

WEEK OF LAITY

2023 RESOURCE



THE CALL TO SERVE
LAITY SUNDAY LITANY
APPRECIATION GUIDE
LAY LEADERS' PRAYER

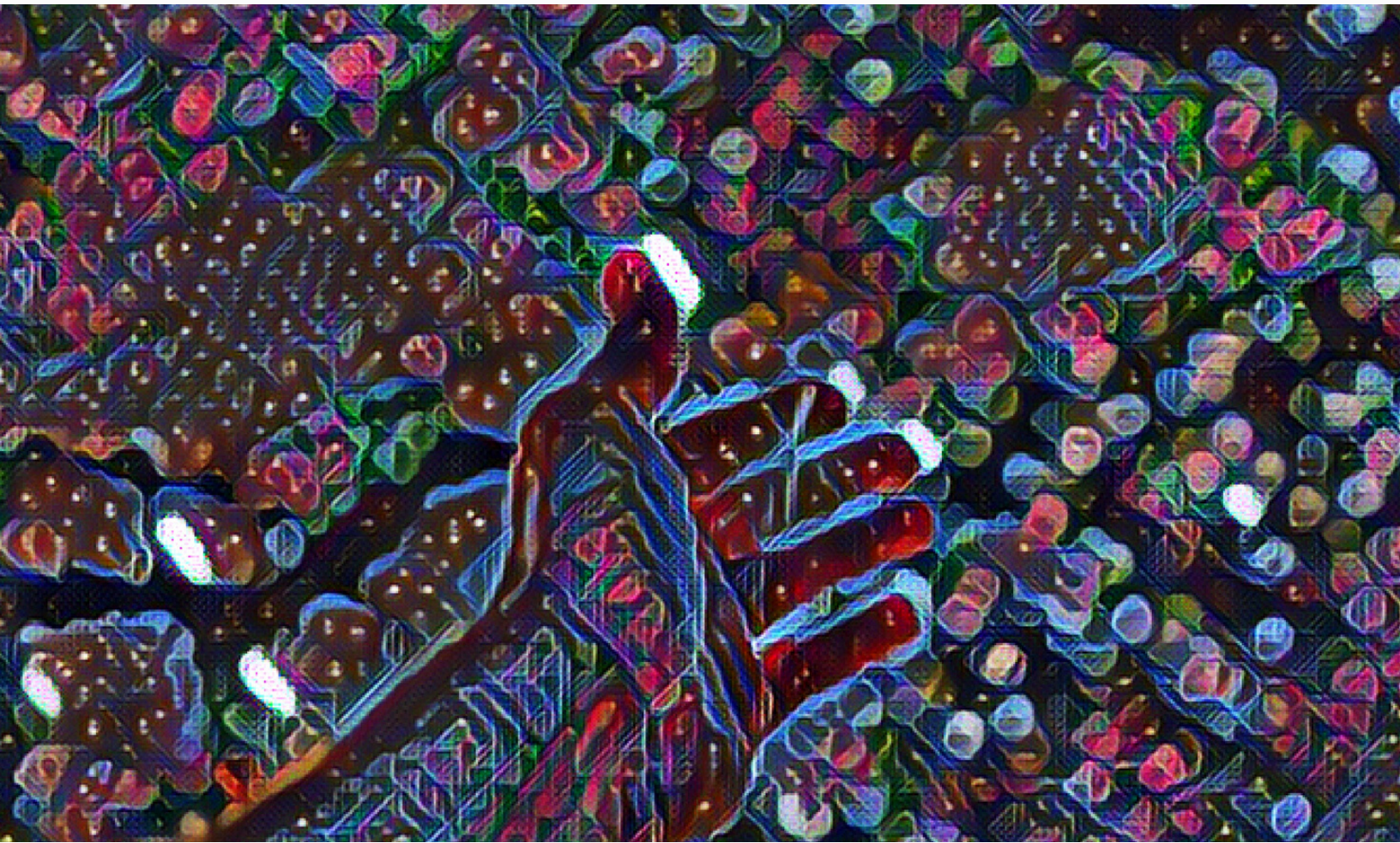
Experiences are better than descriptions and descriptions are better than labels. To know a thing offers notably more substance than to speak of a thing you have not known. Laity is a loaded term. When we speak of "lay leaders" it is often with incomplete considerations for whom lay leaders are in the church. In a world of celebrity culture and social media personas, secular and faith communities give disproportionate attention to those in proximity to power, those who have been granted authoritative voice. Our understanding of lay leadership can be limited to service with not enough expectation around "voice". Those who are and have been laity, we know very well the power of voice. For it is the voice of God calling out for our service, focus, and ungrudging commitment.

