

All Saints and St Catherine's

Time and Talents

Called to be closer to Christ.
Sent to be closer to others.



Introduction

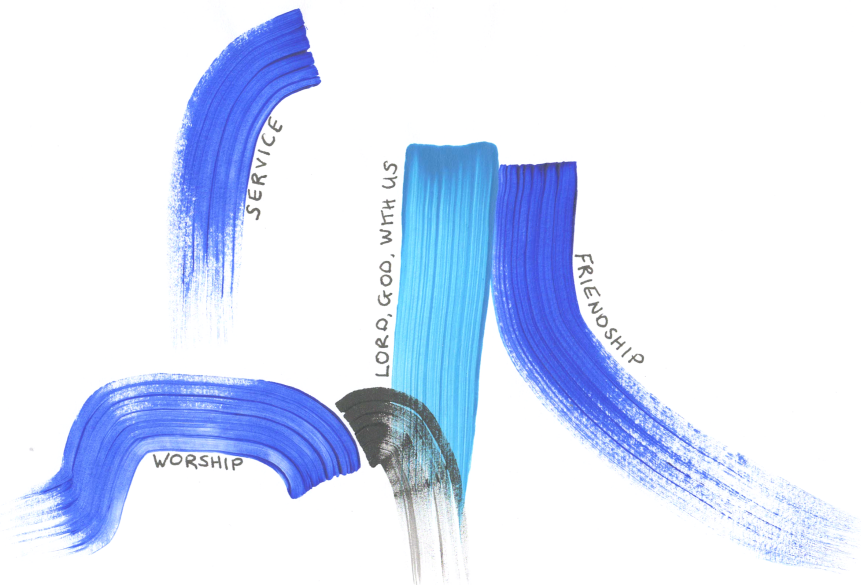
In this parish we believe that we are called to be closer to Christ and sent to be closer to others. We are exploring what it means to live out a vision inspired by the image of God pouring riches into the church so that they can flow out to others and by the story of the meal at Bethany where Martha, Mary, and Lazarus surround Jesus in service, worship, and friendship.

This booklet has been written to help us think through what this means for us in the way that we use our time and our talents.

We live in a world that makes many claims on us, a world in which we can find ourselves so busy and our resources so committed that we feel like we are on a treadmill over which we have no control. This is an opportunity to step off the treadmill, to take a breath, and to refocus our lives on the call that God has for us, and the works that God has prepared for us to do.

We look at five areas of life in turn:

- family
- work
- church
- community
- money



In each area there is the opportunity to engage with what the Bible says about it, to think about how we're currently committed, to bring these commitments before God and ask if there are any we should be laying down, and to open our ears for the call to new areas of service.

Family

*We will not hide them from their descendants;
we will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord,
his power, and the wonders he has done. Psalm 78:4*

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Matthew 10:37

For Moses said, "Honour your father and mother," and, "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death." But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God) – then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. Mark 7:10-12

As we read through the accounts of Jesus' life in the Bible we get a mixed picture of his relationship with his family. At times it seems to be close and loving, at other times there is misunderstanding and disagreements. Pretty standard family life then. Jesus' teaching seems to reflect this tension in family life, illustrated by these two passages. There are, however, two clear principles.

1) God comes first. The greatest commandment is to love God with all of ourselves. Our primary call is to follow Jesus, all other calls flow out of this one.

2) We are not to use our work for God, or our giving to God's work, to be an excuse for not looking after our families. From our love for God flows a deeper love for our families, not a shallower one.

The clearest expression of this deep love for our families will be for us to follow the example of the Psalmist, telling the next generation

of the mighty works of God, that they too may know the saving power of Jesus and also come to love God with all that they are.

Questions to Ponder

What family commitments do I already have?

Which of these is God calling me to continue with, and which to lay down?

Opportunities

Where else in family life is God calling me to invest my time and talents?

- Relationships with parents, siblings, wife, husband, children, grandchildren
- Adoption
- Fostering
- Sharing my faith with my family
- Finding ways of worshipping, praying, serving God together as a family

Prayer

Father God, I bring before you my family life. Thank you for all that is good about it. Please give me grace in the difficulties and pain. Deepen my love for you, so that I may love my family more fully and perfectly. Amen.

Work

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. Genesis 2:15

So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Ecclesiastes 2:17

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters. Colossians 3:23

What is work? For some it is paid employment, for others it is school or college study. For some it is unpaid, voluntary or domestic work. For some it is elusive, out of reach because of long term unemployment or health issues.

Work first occurs in the Bible in the very first book, in only the second chapter. It was created and intended to be a blessing for us to allow us to supply our physical needs and fulfil our creativity. But, as the writer of Ecclesiastes writes, it often feels nothing like that, and that is because humanity has spoiled the blessing of work with our disobedience and selfishness.

So, sometimes it's a blessing and sometimes it's a burden. And, in common with all things that have been spoiled by our disobedience, we are called by God to work with God in restoring it to its rightful state. And we can make a start by learning to encounter God in it.

