

Exploring Call

Synod reminds us of God's universal call to serve in the world, Ruth Whitehead reminds us to ask who benefits from any particular sense of Call. Some are called to the specific task of leadership and John Proctor reflects on what this might mean whilst Gordon Woods reflects on the ministry of Eldership. I consider the way in which we discern in the URC – never a personal thing alone, always a discernment task done together. Susan Durber examines the fact that we are all called in multiple ways and John Ellis helps us consider the call to let go and move on. Finally I reflect on the different ways in which the URC offers a variety of recognised ministries. We hope that these studies will help you focus on your calling; maybe you are exploring a call to join the Church, to become an Elder, or to candidate for ordained or commissioned ministry. Maybe you already serve the Church in some way and wonder how that role may develop or if it's time to let go of that role. Whatever your situation we hope and pray that you will listen and discern more fully your own vocation.

The material has been designed to deliver over 3 sessions – these might be mid-week group over four weeks or it might form the focus of an away day for a church group. It could be delivered in person or on line. These

The Notes are in booklet form and large print. You might want to print them for people or to email them for them to either print themselves or read on a device during the sessions.

Music Each session starts with a hymn. The tunes should be well known and able to be downloaded online. Please email via Andy.Braunston@urc.org.uk if you'd like some help finding music to sing along to. People like to sing and it's a good way to start each session.

To Keep Your Wits About You! The task of the leader is to facilitate the learning so know who you can ask to read a Biblical passage, the information box or the reflection box. It's good to have other voices but remember not everyone is comfortable reading in a small group.

Be prepared to gently encourage the quiet and quieten the more bubbly ones. "Thank you, has anyone else got a perspective on this, how about you Mabel?" is a good way to move a discussion on. Be aware of people are being too

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Leo suggests Jesus trusted the people He sent out to evangelise and, by implication trusts us! Why do you think we often find it difficult to talk about our faith?

For many people faith is intensely personal and we often think personal means private.

We may be afraid of offending another or that we won't have the right words; yet people aren't looking for a f nnoen n m

In what ways is Eldership a ministry rather than being, for example, a Committee member or buildings specialist?

First one doesn't apply! It's a process of Call worked differently in each congregation but a Call comes from the Church Meeting and those who respond are ordained and inducted into their office.

Second, the Eldership leads the local church alongside a minister, if there is one, and has responsibility for ensuring the provision of worship, attending to the church's mission at home and overseas, discerning call amongst those who offer themselves for ordered or commissioned ministry and a concern for the spiritual life of the congregation.

Whilst we often get bogged down, as it were, with boilers, loos and finance, these are all very much secondary to the ministry of Eldership though are often the things we concentrate on as we see that as easier.

How do the criteria for leadership outlined in I Timothy sound to you? Are they realistic for contemporary leadership?

They are: above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent, gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. Manages own household well, keeps children respectful and submissive, not a recent convert, well thought of by outsiders, serious, truthful, holding fast to the faith.

Some of these may not accord well with our contemporary notions of equality but many of them seem wise. Are churches good at expecting these standards and being honest when they aren't met? (why/why not?)

We all have multiple demands on our time and many of these demands are things we're called to; someone might be an Elder, a

I imagine a sense of worry about how things will work, gladness for the minister in finding a new and fulfilling role instead of becoming

