

## Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission: Discernment exercises

**Pastoral:** *redefining pastoral care to include affirming the strengths of Christians in their daily lives.*

- Support groups of various types including specific opportunities for Christians to gather and discuss their work experiences
- Sermons, education events, liturgical affirmations, regular prayers, newsletter/bulletin articles by people connecting their faith with their work
- Individuals sharing their journeys as Christians called by God in the workplace
- Marketplace visits
- Notes from the Rector for those noted in the news media for honors, new positions, promotions, etc..

### Marketplace Visits\*

A way for parish clergy to enter significantly into the daily life of Christians is by visiting them where they spend much of their working hours on the job. That may be in a factory, at home, in an office-wherever the people of God are engaged in their work. A model found to be meaningful to both clergy and parishioners is "the market place visit." In one parish the rector arranges visits during the workday as parishioners' schedules allow. In another, the rector sets aside most Thursdays, scheduling lunches on a one on one basis with members of the parish. The format is simple: meet where the parishioner works. The importance of being present at the there provides an affirmation that cannot be achieved in any other way and has a salutatory affect on parishioners' sense of call and ministry.

One such visit led to this parishioner's reflections: *It's still such a revelation to think of my work as fitting into part of God's purpose. Seems so obvious, but I never thought of it in that way (and still forget it oftentimes!). It serves to stretch the spiritual part of my life into all of my life, instead of just those times when I'm in church or doing some volunteer work or consciously praying or doing some other activity that I more readily saw as "fitting into" a separate box labeled "religion."*

The conversations center on these questions:

- *What do you do here?*
- *What connections, if any, do you experience between Sunday and Monday, the connection with your faith?*
- *How did you come to that place?*
- *In what ways does and can the congregation and its leadership support, affirm, nourish, and equip you in your work/ministry here?*

It is important to share the questions with those to be visited beforehand. The results vary depending upon the person: for some it can be a learning experience-the first time they have considered the connection; for some it is an affirmation of their calling and ministry; for some it can be a challenge to struggle with a sense of ministry where they are; for some it can be an *aha*, when they realize that they do have a calling, a ministry. It is important to recognize that there can be a distinction between a real sense of call- *God has put me in this place*- and a sense of ministry- *in this place I can live into the Baptismal Covenant: "seek and serve..., respect the dignity..."* Most important of all is that such visits affirm that the Church is supportive of the very work that occupies parishioners most of their working and waking hours.

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### Liturgical

#### **A WEEKLY PARISH PRAYER CYCLE: THE BAPTIZED IN THEIR DAILY LIFE \***

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:** Below is a series of petitions for the Baptized in the places where they work. As with the Anglican and the Diocesan cycles, this weekly petition will be on a cycle offering up a different workplace ministry, e.g. health care, environmental, social service, etc. Because some months may have more than 4 weeks, 4 “extra” weeks have been added after December week 4.

***Pray for all the Baptized in their daily work, especially those of our congregation and community who are***

January week 1: In the legal profession including lawyers, paralegals and their support staff.

January week 2: In the arts including painters, sculptors and designers.

January week 3: In the legislative process including advocates, lobbyists, legislators and their staffs.

January week 4: In homes including multitasking parents and homemakers, and “crisis managers”.

#### **A LITURGY OF COMMITMENT AND AFFIRMATION FOR PEOPLE IN THEIR DAILY LIFE\***

Celebrant: My Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus: we are all baptized by one Spirit into one Body, and given gifts for a variety of ministries for the common good. You have come forward today to ask God’s blessings on the particular work that you do. Please now, name the occupation for which you seek God's blessing.

Answer: *(Each person names his or her occupation.)*

Celebrant: In the ministry of your daily life and work, will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Answer: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: In your daily occupation, will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Answer: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: In the vocation to which God has called you, will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Answer: I will, with God’s help.

Celebrant: Let us pray.

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ in his earthly life shared our toil and hallowed our labor: be present with your people where they work. Deliver us from the service of self alone, and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

In the Name of God and of this congregation, I recognize and affirm your commitment to follow Christ in the vocation to which God has called you. May the Holy Spirit guide and strengthen you to bear faithful witness to Christ, and to carry on his work of reconciliation in the world. *Amen*

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***A Dismissal:*** *Let us go forth into our worlds of home and work and community, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.*

***At the distribution:*** *The Body of Christ, Food for your journey; The Blood of Christ, strengthening your journey.*

### **Formation**

#### **EXPLORING THE MINISTRY OF THE BAPTIZED IN DAILY LIFE\***

Note: with five quotes, this format has a number of possible uses. It can be a series of educational events over five sessions; one session by having five small groups, each dealing with one of the quotes; or some other combination

##### **Introduction to the process**

##### **Small Group work.**

###### **1. Two quotes from Dorothy Sayers:**

- “The first demand on a carpenter’s religion is that he makes good tables. What use is anything else if in the center of his life and occupation he insulting God with bad carpentry?”
- “In nothing has the Church so lost her hold on reality as in her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation.”