A first step to encountering God in work is to follow Paul's instruction in his letter to the Christians in Colossae. Whatever work you do, do it as for the Lord. Do it with the awareness that God is there with you. Do it in the way that would please God, both in method and outcome. Do it in a way which shows that God is your Lord, and directs your work.

Questions to Ponder

Why do I do the work that I do?

Why am I doing the work that I do in the way that I do it?

Do I feel God has a purpose for me in this work?

Do I know what that purpose is?

How am I going to find out?

Opportunities

Where else in work life is God calling me to invest my time and talents?

- Investing wholeheartedly in the work before me
- Retraining for a different career or work place
- Setting up a workplace prayer group or Alpha course
- Allowing my faith to reshape the way I relate to others in my workplace
- Reaching out to those who are not able to work and encouraging them

Prayer

Creator God, I bring before you my work life. Thank you for the blessings I receive through it. Help me to see your purposes in the work that I do. Show me how to do it as if for you. When I feel like I'm chasing after the wind, please give me hope. Amen.

Church

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Ephesians 4:11-12

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Romans 12:4-8

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Of the many images and metaphors for the gathered people of God used in the Bible, the idea of us as a body is one that Paul turns to again and again.

- We cannot opt out of being part of the church, because Jesus has made us part of it.
- We all need each other.
- Every part has to do its part for the whole to flourish.
- We are called together and sent together

This idea, of the body, is one that we have to get our heads around and our hearts in tune with if we are to be an effective people, truly declaring the praises of the One who brought us into the light.

Questions to Ponder

What church commitments do I already have?

Which of these is God calling me to continue with, and which to lay down?

Opportunities

Where else in church life is God calling me to invest my time and talents?

- Youth or Children's work
- Maintenance and cleaning of the buildings
- Exploring a call to licensed ministry
- Mission and Evangelism
- Prayer Ministry team
- Intercessions, Readings, and Communion Assistants
- Pastoral ministries: visiting, giving lifts to church, home communions, luncheon Sunday, Oasis
- Music ministries: Playing in services, Bell Ringing, Festival Chorus
- Home group membership and leadership

Prayer

Lord of the church, I bring before you my involvement in church life. Thank you for the body that you have made me a part of. Thank you for the gifts you have given me so that I can be part of building up your body. Please help me to know where to focus my efforts and give me the perseverance to stick with it. Amen.

Community

Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’ Jeremiah 29:7

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

‘Then the King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

‘Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?” ‘The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25:31-40

Jesus said that the second most important commandment was to love our neighbours as ourselves. That love is expressed in:

- how we pray for our neighbours
- how we practically care for our neighbours

When Jesus talked about neighbours he had quite a wide definition, which includes everybody in our communities, and especially those on the edges, the ones others might not see as even part of the community.

Questions to Ponder

Who is my neighbour?

What do I already do to serve and prosper my community?

What is God calling me to continue with, and what to lay down?

Opportunities

Where else in my community is God calling me to invest my time and talents?

- Volunteering at the Hospital or Hospice
- Being a school Governor or getting involved with the YMCA
- Training as a Samaritans listening volunteer
- Doing some shifts at a charity shop
- Working with the teams involved in regenerating Wellington
- Getting to know my neighbours better
- Praying for the people who live in my street
- Joining Street Pastors

Prayer

God of the nations, I bring before you the communities I am part of. Thank you for the neighbours that you have given me. Please help me to see you in and amongst them, and to serve them as I would serve you. Amen.

Money

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. Malachi 3:10

And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, "What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops."

'Then he said, "This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'"

'But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

'This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich towards God.' Luke 12:16-21

God cares about what we do with our money. This is not because God is short of money. Everything in heaven and on earth is God's. God cares about what we do with our money, because what we do with our money is a direct expression of the depth of our faith.

This is not about the amount that we give, it is to do with our hearts. Some of us are in very difficult financial situations, or are in family situations that mean that we do not have the final say in how money is spent.

God invites us to a place where we trust God with our finances, where we rely on God, not on ourselves or our own ability to earn, and from which we give generously because we know that we are loved by a generous God.

Questions to Ponder

How do I feel about my financial situation?

Is God calling me to reduce or increase my financial giving, or is it at the right level?

When will I review this again?

Opportunities

Where else in work life is God calling me to give financially

- Towards the work of the local church
- To a local mission organisation such as CAP, KIP, or STAY
- To a national mission organisation such as YFC, NGM,
- To an international mission organisation such as Crosslinks, Operation Christmas Child
- To sponsor a child through Compassion or World Vision
- To include charitable bequests in my Will.

Prayer

Generous God, I bring before you my finances. Thank you for what you have provided for me. Where I am struggling please help me to trust and to find help. Where I am complacent please wake me up and show me a better way. Amen.

Notes ... Prayers ... Decisions

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