

Ordinary people called to do extraordinary things

By Melody Duncanson Hales and Ruth Noble

A worship service on how God calls us to be “ordinary heroes”

PRELUDE & WELCOME

WE FOCUS OUR HEARTS AND MINDS

Jesus says to his friends, to us here today, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

CALL TO WORSHIP

Believers, servants, and misfits, come together in worship!

We come in brokenness and praise, in sorrow and in joy.

Come and bring your true selves, broken and healed, doubting and trusting.

We come in faith.

Come knowing that you are beloved and called as disciples in faith.

We come in thanksgiving and praise.

Hymn

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (*Voices United*, #333)

OUR NEW BEGINNINGS

If your worship space has the capacity to project videos, share the **Mission & Service** music video *Perfect Little Thing* (<http://bit.ly/2AnR9Qs>). If your worship space does not have that capacity, print and place around the sanctuary images selected from the Minutes for Mission Flickr set ([flickr.com/photos/unitedchurchcda/albums/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/unitedchurchcda/albums/)); use one of the images for the cover of your bulletin. Introduce the video or guide people to look at the pictures around your worship space. Ask, “Where in your congregation do you see people doing extraordinary things? Where do you see God at work in your congregation?” Then, “I want to show you a video” or “I want you to look at the images on the cover of the bulletin and around the worship space that illustrate many of our extraordinary **Mission & Service** ministries and partners in Canada and around the world.”

Invite a leader to share their “Why I Give” story. Ask: “Why are you here, in the United Church and/or in this congregation? Why do you stay? What is the difference that you, through the church, make in others’ lives? Why—not how or what—do you give?”

Scripture

1 Samuel 22:1–5

Hymn

“Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” (*VU*, #563)

Gospel

Matthew 4:18–22

SERMON

In 1997, Apple developed an ad campaign titled “Think different.” The ads included the words “Here’s to the unusual ones...the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square hole, the ones who see things differently.... The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones that do.” The images in the ad campaign included Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Nelson Mandela, Amelia Earhart, and Jim Henson, to name a few.

The scriptures for today are about the calling of unlikely, ordinary people who, in the end, accomplish extraordinary things that change our world forever. We all know someone in the “ordinary heroes” category, someone like Mary Dickson from Amherst, N.S., who, through the encouragement of her UCW unit, has handed out over 80 prayer shawls to people in need. The gift of a prayer shawl can seem like a simple thing until you are the recipient—it is as if you can feel and are wrapped by all of the prayers that have been poured out during the creation of the shawl. I have seen people who are agitated from pain or fear calm down when a prayer shawl is wrapped around them. An ordinary act that creates extraordinary healing!

This is an example of what it means to be a disciple—to live or act out your faith. In the biblical world, there was a tradition of teachers called rabbis who would choose the best of the best from among young boys who attended school in the temple. The boys would be around the age of 13 and they would be chosen to be apprentices, to learn the ways of the rabbi. All other boys would return to their families and work in the family businesses. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read about Jesus calling fishermen to become his disciples, his apprentices. In this situation, they were not necessarily the best of the best; they would be ordinary;

and yet they were being called to the extraordinary life of a disciple. The meaning of the word “disciple” is a person who tries to live and preach the ways of their leader. So the disciples were taking on the extraordinary life of being like Jesus, healing and preaching the Word. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to come and follow him and be fishers of people, to preach to people the words of Jesus; then Jesus calls them to also heal people. These ordinary people who, at times, seem to be clueless are chosen, chosen to speak and heal, and chosen to change the world.

When you think about it, if these ordinary people could be called to follow the life of Jesus, that gives us hope as well. I don’t know about you, but I rarely feel like the best of the best. Often I feel less than; even accomplishing one ordinary task would seem like a herculean effort. Reading about the disciples and their times of cluelessness encourages me to move forward, to make a difference no matter how small.

We are all called to live in faith, offering compassion and hope to those we encounter. We are also called to share our gifts with our partners and ministries of **Mission & Service**, those whom we have not met in person, but know through the stories of **Mission & Service** found in Minutes for Mission and *Mandate* magazine. Following in the way of Jesus is two-fold—giving both locally and beyond our community. Following the teachings of Jesus to love one another and to love our neighbour is at the very core of our faith. Love is the one constant; when we love one another, it fills our heart and the heart of the person whom we love. We may not like what that person is doing, but we can still love them. Loving one another is one of the most profound ways we can offer compassion and hope to those we encounter, because through that love, others can be encouraged to take a chance on accomplishing extraordinary tasks.

Let me tell you a story. In Hamilton, Ont., there lived a man named Roger. He had spent the majority of his life homeless, addicted to drugs and alcohol, one of “the lost and least” whom we all encounter on city streets. Roger believed he was headed toward an early death until he encountered Wesley Urban Ministries; the people there loved him back to life. He is now clean and sober and lives in a one-bedroom apartment above Wesley Urban Ministries in downtown Hamilton. Roger will tell you that without Wesley, he would be dead. This story illustrates the result of an extraordinary act. Ordinary people called to the extraordinary, called to change people’s lives. So here’s to those who change things, those who push the human race forward in love. Here’s to us, called in faith, to mend the world! Amen.

Hymn

“I Danced in the Morning” (VU, #352)

Minute for Mission

OFFERING

Let us now share our gifts of intentional living. Our offering will now be received. Let us pray:

Almighty God, we come before you with open and willing hearts. Help us to see and be thankful for your abundant blessings. Give us insight, courage, and conviction as we choose to live intentionally as good stewards. Bless our intentions for the environment, our time, talents, treasure, and our mental and physical being. We ask you to empower us with your Spirit and infuse us with Christ’s redeeming love. Amen.

Hymn

“Will You Come and Follow Me” (VU, #567)

This is an abridged version of a worship service available as part of a three-week program in Called to Be the Church: A Congregational Giving Program, 2019.

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