

Reflecting on Vocation¹

Rev Dan Balsdon | May 2021 | read online at www.revdanbalsdon.com

On Sunday 2nd May the Methodist Connexion marks Vocation Sunday. A day when we celebrate and reflect on the vocation of individuals and communities.

What do we mean by vocation?

it's perhaps a church-y word – but it's an important one.

it differentiates from the idea of work, of job, and of economic activity.

Vocation connects with our very selves, our identity, our humanity, and says this is what I am created for at this time, in this place. My collection of gifts and skills suits me to this role, this function, this way of being – this vocation.

And of course, all of that, within our faith, is encompassed in the belief that God gives each of us life and breath and gifts and skills. The truth and belief that God gifts us and equips us for the vocations he calls us to.

But not only that, but also the belief that God is active in the world inviting us to notice and respond by getting involved with what God is doing. For getting involved in what God is doing is indeed our vocation as Christian people. Noticing where God is at work, the places where there is evidence of the fruit of God's Spirit – and joining in.

Words like calling and vocation can scare us sometimes. Perhaps it is helpful to think of it like this: the primary call of a Christian is to follow Jesus, and the journey that emerges from that, for each of us, is our own unique vocation.

Do you see your journey with Jesus as a vocation?

Or do you think that vocations are just for Ministers, and nurses and teachers?

A couple weeks ago my daughter Lydia lost a particular soft toy – dog from TV programme Paw Patrol, - and we searched high and low for it. The last time we knew we'd had it was on a bike ride and we wondered if it had fallen out of the seat it have been sat in.

¹ Some material adapted from connexional material for Vocations Sunday [vocations-sunday-2021-english-language.pdf \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://www.methodist.org.uk/vocations-sunday-2021-english-language.pdf)

We looked and looked but could not find it anywhere. After 4 or 5 days of looking, Louise and I had just about settled that it was lost, and gave up looking. Then, one evening Louise noticed something behind the pedestal sink, and there was the toy. We'd been looking in the wrong places.

Do we sometimes look for a sense of vocation where it is not?

In John 15 we read of Jesus presenting himself as the true vine and that those who follow him are the branches.

A vine is a plant that bears grapes. For a vine, or any plant to grow strong, it needs to be well fed with nutrients, water and sunlight. Different plants can require different combinations of this food to grow and, if fruit bearing, to produce fruit.

**On this Vocations Sunday, I wonder where our life is bearing fruit.
'could this be evidence of my vocation?'**

Sometimes a plant needs its branches cutting shorter, to be pruned - because this helps the new branch that grows to have more fruit. Sometimes there are things in our lives, and the lives of our faith communities that were once bearing abundant fruit, that were once our vocation, but are not anymore.

Are there things you are doing or were doing, possibly in the name of God and church, that are actually now a burden & chore that bring a sense of gloom, and either don't bear any fruit or the fruit is no longer abundant and juicy?

If so, it might be time for change, time to have those branches pruned. Sometimes pruning plants looks and feels brutal, but it is sometimes necessary if the plant is to grow new and delicious fruit.

Vocation is not only something that is about you and me as individuals; it is also about the vocation of the church.

As we emerge from lockdown, this is the time to ask, what is the vocation of my church in the time and the place we find ourselves?