

Year A Proper 2, Epiphany 2

Isaiah 49: 1-7

1 Corinthians 1: 1-9

John 1: 29-42

Pointing and Calling

You have just heard about the excellent project called Renew 26 that has been running from the Glencorse Centre, and will be starting up a second location in the North Kirk.

When you listen to such a presentation, I wonder how you feel? Maybe you know someone who has struggled or struggles today with their mental health, or maybe you have struggled in the past? This may give you greater insight and empathy for people who don't feel OK just now.

Maybe you felt something when you heard Sheila and Eunice speaking; a movement or stirring inside of you that this was something you may want to explore further, as you sense a desire to support this project?

Maybe your mind was initially saying 'no', on the basis that you don't believe you have the skills or temperament for being alongside someone who is not feeling OK? But was that where the first rational feeling stayed? Perhaps you did start a train of thought running about what you may be able to offer, after all some of the activities are things most of us can do.

From my own experiences, I know my rational brain is often the first to respond when opportunities open up, and I can find all sorts of reasons to stay in my comfort zone. However, I let that initial thought subside, and I have learnt to listen to my feelings, and also

be on alert for more subtle 'nudges' of the Holy Spirit, that may be asking me to at least explore things further, or give something a try.

Today's readings all reflect individuals with a strong level of confidence. Our reading from Isaiah ch 49, was written by a prophet we call 'Second Isaiah' (who it is believed wrote chapters 40-55) who lived in Babylon during the exile from Jerusalem. This prophet speaks with confidence that there will be one chosen who can lead the people even after the calamitous fall of Jerusalem and years in exile.

Verses 1-6 is seen as a song, in which, in verse three the speaker is told that he or she the servant of God, and in doing God's work they will be glorified! Anyone doing God's work, the verse states, is also called 'Israel' just like Jacob!.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians we find Paul praising the people of Corinth who have become followers of Jesus, confidently stating that in doing God's work they have been blessed with God's grace and are called into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to use the gifts given to them.

In our gospel reading we see John the Baptist at his most confident best, pointing everyone towards the Lamb of God, the Chosen One. John says that only when the Holy Spirit descended and remained over Jesus did he know for certain that this was the Chosen One, as God had indicated so powerfully.

Wouldn't we all like the level of confidence that these three writers had? When we discern the promptings of the Holy Spirit are they always quite so clear and unequivocal? I know they are not for me. Sometimes I need to listen some more, and pray. Sometimes I need to ignore my rational 'head' thoughts, and listen to my heart or even my gut instinct. Sometimes I just need to try something out and be ready to be surprised. And sometimes I know in my inner being that this is not part of my vocation in life.

Sheila and Eunice's presentation on Renew 26 may have provoked some sort of initial response from you, of being attracted towards it, or maybe the opposite. Please hold those feelings and thoughts, and let them sit with you for a while. After the service, in the hall, we shall show a short video that will give you a further moment to explore this activity, and to consider if this is a project you wish to get involved in, either with full confidence like our writers today have demonstrated, or maybe more tentatively, to explore and discern if this is in fact something you may find rewarding.

Thank you, Sheila and Eunice, for your presentation. And I look forward to watching the short Renew 26 video in the hall after the service.

For those who wish to watch the video, the link is below.

<https://vimeo.com/736559519/db4ba1595e>