###### ***Some questions***

- What connection does Ms. Sayers envision between one’s Christian faith and one’s work?
- How does that relate to (a) your personal situation and (b) your parish?

**2. Byron Rushing**, an Episcopalian in the Massachusetts Legislature, currently the VP of the House of Deputies, said, “Jesus is in the Legislature where I am called to serve. If he were not there, I should not be there either.”

###### ***Some Questions:***

- What connection does Mr. Rushing make between his work and his Faith?
- How would he define “ministry?”
- How does this translate into your work?
- In what way(s) could a parish equip persons like Mr. Rushing in their ministry in the world?

###### **3. Quotes from the Book of Common Prayer:**

- *...that we may do all such good works as thou hast prepared for us to walk in.... (p. 339)*
- *.....Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us the strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart.... (p 365)*
- *...And now Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. (p 366)*
- *Go in peace to love and serve the Lord (p 366)*
- *Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. (p 366)*

###### ***Some questions:***

- Where and what is “the work you have given us to do?”
- As a Christian, what do you need to equip you for this work?
- How does your congregation prepare you for this work?

##### **Plenary discussion**

- What is a definition of ministry? Vocation? Calling?

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- On a scale of 0 (not at all) to 10 (totally) rate your parish in its affirmation of this understanding of ministry.
- Why did you place it there?
- What step(s) can you take to raise the support level of your congregation as a base camp?

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### Communications

#### *Faith and Work articles*

Lisa McKnight

I am a corporate “transactional” attorney, which means that I work for a corporation (UPS Freight), as opposed to a law firm, and that I primarily work on transactions that the company is involved in, such as buying or selling real estate or entering into a contract for some type of services or goods. Because of this I work with people in many different positions within the company. From Service Center Managers that are at locations all over the country to senior management here in Richmond. I negotiate and write all kinds of contracts – contracts to buy software, to lease trucks, to acquire janitorial services, to hire guards at our terminals. If it involves a contract of any type, I’m usually involved in it. They can be very insignificant contracts or multimillion dollar contracts.

When Fletcher Lowe originally asked if he could visit me at work to discuss the “faith connection”, that is the connection between what I do to make a living and my faith, I agreed reluctantly. Not because I was reluctant to talk with Fletcher or because I was reluctant to talk about either my work or my faith. I just wasn’t sure I saw any connection between the two. So, I agreed, but planned to rely on Fletcher to steer the conversation, because I really couldn’t draw a connection there. I mean, after all, how could working as an attorney for a trucking company tie in to God’s work anyway?

I am fortunate in that I’ve been able to link my company with the Micah project at Woodville – many of our employees tutor students, adopt classrooms, and provide needed supplies. I coordinate those efforts with Carol Sabatino (the Micah Woodville Volunteer Coordinator). So, I thought, at least I’ll have that to discuss, that is surely God’s work. I really hoped the focus of the conversation wasn’t going to be that I needed to do more to bring my faith to work – i.e., a “spread the Good News” to my fellow employees kind of discussion...that’s admirable, but just not me!

I should have known that Fletcher had a different take. In our discussion, he challenged me to see how the gifts I have and the work I do is in fact God’s work. That drafting up a contract fairly, is applying my faith and the values rooted in my faith. That treating my fellow employees with respect, behaving in an ethical manner, and being able to help two parties work through issues and come up with a problem solving approach, rather than a conflict based disagreement, is doing God’s work. That, in fact, doing what I have the skills to do, using whatever talents I may have, is God’s work.

It was a revelation to me! I tended (and still tend, it’s hard to re-train my brain after 48 years), to view “God’s work” as what the priests and choir directors and youth ministers and Mother Teresas of the world do. I viewed the “work world” as separate from the “faith world”. To my mind, God’s work is things like tutoring at Woodville, serving guests at CARITAS, even writing a check to the Carpenter’s Kids. It turned that assumption on its ear to see that maybe simply applying the talents God gave me is, in fact, also doing “God’s work”. As dry and un-faith-like as writing up a contract sounds – it did seem possible that somehow that type of work might also serve God’s purpose. And, in that setting, St. Paul’s and the community there, isn’t separate, but is a foundation, as Fletcher likes to say, a “base camp”, for the rest of the week – a place to focus, resupply, and prepare to go back out and do whatever work is set out before me.

I suppose, that is the bottom line – that God’s work can take the shape of every type of labor and effort in the world. All that variety of work has to occur in order for the world to move forward; for the community of [www.ecfvp.org](http://www.ecfvp.org) , 3.5.14

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humankind to prosper (in a spiritual sense, as well as a material one). And the most important thing is to use what gifts we each have – gifts as diverse as the work to be done – to tackle the work that is set before us. What a concept. God is truly amazing!

\* Note: These and several more come from *Baptism: the Event and the Adventure*, LeaderResources.