



How were they called?

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Diocese of **Guildford** 

Transforming **Church**
Transforming **Lives**

Richard Allan



No matter which path I take through the Valley of Death, I lack nothing because the eternal Lord is my Shepherd.

- Psalm 23:1-3

God's call to ordained ministry has taken thirty-five years to come to fruition. During this period He has graciously shaped my calling to what it is today; some doors have opened, whilst others have closed. Although the road has twisted and turned along the way, God has remained faithful throughout; His steadfast love endures for ever. As the twilight years of life beckon, my prayer is that I remain a faithful servant to His call, that by His grace I am equipped to selflessly shepherd His flock in Alfold and Loxwood, and come the end, I finish well.

One of my favourite Bible verses is Psalm 23:1-3. "No matter which path I take through the Valley of Death, I lack nothing because the eternal Lord is my Shepherd" – game, set and match!

Lucy Bush



And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

- Luke 22

My husband, Dave, has been my biggest champion, and he, along with my sending church, supported and encouraged me to respond to my call. I am also lucky to have many brilliant ordained people around me, who have all modelled what it looks like to be an ordained person!

I had a clear sense of God calling me at my friend's ordination service in St Paul's cathedral. The discernment process, though longer than I'd hoped for, was so helpful in testing that call, and having it confirmed by lots of other people along the way.

David Camp



Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

- Proverbs 3:5-6

My earliest recollection of my faith journey was listening to my grandmother singing in the choir at age seven. After she passed away in my late teens, I drifted away from church, but that sense of God's presence and being watched over never left me.

The recognition that I had a calling, burst into focus when I had an epiphany moment after my dad died in 2015. It wasn't so much that Jesus told me I had been chosen - Oh, how I wish it were - it was more like an awakening. As a result, my wife thought it would be good to take me to her church, with my attendance up to that point having been as rare as hens' teeth.

They welcomed me with a warmth I have rarely encountered. I was encouraged to read scripture during a service and then encouraged to lead and even preach. As time passed, I began to explore my faith in a deeper sense.

After 3 years of hard thinking, I was pointed in the direction of the Peter Stream at St Mellitus Theological College, which supports individuals who have been called to ministry in a slightly more unconventional way, including those with little or no church background.

I would like to say to those of you who are tentatively exploring your vocation: If God can call a 58-year-old man like me, who has been travelling around in circles in the wilderness for 35 years, then take heart and cling to Proverbs 3:5-6. It may be rocky, and you will undoubtedly stumble, but you will be led by some amazing people who in turn are led by God.

Jill Gooding



**He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."**

- Psalm 46:10

I had just started a new medical job in a hospital when I experienced the call to ordination. It came totally unexpectedly and suddenly, while I was at work, in fact just after all the hospital chaplains appeared on my ward at once! I heard the call very clearly but was in total disbelief and had no idea what to do. I spoke with a close Christian friend, who encouraged me and asked me what I planned to do about it!

But I had been through a hugely busy period in my life, leaving little time for God in it. God gave me this verse soon after, that remains close to my heart: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10), God drawing me back into a closer relationship with him.

I did very little about the sense of call for several months until the gentle nudge from God became a full-blown shove – it was like trying to holding a curled spring that just had to break free. I spoke to one of the church ministry team and the journey began.

Erik Heemskerk



All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

- 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Growing up in a vicar's household, I thought I myself would become a vicar, though in my teenage years this sense of vocation largely disappeared. It returned when I joined the Anglican Church in Utrecht and became very active in leading student ministry. Quietly I began to wonder whether God had called me to ordination, and I was prodded to explore this further by my priest and others asking me the same question.

After this I became more involved in other areas of ministry, as an altar server, and in leading and preaching at services. While this and other aspects of ministry were and still are quite terrifying, I got a strong sense that this is the right place for me to be, the place where God has called me. I believe the heart of my calling to be facilitating, providing, and serving in a Church where people encounter, share, and live out God's loving offer of reconciliation with Him, with others, and with ourselves.

Rachel Johnson



But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.

- 2 Corinthians 12:9

My first inkling that God was calling me to ordination was part-way through my Licensed Lay Ministry training. It was a small but persistent voice, confirmed by a word from a friend. I couldn’t imagine myself as an ordained minister but I knew that if that was God’s plan for me then God would make it clear at the right time, and that time came during a church quiet day, when God simply said, ‘Trust my voice’. So I gathered my courage to speak to my vicar and found he’d been thinking the same thing. God has been so gracious and led me one step at a time.

