

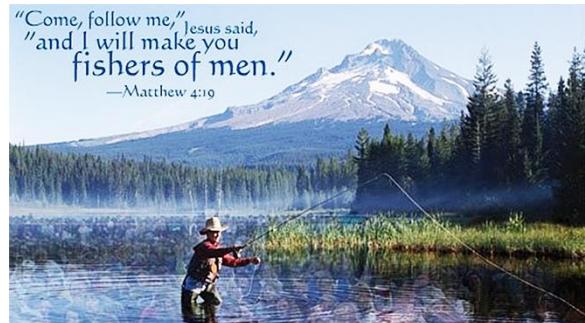
Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.

Sunday 25th January 2026.

Year A Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Prepared by Rev Helen Harrell

Call to worship



Jesus, who calls us,
we come as we are to worship you.
We come with our strengths and our weaknesses,
with our hopes and our heartaches.
We come in urgency and in hesitancy.
We come as we are, knowing you welcome us.

StF 28: Jesus calls us here to meet him

Jesus Calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people love and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
Praise the Son who calls us friends;
Praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Lord of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hands of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

John Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b.1958)

Prayer of Approach

Lord,

you approach us that we might approach you. You call us that we might call others. So, today, we your disciples look to you to lead and guide us in the ways of your kingdom, that we might lead and guide others. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Forgive us, Lord, when we are slow to respond to your call on our lives; when we want reassurances that we can follow in our own way, in our own time, at our convenience, with our agenda. Forgive us and call us afresh, that we may trust your promises and bring our hearts. **Amen.**

Sermon

Once upon a time, there was a young camel. The camel was very young and confused. "Why?" said the young camel to a much older camel, "Why do I have such big feet?"

"Oh," said the older camel "God gave you big flat feet so that you could run easily across the desert sands!" "And why?" said the young camel to the older camel, "why do I have such long skinny legs?" "Oh, those," said the older camel, "God gave you those so you do not sink into the desert sands." "And," said the young camel, "Why do I have these long eyelashes?" "God gave you those to protect your eyes in the desert storms." "And what?" said the young camel, is this huge lump on my back?" "That's very useful." Replied the older camel, "God made that so you don't get thirsty on long desert journeys." "So tell me then," said the young camel, "if God has given me all these things, what am I doing in a zoo?"

At this time of the year in the church, following on from the birth and baptism of Christ, we traditionally take time to think about our own calling, our gifts and our response to God.

Perhaps we find ourselves getting frustrated with God, because we can't recognise what he is calling us to. We offer our prayers and he seems to remain strangely silent. Or maybe we feel we have gifts, but we just don't seem to be getting the opportunity to use those gifts. We feel trapped where we are when we feel we ought to be doing more. Our Gospel reading today is a very familiar one. It is probably among one of the first we learnt if we went to Sunday School and along with it, learnt the chorus "I will make you fishers of men" - complete with actions. Though it is a well-known story, it still speaks to us today. As we look at the story of the calling of the first disciples and apply it to ourselves we can find out something about the nature of God's calling and how he wants us to best use those gifts which he has given us.

The first thing to note is that Jesus met the disciples where they were - they were on the edge of the sea of Galilee, casting their nets. In other words, they were going about their normal daily business. They were not in the synagogue or in the Temple. It was probably a bit of a surprise for Peter and Andrew, when Jesus, who was presumably a complete stranger at that time, came up

to them and started talking to them. Perhaps in those days it wasn't quite so strange for people who didn't know each other to just strike up a conversation. But this was no ordinary conversation. Jesus said to Peter and Andrew "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." "I will make you fish for people." Jesus used words that the fishermen could relate to. They knew what fishing was all about. It was a job that required judgement. They had spent years working on the sea of Galilee. They would know how to assess the weather and if it was safe to go out to sea. They would know when the weather changed, if they would need to put in to shore and take shelter. They would have learnt from experience what were the best times and where the best places to cast their nets were. It was these gifts of judgement that Jesus knew would be useful when he picked Peter and Andrew to join his team. These first disciples would sometimes have to go out into places where the people would have been hostile. They would have to have judged which were the best places to go to and speak the Gospel. They would have to know when it was wise to withdraw and allow things to cool off a bit.

