

If you have ever heard me lead the prayers of the people, you will have heard me praying for what often seems like a long list of people. I often start off praying for the people in the congregation here, and then I will pray for Jan, Audrey and myself as licensed readers, for Jan and Brenda our wardens, for the members of our church's Vestry, for our vicar Jan...yes there seem to be a lot of Jans in the parish...and as I work through praying for all the ministers in Hastings, I'll end up praying for those in leadership in our [diocese](#) and for church leaders throughout the [world](#).

These are people we pray for, praying for what they do, for their work and ministry here and elsewhere, and for themselves and their families.

Yet there is so much that they do, and we all need to pray for ourselves and for them as we work through all the things that our Lord is calling us to do.

We support all those in our society who do so many things without pay, not just because they need to be done. I think of all the work done in kindergartens, playcentres, in schools and elsewhere. So many people spend their time coaching sports, leading youth groups and involved in other things because they have a passion for those things.

As I think of those who work for so many Christian things, I think of [Christian radio](#), and for some of my friends who work in Bible translation and church planting in another country where there is no support from the government or from many of the people of that land, yet they continue in their work, with a passion and an enthusiasm that would

put so many of us to shame for our levels of commitment. Their task is thankless on earth, but they continue, regardless, knowing that a great reward will be theirs!

That is ministry. Ministry is recognising that everybody has gifts and that each of us has things that we can do well and that we do less well. Some of these are reading, preaching, praying, leading worship, making coffee, leading people into God's Kingdom, teaching people of all ages: children, youth, adults, old people. Yet there are some who perceive some things to be lowly gifts: cleaning the church, dusting, giving out the hymn books and so on.

I don't agree: all have gifts; all these things are important to the functioning of a church, all need to be done. Years ago, a preacher had been preaching, and after the service as people were talking in the hall, one listener told a church member that they wanted to know more: how could this person take the first step towards God's Kingdom? The person being addressed was a new Christian herself, and not yet confident in how to share her faith, but knew what to do instead. She stated that she was not fully able to help, but took the enquirer to another member of the church who had more of a gift in evangelism. Talk to her, and while you do that, I will get you both some coffee. Both were important: the drink she brought and the talk that the other gave. Each of us has a gift.

I am a mathematician and a computer scientist, and I get tired of people who say "Maths? You must be very clever!" It's a perception of mathematics as the province of clever people that I feel to be wrong, but our society seems to

have got that as an idea. Arguing with it is outside the scope of a sermon, however! If you want to know how clever I am, try me with a saw or a paintbrush. I appreciate good music and fine art, but in these fields I am a spectator and not a participant. I asked Viv to suggest some areas where I am not talented, and I stopped here before the list got too long. It included wrapping up parcels, gardening, decorating...anybody who knows me will recognise there and be able to add to the list.

We all have the opportunity to hear God's calling in our lives. I felt him calling me to be what the church currently calls a Reader when I was in High School. This call continued on and on and I was able to act on it in 1985 after I moved to Birmingham. A snowy day in 1988 saw me licensed as a Reader, and my ministry continued here in Hastings. However, licensed ministry is **not** for everybody: we all have strengths and weaknesses in what we do and in what we are called to do. Licensed ministry is not for everybody; nevertheless, ministry in the form God chooses is for us all.

I found it hard to find the right words to express what I wanted in this sermon, but I recently received a magazine which contained exactly what I wanted to say, and I close with it.

If you are doing it because no one else will, it's a job.

If you are doing it to serve the Lord, it's a ministry.

If you are doing it just well enough to get by, it's a job.

If you are doing it to the best of your ability, it's a ministry.

If you are doing it only as long as it doesn't interfere with other activities, it's a job.

If you are committed to staying with it, even when it means letting go of other things, it's a ministry.

If you quit because no one praised you or thanked you, it was a job.

If you stay with it even when no one seems to notice, it's a ministry.

If you do it because someone else said it needs to be done, it's a job.

If you do it because you are convinced it needs to be done, it's a ministry.

It is hard to get excited about a job.

It is almost impossible not to get excited about a ministry.

People may say, "Well done", when you do your job.

The Lord will say, "Well done", when you complete your ministry.

An average church is filled with people doing jobs.

A great church is filled with people involved in ministry.