Ever since my first terrifying steps in ministry, I’ve been upheld by 2 Corinthians 12:9 ‘But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.’

Corinne Jones



**I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.**

- Isaiah 43:19

It took me many years to recognise God's call and when, in 2017, the curate and incumbent named it, I struggled to accept this gift. Being up front wasn't my thing. I struggled still more to articulate to those closest to me that this was the right and good path for me to follow.

But to resist was out of the question. I drew much strength and encouragement from praying, reading, contributing to worship, studying with the Local Ministry Programme and conversations with all sorts of people: lay and ordained, churchgoers and non-churchgoers.

Taking that leap of faith and responding to the deep-seated compulsion of God's call, which has always been somewhere within me, has been a painful, joyful and natural process. However rocky the path might be, I am thankful that I can be who I am and so be better equipped to share the light of Christ.

Ellie Lister



**He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.**

- Psalm 23:2-3

My sense of call has been a long, gently persistent journey, which began 12 years ago when I went on a prayer walk at a retreat centre. As I walked, every footpath I planned to take was closed. Eventually, I came across a tiny gate I'd never noticed before. It was open, and delicious blackberries were growing along the way. The footpath took me straight to the chapel, and a cassock lying on a chair. I felt the Lord say, "I'm calling you to walk with me towards ordination. The path you take won't be one you expect, and it may take you along some unexpected side paths, but there will be good things to nourish you and to enjoy along the way."

This has certainly been my experience. Family illnesses, and then my own 3-year Long-Covid journey, have taken me along unexpected and sometimes unwanted paths. Throughout, Psalm 23 has been my prayer and encouragement. God has been faithful, providing good nourishment along the way. I am excited for all that is to come, knowing that, whatever paths lie ahead, Jesus the Good Shepherd walks beside me.

Jonny Lowe



The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

- John 10:10-11

Having put my trust in Jesus as a child, my family, friends and mentors have had a huge influence on growing my faith and encouraged me in my discipleship. Their affirmation and encouragement to discern ordination was hugely significant and, without it, I may not have even considered it. However, after much prayer, I felt God had called me into leading his people in some capacity which I am really excited about.

Seeking God's direction for my life in prayer and conversation with friends and family led me to realise God was guiding me into pastoral leadership within the Church. Having continually been given opportunities to lead throughout my life and great investment from people, alongside my gifts, I felt God was preparing me for something greater. Even when I felt unsure or reluctant, God kept opening the doors to ordained ministry and I remained faithful to keep walking through them in obedience.

John 10:7-18 (particularly verses 10-11) holds a very special place in my heart. My late grandfather taught these verses to me as a child and they have played a significant role in my own journey of faith in Christ and encouraged me into gospel ministry.

Kayleigh Magrath



The Lord said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

- 2 Corinthians 12:9

At the age of five I found a book of Reader’s Digest children’s Christmas carols (the most religious book I could find in our house) and announced to my parents that I was going to church. God had called me to worship him, and I answered the call. When I got older, however, and felt that I might be called to go into ministry, I resisted. My family had ambitions for me, and I had ambitions for myself. None of these ambitions involved working on a Sunday.

When I was at university I developed an illness which required me to spend long periods of time in hospital receiving treatment and multiple surgeries over the course of several years. Prior to this illness, I had been so busy following the call of my ambitious pride that I had managed to block out the voice of God almost completely. Now, stuck in a hospital bed, I had little choice but to listen and to respond.

I started talking with my fellow patients about faith; then I was praying with them; then I was reading and discussing the Bible with them. Through this extended period of bodily weakness, God revealed to me where my strengths lay, and that my true calling was to serve him, and to serve others through him. Though I am very grateful that I am now physically recovered, I am also grateful to have had the time and space for discernment and reliance on God which led me to where I am today.

Alistair Milne



Let him use words ... to set us dreaming as well as thinking ... which do not only try to give answers to the questions that we ask or ought to ask but which help us to hear the questions that we do not have words for asking.

- Frederick Buechner, Telling the Truth

My journey has been a search for authenticity, both within myself and in my relationships with others. In this, I have been continually inspired by those who have gone before me who offer a witness which speaks of the truth and beauty of God, whilst recognising the complexity of life.

The reception of inner vitality or spiritual life is a sign of calling to the source of that vitality. My hunger for meaningful encounters with others so as to bring myself and others into the healing love of God is a source of that vitality.

