

A Suggested Order of Worship for the Service of the Lord's Day
Christian Vocation Sunday
August 31st, 2008 (22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time)

"God's call to daily service in the world through our jobs, talents and interest — is a cornerstone of our lives as Christians. A sense of Christian Vocation is what gives meaning to our daily routine. Without a true sense of God's call in our daily lives, we will pass through life without direction to our work, and most of life will have no meaning. Whether you are a butcher, a baker or a homemaker, your labors and talents are God's gift through you to the world. The resulting joy of accepting your labors as God's work allows you to take life one step at a time — as it has been delivered to you — and to find meaning and worth in every moment of the day and in every encounter along the way. God's "Call" is more than a job — it is discovering the possibilities of oneself; it is insight into who one is, what one should do. Call is a powerful resource for confronting the uncertainty of life. It is a symbol of divine direction and divine acceptance, connecting one with the community in which one serves. Call makes sense of one's Life."¹

Gathering

Call to Worship

One: O give thanks to the Lord and call upon God's name,
Many: Make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.
One: Sing to the Lord, sing praises;
Many: And speak of all God's marvelous works.
One: Glory in God's holy name;
Many: Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
All: Praise the Lord!

From Psalm 105:1-3, 45c

Hymn of Praise: PH 458, "Earth and All Stars"

Confession and Pardon

Call to Confession: God's grace knows no bounds. Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child; like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home; God is faithful still.² Assured of God's faithfulness, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

¹ <http://www.pcusa.org/christianvocation/christianvocationsunday.htm>

² *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Lines 49-51.

Unison Confession: Holy and merciful God, we confess that our love has not been genuine. We have not hated what is evil, held fast to what is good, or loved one another with mutual affection. Your people are needy; but we have not met their needs. We have not extended hospitality to strangers. We have sought vengeance for ourselves and failed to live peaceably with all.

Have mercy on us, God. In your great compassion, free us from our selfishness. Free us to hear and heed your will for our lives, that we may, through the power of your Holy Spirit, live out our calling as Christians and live into our baptism. In the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness: Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. **Amen.**

The Peace: We are called to live peaceably with all. Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another. The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.
And also with you.

Response in Song: PH 298, "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

The Word

Prayer for Illumination: God of glory, your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. By your Spirit, give us grace to receive your truth in faith and love that we may be obedient to your will and live always for your glory; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

Scripture Readings

First Reading: Today we celebrate Christian Vocation Sunday. We recognize that God calls each of us in different times and places to different tasks, just as God has always called God's people to service. The Old Testament passage is a familiar story of call to a shepherd taking care of his father-in-law's flocks. Hear God's word.

Exodus 3:1-15

Second Reading: While some are called to vocation within the church, we are all called to live into our Baptism, to let our lives witness to the grace of God and the salvation we have in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul's instructions to the church in Rome still speak in clear relevance to us today.

Romans 12:9-21

Gospel Reading: Let it never be said that the church existed without disagreement. Today's Gospel reading reminds us that our call to live together in community as Christians is not always an easy one, but God is with us as we find our way together.

Matthew 18:15-20

Sermon: "A Burning Question"

"A Burning Question" references the burning bush from the Exodus passage, but the question of one's vocation as a Christian is also frequently a burning question. A sermon might emphasize the fact that we are all called, though our process of discernment might look quite different from the burning bush shown to Moses. How does God still speak today? How do we discern and heed God's call?]

Hymn of Response: PH 343, "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

Affirmation of Faith

Response to the Word

Offering: We have heard God's Word read and proclaimed. As we present our tithes and offerings, let us also meditate on the gifts and talents that God has given us, and how we might be called to use them in service to the world today.

Freely you have received, now freely and joyfully give.

[One option for this Sunday's offering is to invite, in advance, parishioners to bring symbols of their vocation to bring forward and place at the chancel steps, for example, as a means of offering one's talents and time in vocation.]

Song of Response: PH 422, "God, Whose Giving Knows No Ending"

Prayers of the People: Let us continue our self-giving in offering our prayers to God for the Church and for the World.

Glorious God, you call us to live together in community, many members comprising one single body with Jesus Christ as the head of the Church. You have gifted each of us differently through your Holy Spirit so that we might be complete only in coming together in unity. Even as we have different calls and different gifts, we have one calling to live as followers of Jesus, loving you above all, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Hear our prayers for those living out a diversity of vocations in your world, for our sisters and brothers in need, and for your Church on earth.

For the holy church of God, we pray that it might be filled with truth and love, bound in unity through the Holy Spirit. We pray for leaders of the church – those who have answered the call and those whom you call still. We pray for our ministers and all ministers, and for all who are called to work in the church. We pray to you, Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who fear God and believe in Christ, that our divisions may cease, and that all may be one. For the mission of the church, that in faithful witness it may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. For those who do not yet believe or those who have lost their faith, we pray to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

For the peace of the world, that a spirit of respect and forbearance may grow among nations and peoples. For those in positions of public trust, that they may serve justice and promote the dignity and freedom of every person. For the poor, the persecuted, and all who suffer. For refugees, prisoners, and all who are in danger, that they may be relieved and protected. We pray to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

For a blessing on all human labor, and for the right use of the riches of creation. For a blessing of those living out their Christian Vocation in your service. For discernment for those seeking your will and your call. For the wisdom to support and encourage one another in vocational growth and discernment. We pray to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

For this congregation, members present and absent, that we may be delivered from hardness of heart, and show forth your glory in all we do. That we may heed your call as a congregation, living into our baptismal identity as the Body of Christ on earth. We pray to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear our prayer.

[Specific prayer requests may be offered here, or silence can be observed.]

O God, in your loving purpose, answer our prayers and fulfill our hopes. In all things for which we pray, give us the will to seek to bring them about, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray, saying... *[Lord's Prayer]*

Sending

Hymn: PH 427, "Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service"

Charge: As we are called forth from this place of worship, remember that we are called to service in the world. What is God's call to you? God still speaks. Will we listen?

Blessing: Now go in peace, and may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forever. **Amen.**