Jesus comes to us too, in our daily work, whether that be paid employment or in our activities in the home and the community. Jesus can and does speak to us in church and at big evangelistic rallies, but if we are listening for his voice, we can hear him wherever we are. And Jesus invariably calls us to tasks that will make use of the gifts and the experiences we already have. We may not think that we have very much to offer or that our gifts are anything special, but if we are willing to dedicate what we are and what we have to God, he will take us and use us for his glory. If there is a particular task he wants us to do, then yes, he will equip us and where necessary give us additional gifts, as he has promised.

But how are we to respond when we hear the voice of Jesus calling us? The Peter and Andrew's response was immediate. They left their nets and followed Jesus. As did James and John – they too, we are told, immediately left their boat and their father. When we read this passage, we could be forgiven for thinking that the demands Jesus makes are too great. We cannot perhaps visualise how we could possibly give up everything that we have – our work, our families, our possessions. Things that are very dear to us. Yet it is not so much a case of giving up those things completely, but allowing Jesus to take priority in our lives.

As we read through the Gospel stories it is clear that the disciples didn't literally leave their boats behind. There are many stories that indicate the disciples still carried on their work of fishing. Until the death of Jesus Christ, they stayed in the area around Galilee, presumably with their families and friends. It was only after the first Easter that the disciples started to minister in Jerusalem and, from there, following the anointing of the Holy Spirit, went out into all the world to proclaim the good news about Jesus. So, Jesus doesn't always call us to give up the day job. He doesn't demand that we all go and work for missionary societies, charitable organisations or the church. Indeed, Jesus needs Christians working in secular employment and for us to be involved in other secular groups, because that is where we can be effective witnesses for him.

God calls each one of us. He calls us to use the gifts and experiences with which we have been blessed. He will empower us by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to carry out our calling, giving us the strength and courage to stand up for the truth in this world in which we live.

May we always be open to God's calling and respond immediately as the first disciples did.

STF 558: Lord, you have come to the seashore

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.*

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

O Lord...

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

O Lord...

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

O Lord...

Cesáreo Gabaráin (1936-1991) © 1979 Cesáreo Gabaráin

Prayers of intercession

Good news...

we have been entrusted with the gospel! We have good news for all the earth.

God of truth and love, we pray for the mission of the church:
for Christians bearing witness to the gospel throughout the world; in conversations with others,
through preaching and teaching, by loving and courageous actions. We pray for those who are
persecuted for their faith by those among whom they live, or work, or study. We pray that the light
of your gospel may shine in dark places.

God of grace and peace we pray for the mission of the church:
for ourselves, as we bear witness to the gospel within our communities; in conversations with
others, through our unity with one another and with all Christians by our loving involvement with
those who need us. We pray for the guidance and inspiration of your Holy Spirit, giving us the
right words, right attitudes, right ways of showing our love and concern. We pray that the light of
your gospel may shine in dark places.

Good news...

we have been entrusted with the gospel! God has given us the good news of salvation to share

with all the earth. God of power and glory, we pray for the coming of your kingdom of love, in the name of Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. Amen.

STF 662: Have you heard God's voice

Have you heard God's voice; has your heart been stirred?

Are you still prepared to follow?

Have you made a choice to remain and serve,
though the way be rough and narrow?

*Will you walk the path that will cost you much
and embrace the pain and sorrow?*

*Will you trust in One who entrusts to you
the disciples of tomorrow?*

Will you use your voice; will you not sit down
when the multitudes are silent?

Will you make a choice to stand your ground
when the crowds are turning violent?

In your city streets will you be God's heart?

Will you listen to the voiceless?

Will you stop and eat, and when friendships start,
will you share your faith with the faithless?

Will you watch the news with the eyes of faith
and believe it could be different?

Will you share your views using words of grace?

Will you leave a thoughtful imprint?

*We will walk the path that will cost us much
and embrace the pain and sorrow.*

*We will trust in One who entrusts to us
the disciples of tomorrow.*

Jacqueline G. Jones © Jacqueline G Jones www.spiritualsongs.co.uk

Blessing

Leave behind your nets of darkness
and go from this place to cast light
through your prayers, words and actions.
And be blessed in Jesus' name.

Amen.