Judith Mitchell



**But you, Lord, are a shield about me;
you are my glory, and the lifter up of my
head. When I cry aloud to the Lord,
he will answer me from his holy hill;
I lie down and sleep and rise again,
because the Lord sustains me.**

- Psalm 3:3-5

Ten years ago my sister-in-law was ordained as a deacon here at Guildford. It was a kairos moment. I felt as if God was telling me it was OK to come 'home' after I'd kept away from Church for so long. When I said 'yes' to attending a vocations evening, things just fell into place. Random people started mentioning ordination and me in the same sentence! But strangely it was when someone challenged my calling, that I knew it was confirmed. Though the challenge was initially devastating to hear, the time with God that followed was a blessing and strengthened my understanding of his call.

Berenice Page



**Just as I am – without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.**

- Charlotte Elliott

What inspired me to eventually respond to my call was that still, small voice that never went away. As part of a clergy family, I always thought it was usual to feel a strong connection towards ordained ministry. However, as time passed, I began to see my vocation as a more powerful entity in its own right, not simply derived from those around me. This then appeared to be my calling. I then had a conversation with my incumbent who suggested I spoke to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands.

That still, small voice never goes away. It's like gently travelling along a canal, not quite knowing if the destination will be reached. There are periods of calm followed by periods of change, stirring up, formation, like encountering the lock on a canal. The focus and destination never changed and steadily I gained further clarity that I was called to Ordained Ministry.

This hymn has encouraged and strengthened me through the process – I think the words speak for themselves:

Just as I am – without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am – of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove
Here for a season, then above,
O Lamb of God, I come.

Janet Ruthven



The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

- 1 Samuel 16:7

A random thought about ordination which appeared by complete surprise to me started a process of prayerful discernment which has brought me to this point. The confirmation of my calling came when I shared my story of discernment with other people, and no one was surprised, except me. At each stage of the journey I have knocked at the door and God has graciously led me through the door onto the next stage.

I was encouraged to respond to the call by a trusted staff team member at church, and a couple of trustworthy friends who I knew were praying for me and affirming of my calling.

A significant Bible story for me during my discernment process comes from 1 Samuel 16 when Samuel was with Jesse's sons to find a new king of Israel. David was not the obvious choice for Jesse, but he was God's choice. 1 Samuel 16:7: "The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart". My calling has been a surprise to me but I trust God for the future.

Mandie Shirnia



Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

- Philippians 4:6

It took time to recognise my calling. I already worked in Christian ministry serving God, serving the marginalised, and enabling discipleship. Why ordination when I didn't feel equipped for the academic training? God encouraged me with the 'Ministry and You' course and a stream of both gentle and forthright encouragers!

A series of God-incidences, then one enormous God prod, confirmed my calling. I was cautious, so I asked God for an unmistakable encounter to confirm. Then, our previous curate arrived at my work, miles from his home, and confirmation was received!

Two significant verses that encouraged my journey:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

"My grace is always more than enough for you, and my power finds its full expression through your weakness." So, I will celebrate my weaknesses, for when I'm weak I sense more deeply the mighty power of Christ living in me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Heather Valletta



And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

- Ephesians 3:17-18

Through discernment and training, as I have sought God, I began to understand that calling is itself a journey of discipleship. Reconciliation has been a theme that has run through my discipleship learning: to God, to myself, and to others, including my father, whom I met in June 2020 after being estranged for 32 years. My calling is to tell God's story of how He has reconciled us to Himself, being part of His kingdom story, which is an offer extended to everyone.

Knowing that God had called me to ordained ministry was a gradual realisation that God had been preparing me for many years to come to this point. However, there was a very poignant moment at the first communion service after the first lockdown of the Covid pandemic. Our curate came to me, to administer and dropped a piece of bread into my hands, and I can only describe it as a clear voice which said, 'Feed my people'.

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:17-19) I have returned to this verse again and again as a reminder that first and foremost I am called to be a disciple of Christ who desires to know and love Jesus more and more, and to know the fullness of God in my life and those around me.

God Calls You

**“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born, I set you apart.”
Jeremiah 1:5**

God calls every one of us to serve him. This may be in the Church or in the world, or a bit of both. Vocation is about the whole of our lives.

At our baptism we are called into a relationship with Jesus Christ. We become disciples and play our part in sharing the Good News of the gospel.

When we truly find our place, we are the best version of ourselves, the person God created us to be.

A wide range of training and ministries are available at the Diocese of Guildford:

- Ordained Ministry
- Stipendiary Ministry
- Self Supporting Ministry

