## God’s World Needs Leaders

#### A Service for Vocation Sunday or other inspirational service

*by Alydia Smith with Prayers by Bronwyn Corlett*

### Call to Worship

We gather together in worship and praise!

**Praise to you God!**

Praise to you for this morning.

**Praise to you God!**

Praise to you for the great commission: to make disciples, to baptize, to teach!

**Praise to you God!**

Praise to you for always lighting our way.

**Praise to you God!**

### Opening Hymn Suggestions

“Be Thou My Vision” (*Voices United* 642)

“Walk with Me” (*Voices United* 649)

### Opening Prayer

Generous and loving God,

who provides water in the desert,

wine at a wedding,

fish when there are no bites,

bread when we are hungry,

answers when we are confused,

be with us this morning, as you are always.

Blow through us, that we might sense your presence.

Wrestle with us, that we might discern your path.

Love us that we might become who you call us to be.

Amen.

### Lighting the Christ Candle

You assure us, Jesus, that wherever two or three are gathered in your name, you are there. We light this candle to remind ourselves and to celebrate your constant presence. May we always seek your guiding light in our lives.

### Prayer of Confession

Sometimes,

**I think I have all the answers.**

Sometimes,

**I ignore feelings of unease.**

Sometimes,

**I forget that you are active in my life, my calling, purpose.**

Sometimes,

**I don’t want to listen, I don’t want to act, I don’t want to serve.**

Forgive us for these times.

**Help us to respond to all that we are, all that you have made us,**

with love, with abundance, with care.

### Words of Assurance

Be assured, people of God,

when we fail, God does not;

when we avoid, God seeks us out;

when we forget, God calls us back;

when we disengage, God builds relationship.

God forgives you, God loves you,

and God calls you to new life, again and again. Amen.

### Children’s Time

Have someone in the congregation tell the story of their calling to a profession, highlighting the twists and turns, surprises and expectations.

In your own words, tell the story of Numbers 20:1–13 (in which Moses gets water from the rock). Then ask:

* When the people complained, what did Moses and Aaron do?
* What did God do when Moses and Aaron prayed?

End with a prayer, thanking God for answering our prayers—even in unexpected yet abundant ways.

### Hymn Suggestion

“Rise Up, Rise Up” (*More Voices* 130)

### Scripture Readings

* Numbers 20:1–13 – God commands Moses to strike a rock for water because the people don’t believe.
* Psalm 138:1–8 – Answering God’s call.
* Luke 5:1–11 – Jesus teaches from Simon’s boat and, despite Simon’s doubts, they catch an abundance of fish.

### Hymn Suggestion

“I Have Called You by Your Name” (*More Voices* 161)

### Message: God’s World Needs Leaders

*by**Elizabeth Brown*

***Considering Ministry***

Have you ever wondered how a person becomes a minister in The United Church of Canada? Maybe you’ve listened to hundreds of sermons and prayers and participated in more than a few worship services; perhaps this is your very first venture into a United Church building; maybe you’re returning after an absence and you’re wondering about the changes you experience; or perhaps you’ve been trying to figure out if paid accountable ministry is where God is calling you—whatever your circumstances at this moment, questions may have crossed your mind about this journey. How does the United Church know when a woman or man is interested, or has the gifts and talents and faith necessary to begin the process toward ministry? Maybe you’ve been part of a discernment committee at your local church or part of a Presbytery Education and Students Committee, or watched the ordination, commissioning, or recognition ceremony at a Conference Sunday and wondered about the steps taken by the individual. Well, you’re not alone! People throughout history have wondered all these things as well! Whether it’s a person from a story in the Bible or the woman you taught Sunday school with; whether it’s the young person in the confirmation class or the one who took part in the peaceful protest whose picture was in the paper; whether it’s the teacher, banker, or nurse from the next town, or the minister’s son, daughter, or partner…all who follow the path of someone who decides to enter ministry wonder how it all began. If you were to ask 10 different ministers, you would likely have 10 different answers! And if you were to know 10 different ministers, you would discover they are 10 very different people who were called to 10 very different ministries! That’s the reality of ministry in The United Church of Canada.