THE CALL TO SERVE

1 SAMUEL 3:1-10 NRSVUE

"Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again."

So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."



In this text, we read of a Samuel who is committed to his service and responsive to "voice". It is not unusual, in the sustaining ministry of lay leadership, there can be confusion when it comes to divine instruction. This can show up in the misalignment of gifts and ministries. It can manifest in a difference of opinion as to how a ministry should be executed, and sometimes there can be uncertainty around whether one's volunteer service in a particular area needs to end. Needless to say, it is essential to discern and differentiate the voice of God from all other voices. God's voice ought garner a greater level of devotion, one more far-reaching and resilient in the face of typical church challenges. It is God's voice we need to discover in deciding if to accept an assignment. The call to serve is not exclusive to clergy. The *call to serve* reaches all. It is healthy to ask ourselves what voices are resounding in our ears.

- Name the voices at work in your service to the church.
- Which voices offer the decisive peace of God?

There is encouragement to be found in the scripture's caution, "visions were not widespread." It is fair to say, God is not in the practice of misleading us or reveling in confusion. Therefore, it was not surprising or unreasonable for Samuel to assume it was Eli calling out to him. God was not yet known to Samuel and during this time, God was understood in the context of community. Anything experienced personally was to be interpreted communally. Praise be to Our Creator, we are not without the help of our village in living out the *call to serve*. We need the sacred "Eli insight" of others who know God.

It is also notable the ark of God (the most sacred symbol of Israelite faith representing the presence of God), was where Samuel laid down in the temple. The demands of lay leadership require stillness among sacred things: rest, prayer, quietness, study, music, and meals with friends.

- How often are you still in sacred things? Which things best renew your strength for ministry?

God appears in expected and unexpected ways. This is why a balanced life offers us more portals of encounter. The *call to serve* is an absolutely holy encounter.

“

*O thou bright jewel, in
my aim I strive
To comprehend thee.
Thine own words
declare
Wisdom is higher than
a fool can reach.*

— PHILLIS WHEATLEY

Finally, every time Samuel heard his name, he exhibited a readiness to get up and do what was needed. This is a clue he was *called to serve* and not simply assigned to service. For laity showing up ready in their call, we give thanks! Listen for God's voice. Have you received a *call to serve*?



LAITY SUNDAY

Opening Song and Invitation of Laity to the Altar: Psalm 23 (The Lord's My Shepherd -Instrumental Hymn)

Pastor: We gather this morning with heartfelt thanks and appreciation for the lay leaders of our church. We could not tangibly share the Good News of Jesus without their help. Let us clap our hands in praise for the laity gathered at this altar. (pause for applause)

Lay Leaders, we trust you have spent time with God and discerned who calls you to ministry in this sacred community.

Lay Leaders: It is God's voice that calls us to compassion, service, and commitment. We offer God a "yes."

Pastor: The Lord is our shepherd. God offers green pastures, still waters, and leadership. Lay leaders, without hesitation, receive what God offers.

Lay Leaders: We don't have to fear. God's rod and staff comfort us. God prepares a table for us and anoints our heads with oil. Goodness and mercy shall follow us.

Pastor: Congregation, do you join with me in affirming their call, praying for their strength, and loving them to life in their coming and going?

Congregants: We affirm, pray for and love our lay leaders. We love them to life!

Pastor: Holy Creator, you have designed each and every person here with unique gifts and graces. Employ these mighty blessings for your glory. We believe in the power of your people. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



