

Introduction to Mission & Values Interim Event, October 6, 2019
Grace and Holy Trinity Church, Richmond, VA
The Rev. Bill Queen, "Our Mission, Our Values"

who are we Grace and Holy Trinity Church? not as a generic Episcopal church, but as this very specific group of individuals, which is different from any other church; what our mission is can only grow out of who we actually are: from things like our mix of commitments in terms of time and talents and treasures, and how well we work together; so GHTC's particular mission is going to be different from any other church's; the nearby Episcopal churches of St Paul's, St Andrew's, St James', St Stephen's all have their own, differing sense of mission; and this is not just from who they are, but also from where they are located; each parish's location gives a particular set of community needs to which a church must respond; let's look at a prayer, Bible readings, and an image that can help us think this through

Collect for Vocation in Daily Work

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

this prayer talks about doing the work God gives us to do "for the common good"; it's not our work, it's God's work; and the common good is not for us as a church, but for the parts of God's world, nearby or far away, where we can have some influence; some people think that "vocation" only applies to work as an ordained person; no, everyone has some kind of vocation, of calling, to do some part of God's work; it may be something you do within your job, or as an avocation, in your free time; but it is something of which you are aware that God has called you to do

Isaiah 55:1-11

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money,

come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Isaiah says that we are given work to do to carry out God's purposes, not our own; we have to discern God's ways for this community; God has brought this group of people together, in this place, at this time, for a reason; our job is to discern, carefully and prayerfully, how to spend our time, our money, and our energies on that which most satisfies—not us—but God

Psalm 116:4-12

Gracious is the LORD and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The LORD watches over the innocent; I was brought very low, and he helped me. Turn again to your rest, O my soul, for the LORD has treated you well. For you have rescued my life from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling. I will walk in the presence of the LORD in the land of the living. I believed, even when I said, "I have been brought very low." In my distress I said, "No one can be trusted." How shall I repay the LORD for all the good things he has done for me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the Name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

this Psalm reminds us that all we do is in response to the much greater work that God has already done for us; everything we do is done in God's presence, and stands as a witness to God to those around us

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift... The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Ephesians reiterates that we, individually and collectively, have a calling—that's 'vocation' again—a calling to which we have been called and that calling is to do some work of ministry; each of us has been given gifts to do just that, and our gifts must be exercised in coordination with each other, the way the parts of a body have to work well together

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And

remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew presents Jesus giving us the Great Commission, the overall mission for all Christians and the context within which we will locate our own particular mission; the call there is to go out into the world and make a difference there, by helping other people become disciples of Jesus, like we are



finally, look at the image above; you see a compass; mission and values, together, are like a map and compass that help us decide where we want to go and how we are going to get there; we can't go everywhere; we can't do everything; we have to choose a particular course and a direction, and make certain things a higher priority than other things

in sum, what is most important for us now is to know that we are being called as individuals and as a church; to recognize that we are being sent out on a mission to do God's work; this is not necessarily a mindset that all churches have; to some people, church is a place you go, rather than something you are; to some people, the work of the church is done largely by professionals like clergy and paid staff, and possibly by some highly committed volunteers, rather than by every individual; but the church's mission is the sum total of our responding to that call to mission experienced by every one of us in the church

now, with these Biblical and theological perspectives in mind, we'll continue with our Mission and Values Event's activities