place a petal, stone or candle into the water. Watch the ripples flow outwards.
Pray for Christians serving others practically: for kindness, friendship, rest.
Pray for all those who are touched by their ministry.

Place a petal, stone or candle into the water. Watch the ripples flow outwards.
Pray for Christians supporting others pastorally: for compassion, grace, sensitivity.
Pray for all those who are touched by their ministry.

Place a petal, stone or candle into the water. Watch the ripples flow outwards.
Pray for the whole people of God: for obedience, faith, courage.
Pray for all those who are touched by our ministry.