APPRECIATION GUIDE

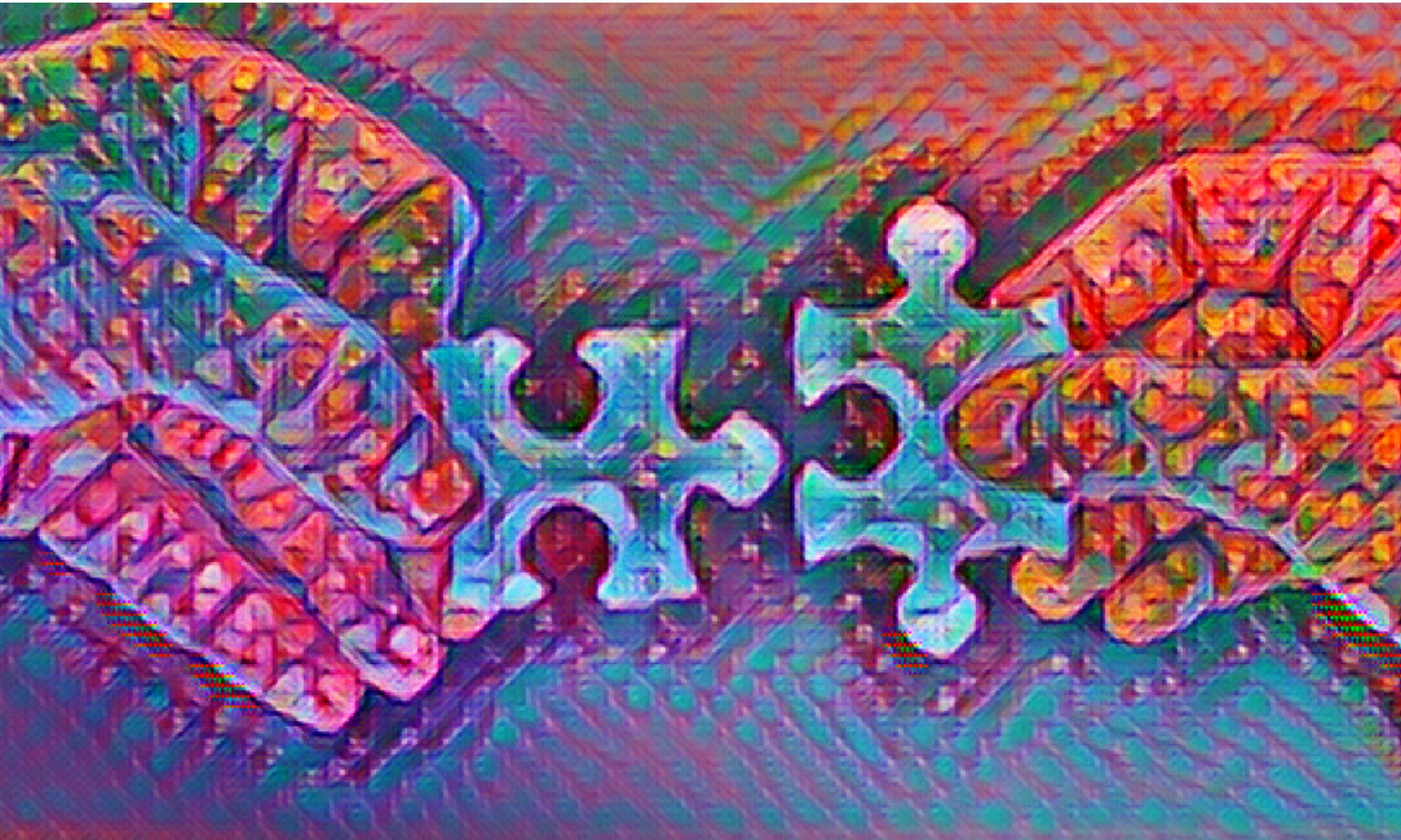
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*Acknowledging the
good you already
have in your life is
the foundation for
all abundance.*

ECKHART TOLLE

With laity, [watch this 17-minute affirming sermon from Henri Nouwen](#) and engage one or more of the adjacent suggestions.

- A Night Out – attend or host a movie, musical performance or art exhibition with lay leaders
- Rent a labyrinth and gather laity to walk in silent meditation or prayer, listening for God
- Take requests and have your choir or praise team offer an hour of songs that inspire your volunteer leaders.
- Provide inscribed prayer journals, book marks, or water bottles with a case of water
- Mail greeting cards or snacks with a note of appreciation specific to lay leaders' ministries in the church
- Plan group photos for each lay ministry and share them publicly with a story of their work
- Offer each lay ministry a mini-grant to engage a project or activity they desire to try
- Plan a listening session of their hopes and dreams for the church



To download this and other resources, please visit the DHM website [Christian Education and Faith Formation Resources page](#). Should you need any additional support, feel free to contact us at the following addresses:

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