

## **Called by Scripture** *by Jane Vlach – 8 July 2011*

Since becoming a Christian as a teenager I've felt called to love, worship, praise and serve God. Part of this calling has been based on the reading and hearing of Scripture, as well as from wisdom gleaned from sermons and discussions with others.

The Bible tells the story of God's love – for each one of us as for the whole of creation. It affirms how precious we all are as we are wonderfully made in the image of God. It shows us how God is longing to restore his kingdom based on love, mercy and justice and provides us with hope for a time when relationships will be restored and violence and suffering cease. All that is required of us is that we love God –which is the 'common' calling of Christians. We express our love for God through worship and praise and in so doing develop our understanding of and desire for service.

As the body of Christ we each have a unique part to play in restoring God's kingdom and interpreting and expressing our love for God. As we read the Scriptures and are prompted by the Holy Spirit, we become attuned to God's desire for justice and the restoration of the beauty of creation. This enables us to be more aware of issues and needs in the world and may inspire us to become involved in activities that we may previously have found completely unfathomable. In this way we reflect God's self-giving, generous love such that we too become part of the wider narrative of God as portrayed in the Bible.

If our lives are based on a framework of truly loving God then I would suggest that we are fulfilling our calling. However, from time to time new opportunities or ideas come our way that suggest that we need to question or renegotiate our current understanding of calling. A few may experience a divine encounter such as Isaiah's temple vision (Isaiah 6:1-8) when Isaiah said:

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here I am; send me!'"

However, it appears more common nowadays that the seeds of a calling are far more subtle, although they can be equally life transforming. A chance suggestion from a friend, or the article in a magazine that continues to challenge, may be the first recognition of a calling but will need to be considered alongside Scripture and the wise counselling of others.

In my own case the idea of a calling to ordination arose from a conversation with my sister when she asked what I would do if I could choose another career. I totally surprised myself by immediately replying that I'd be a Curate! This marked the start of a very long process of discernment during which time I had to remain open to the possibility that the 'calling' would not be confirmed, whether by Scripture or the church.

I think it takes quite a bit of confidence to pursue a calling that is so different from anything that we have done previously, but whatever the final outcome if we have sought guidance through Scripture we will have been 'formed' in the process.

And so, by way of reassurance, it's worth remembering the following:

'Go in peace. The journey on which you go is under the eye of the Lord,' (Judges 18v6)

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