



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

Vocations Sunday

The fourth Sunday of Easter

Sunday 26 April 2026

Readings: Acts 2.42-end, John: 10.1-10

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Growing up in a large family, we often knew the cost of holding everything in common. My parents wanted us to have as many opportunities as possible. But with that came complex logistics of which child needed to be there, and a lot of waiting for others to finish brownies or a dance class or a music lesson.

We had a family mantra which would often get pulled out if a party or activity was mentioned at the last minute. And my mum would say, "if it's not on the calendar, it's not happening". We learned from a young age the importance of each other's needs and wants and desires. And if I'm honest, we weren't always that happy about it.

This means I have high esteem for anyone who can hold everything in common. Trusting that there would be enough for them in that time of need, just as much as there was for others. This is what we hear was happening in the book of Acts. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling property and possessions for anyone who had needs and meeting together, eating together and breaking bread together. It's a beautiful picture of Christ's united body caring for one another and building each other up. And this Vocation Sunday, this is what I want to offer to us as the foundation of who we are, as Christians, and what we should be doing as Christ's united body here on earth, in the United Kingdom and in the Diocese of Chelmsford.

You see, in the church, when we say the word vocation, we often think about something that is for a selected person, often wearing a collar and stood in special robes with years of training and investment, and sometimes a house and a stipend. And we're not wrong. Those people do have a vocation and are a representation of part of the church's vocation, but just a part, a small part of the calling that God has for us, God's people.

The word vocation comes from the Latin word 'Vocare', which means 'to call'. Each and every one of us has been called by name, by Christ, just as Christ called his disciples and his followers. That means that our primary vocation is to be a disciple, to be called by name, and to walk with God. In our gospel reading in John:10, we hear about the shepherd who calls his sheep. Here is a picture of calling, where the shepherd comes to their sheep and leads them into new pastures.

The job of a shepherd wasn't to keep the sheep exactly where they were. The grass would run out and the wolves would circle. But the job of a shepherd was to lead the sheep to fresh water and new pastures. In order for that to happen, the sheep would learn their shepherd's voice and learn to move in step with their shepherd.

The same is true for us. We were created for relationship with God. We were created to be called by name, to explore who we are and learn more about God and our world. It's from that place, a place of love and relationship with God, from knowing God, our Shepherd's voice calling our names, that we step out and we share that love with others.

The world in its many voices can tell us that we are not good enough, that we need this, that, or the other and that we will never be as tall, as talented, as respected, or as loved as we long for. There are voices everywhere that come to thief and steal, but the voice of God is the voice of love and care and compassion and also challenge a voice that calls us by name and then says, 'follow me'.

Following someone is hard. If you've ever sat in a car, either driving it or in the passenger seat and followed the car in front of you to your destination, you'll know it's a bit stressful. You can stay as close as you'd like to, but inevitably there will be a traffic light, or a pedestrian, or a bump in the road that slows you down. So, to make it to your destination, you need a leader who has an eye in their mirror, who knows you and knows what your car looks like and is willing to slow down, stop, and get you back on route. This is the kind of shepherd that Jesus is with us. With the Holy Spirit guiding our way, we are asked to follow. But God knows us, God knows what might come along and stop us on our journey, knock us off course or distract us. It's a journey worth going on despite the bumps in the road., or the thieves and robbers who come to steal because Jesus says, 'I have come, that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Eternal life is the promise that we are given that we will receive through Jesus Christ, the gate. That calling from Jesus, that eternal life is not static. It's not for a fixed point in the future. It is for now too. It is a calling when we are led out of the safety of the sheep pen into the fields, to seek green pasture. It might feel scary. It might feel vulnerable. It might be much easier to stay in the sheep pen and ignore the call of the shepherd. But our shepherd is a good shepherd, who knows us by name and wants us to have life to the full. That calling into the fields to seek green pasture could be to explore something new out of the safety of your sheep pen. Perhaps there's something in your spiritual life that you have been wondering about. Maybe trying a retreat? Pleshey has some fantastic things coming up.

Or maybe going along to a new service. Something like a healing service to ask for prayer or joining in with something like our diocesan 100 Days of Prayer. Perhaps you are feeling a call to something in the community. Is there a place you're feeling God's nudge to serve? Maybe the food bank or the uniformed organisations like Scouts or Brownies? Or maybe in the library or in the school as a governor or a reading volunteer? It might be a calling to be out in the community focusing on others.

Or perhaps the green pastures you are being called out into are in a place of service inside the Church. Have you been thinking about putting your name forward to join a team? Have you been wondering about having a go at intercessions or reading the Bible lessons? Or maybe working with children and young people? Or maybe there's been something that you've just been wishing somebody would hurry up and do. Maybe you could do it. One of the ways that we often know it's God's voice is if it's a niggles that we can't get rid of internally, or something that others have said to us externally, that won't

go away. I wonder if, as I've been speaking, there has been something for you that just keeps coming back, and if so, can I encourage you to say it out loud to someone this week and see what they think. If you're feeling really brave, say it to your vicar or to your LLM. It's their job to help the people of God discern God's voice.

Perhaps you can think of someone you think would make a great school governor, or intercessor, or preacher, or minister. And it's the same encouragement to you for that. Speak to them. Tell them. Encourage them. Because discerning calling is best done in community, held in common as we meet together to break bread and praise God, just like the early church in Acts.

Our calling is for the good of others we meet with in the church, in our communities, and for the good of the whole world, because Jesus calls us into life in all its fullness. To receive that life, we step out of the known into the unknown with Jesus, our good shepherd, leading us every step of the way.

Amen.