(*Read through the list of scripture passages listed in the PDF at www.united-church.ca/entering/call#prayers. Choose two stories and explore the different journeys of being called to ministry.*)

These stories illustrate two ways of being called, but there are many ways to be called, to explore God’s call, and to find your way into ministry. Often we feel as though our journey needs to be exactly the same as our minister’s experience or very similar to those told in the Bible stories. The truth is that God’s call is unique for each one of us. It might reflect some parts of some stories but no two stories are the same. So we might feel we’re too young or too old (like Jeremiah or Noah), that we’ve struggled along the way (like Jonah), or that it feels impossible (like Mary) to follow this path; but the way we respond is uniquely ours. One thing that is similar to every story is the realization that it’s good to talk to others to help discern God’s voice in the midst of all the other voices in our mind and heart.

Like many other professions, how we live out our call to ministry has changed over the years. At one time, there was the tendency to fit a certain “mould” as a United Church minister. Today, there are various ways to “be” in ministry. With society and culture changing, with the increase of multicultural and intergenerational communities across Canada, and with technology innovations happening all around us, a minister in the United Church has numerous possibilities! Here are a couple of stories from folk who have recently followed their calling in the United Church:

(*Download and share two call stories from www.united-church.ca/entering/stories*.)

***Minister’s Reflection***

Reflect on the problems that are faced in the biblical stories, e.g., draught, hunger, doubt, overcrowding, and expectations—we’ve already tried that and it didn’t work!).

Describe your call to ministry. Include the challenges and doubts, as well as the rewards and satisfaction. Highlight the ways your call has changed over the years and how ministry has impacted you personally.

Reflect on the abundance of the texts: God’s answer, elders, water, solutions, fish, other helpers nearby, a new path, and a new vision.

Describe some of the things that you love and appreciate about being a minister. What abundances have you discovered?

***Congregational Reflection***

Invite the congregation to form pairs or small groups to share with their neighbours some of the challenges that they faced in making major life decisions: career, family, lifestyle, and so on.

Invite the pairs/small groups to share what helped them make these decisions: prayer, mentors, friends, family, and so on.

Invite the congregation to consider whether they know someone who might be facing a life choice, e.g., a teenager considering college or university, a college student considering courses, someone looking for work. How might they offer support to that individual?

***Leadership Reflection***

Reflect on the leadership qualities found in the scripture: listening, observing, caring, prayer, questions, accepting help, gathering elders, inviting others to follow, courage, affirming, assurance, confidence, trust, invitation, and so on

Invite the congregation to consider if they know anyone with these types of leadership skills. Has anyone invited them to lead something or get involved in something? Do you see gifts for ministry in any of these people? Have you ever told them? Would you be willing to discuss ministry with them? Or just plant the seed?

### Hymn Suggestions

“Come, O Fount of Every Blessing” (*Voices United* 559)

“Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” (*Voices United* 563)

“Will You Come and Follow Me” (*Voices United* 567)

“We Are Pilgrims (The Servant Song)” (*Voices United* 595)

“Take, O Take Me as I Am” (*More Voices* 85)

“I Know Your Word” (*More Voices* 108)

“Called by Earth and Sky” (*More Voices* 135)

### Offering

“I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (*Voices United* 575)

### Prayers of the People (ending with A New Creed)

Generous and loving God,

we thank you for the many gifts that you have given us.

We thank you for the sunshine and the rain,

the mountains and the valleys,

the challenges and the gifts,

the snow and the flowers.

We are grateful to live in your grace.

We remember those who are struggling this day,

those close to our hearts,

those we learn about through the news,

those we pass on the street and do not know,

our neighbours sitting beside us this day.

Be with each of them.

Help them to know your love and grace.

Help us to recognize your presence among us.

Help us to hear your voice in the busyness of our lives.

Help us to pay attention to your words all week long.

As we make plans, work hard, and enjoy friends and family,

help us to remember that we have purpose,

your purpose.

Help us to always be building up your church, Christ’s body in the world.

Help us to support, foster, and create faith communities that love the world.

Asserting that we love our neighbours as we love ourselves,

let us recite A New Creed together as a community of faith.

### A New Creed

### Closing Hymn Suggestions

“Go Forth for God” (*Voices United* 418)

“As a Fire Is Meant for Burning” (*Voices United* 578)

“We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection” (*Voices United* 586)

“Spirit God, Be Our Breath” (*More Voices* 150)

“I Am a Child of God” (*More Voices* 157)

“Go, Make a Diff’rence” (*More Voices* 209)

“Wherever You May Go” (*More Voices* 216)

### Benediction

Go from this place knowing who you are and to whom you belong.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen.