Chosen, Called, Commissioned

Clergy Conference 2025

Called

Keynote: Revd Canon Prof Luke Bretherton

My name's Luke Bretherton. It's a really a delight and an honour to be with you. I've recently joined the diocese. I've moved over here from North Carolina. I've been teaching at Duke Divinity School for the past 13 years and have kind of rocked up in Oxford, which is a strange world where I'm still trying to work out why I have to have a kind of working knowledge of medieval Latin to work out anything that is happening in the place and where I'm not allowed in meetings without a gown. So I had to kind of nip around the corner and drop 300 quid to buy a gown to get into a chapter meeting, which is a bit of a shock to the system.

But anyway, really a delight to be with you and really is an honour and a pleasure. What I'm going to be focusing on today is thinking about this- what it means and the kind of meaning, purpose and character of our call and what that kind of, what that entails.

And I was at a very, very close friend of mine. He's recently got installed and inducted into a new congregation in West London. And I was there for that to kind of celebrate that and listening, listening through and participating in that service. I was struck by how central this call to shepherd a people in a particular place for a particular time was to that installation service.

And you'll be familiar with this from your ordination vows and from other such services. There are various modalities through which that call is

worked out, reading scripture, teaching sound doctrine, keep the bishop happy, and prayer and the kind of cure of souls. But all of that is in the service of building up the people of God in a particular place.

And that's what I'm going to reflect on with you today, how we kind of understand that call to the cure of souls as a form of pastoral leadership and the ways in which I think if we kind of understand that as essentially a call to political office, that kind of opens up a different vision for thinking about this call to pastoral leadership, which I think is central to all of our ministries.

This is the kind of central question we're thinking about, to what are you called? And it's to be a pastoral leader of the people of God. And pastor obviously is just a kind of translation of the Latin for pastor, shepherd or herdsman.

And so there's this very direct connection between pastoral care and this image of the shepherd. But a lot of our images of the shepherd aren't these are very early mosaic depictions of the shepherd. But as we receive it, or at least in my experience of it, often our kind of images of the shepherd is this rather kind of bucolic, sentimentalised picture of the shepherd. And I'm sure if I went to your rectories and vicarages, we would all have our own precious moments version of this very, very key aesthetic commitment. But we have to kind of get past these kind of slightly sentimentalised images of the shepherd and of pastoral care. And I think the English culture, as we inherit it through various figures like George Herbert, English Christianity, is particularly prone to this bucolic imaging of the shepherd figure.

And so I want to kind of cut past that and you'll forgive a detour, rather obscure symbolic image. And we've just had a remarkable depiction of the shepherd and pastoral care as a political office, because I'm sure you're

glued to your televisions watching the coronation. Maybe some of you were taking part in that. And at the heart of the coronation is the king is handed a sceptre.

A sceptre is symbolically, probably one of them, with a crown, is one of the most ancient symbols of royal power or of rule. And it kind of, we'll kind of unpack that a bit. And I've got there Black Rod at the Queen's funeral. The very final act before we all say, of, know, hail the new king, long live the king, is when the Queen's coffin goes down into the tomb, as it were, Black Rod breaks the rod, which is the symbol of his authority over the royal household. And that goes, in, and it's a sign of the end of one household and the beginning of another. So we find this figure, this scene of the sceptre, right at the central of the iconography and symbolism of royal power.

And as I said, it's one of the most ancient symbols there is. And it's nearly universal. You find the ancient China. You find ancient India throughout the Sumerian Babylonian kind of in his very early stele from about Lipit-Ishtar who ruled the city of Isin in Mesopotamia and he proclaims divine status and portrays himself as a kind of shepherd ploughman and caretaker of the people and the oldest legal code we have which is the laws of Hammurumbi about 5,000 years old and just at the top you probably can't see it, but he's being handed a sceptre by Marduk as a sign of his royal authority. And in the inscription which heads up the law code, it says this:

‘I am Hammurabi, noble king. I have not been careless or negligent toward humankind, granted to my care by Enlil, and with whose shepherding Marduk charged me. I have sought for them peaceful places. I removed serious difficulties. I spread light over them…’

‘I put an end to wars, I enhanced the wellbeing of the land. made the people of all settlements lie in safe pastures. I did not tolerate anyone

intimidating them. The great gods have chosen me. I am indeed the shepherd who brings peace whose sceptre is just.'

You can forgive the echoes of an early Trumpian kind of rhetoric, but we get the point. This image in one of our oldest images of royal power is the figure of the sceptre and this image of the shepherd. And this kind of continues, we have in ancient Egypt the sceptre and crook and flail and here and what the sceptre is it's a sign of a wheat sheaf or of a crook and it kind of marries those two things and the wheat sheaf is the sign of fecundity and life coming to coming to being and then obviously the crook taken up by bishops as a sign of the shepherd shepherding the flock enabling life in the face of scarcity. We'll get into that a bit more and this central is this symbol of control over chaos and a bringer of order is kind of key to this.

Again, it's picked up, we have obviously the gods Hermes, Apollo, Argus Pan, imaged as shepherd figures. And here this is from Plato's Republic, shepherding, and he's trying, it's a meditation on what good rule or true rule consists of. He says:

'Shepherding is concerned only to provide what is best for that which is set over.'

That's why I thought it necessary for us to agree before that every kind of rule in so far as it rules and doesn't bring chaos and oppression and tyranny, it's kind of backstop there, back story there, doesn't seek anything other than what is best for the thing it rules and cares for. And this is true both of public and private kinds of rule.

So central in the ancient world that scripture is picking up on is this figure of the shepherd as a kind of ideal of good rule, who's enabling life, providing order, enabling peace. And we can contrast this, I think, with a

rival image, also present in the ancient world, still very present to us, of what we might call sovereign power as against pastoral power. So sovereign power, we can think here of the image of a military commander or even a judge sitting in judgments, about to offer, whether someone should live or die.

Sovereign power decides between death and life between who dies and who lives. An examples is do we go to war it's a life and death matter that sovereign power exercises crime and punishment should we execute this prisoner or not or should we send them away or not and this depends on a command and control forms of top-down unilateral power so think of military commander command and obedience structures of; this is very different from pastoral power. Pastoral power enables life in the midst of death, cultivating and protecting life in a world of scarcity and death. And it's about, hence the wheat chief kind of image of the sceptre, it's about enabling fertility rather than barrenness. It's about enabling peace rather than conflict. It orders not through sending the army in or sending the bailiffs in, it orders through administration, management and government.

This kind classic distinction gets taken up in early modern political theory between the state as a scene of sovereign power and government as a scene of kind of almost pastoral power. You know Michel Foucault's work, kind of post-structuralist thinking, you'll kind of get that distinction. Anyway, but the kind of key here in contrast to life and death is a good example of this, how would we ensure a good harvest? How do we ensure, how do we bring water through an irrigation system or an aqueduct?

These are sites and examples of pastoral power in operation. An image is a shepherd caring for a sheep rather than a warrior king commanding and controlling an army. And you just had a Good Shepherd Sunday. I'm sure you probably many of you read this or preached on Psalm 23. But that's an image of pastoral power in action. I'm not going to read it through. You're all very familiar with it.

But if we think about what is happening, we have this scene of death is set before. So all the imagery, it's a political psalm about a ruler enabling through pastoral, the exercise of pastoral power, life in a place of scarcity under threat of death amidst enemies, but enabling order, enabling flourishing, enabling blossoming of life under those conditions.

God is envisioned in both ways. If Andy were here, I'm sure he would kind of have my guts for garters in my kind of mangling of the warrior. He did his PhD on the of warrior king imagery in second temple Judaism. But anyway, I'm going to go for it as a kind of ethicist masquerading, doing scriptural stuff. But we have God imaged as both a warrior king and a shepherd ruler. And so here is a passage from Isaiah 40:

'See the Lord God comes with might and his arm,' this kind of picture of a warrior, 'arm rules for him and his reward is with him and his recompense is before him', and then there's a switch: 'and he will feed his flock like a sheep and he will gather the lambs in his arms.'

This gentle pastoral care and carry them in his bosom and gently lead the mother sheep. You see obviously famously in Revelation 19 we have is making a distinction between sovereign power and pastoral power. Sovereign power, bad. Pastoral power, good. That would be a kind of false dichotomy. They're both fallen. They both can lead to domination. They both have good things to them, and they both had bad things to them.

So I just kind of want to run through that. At its best, sovereign power restrains evil and executes justice, the figuratively represented in the figure of the sword. And then pastoral power enables creation to be fruitful, bringing blessing and shalom to people and land and symbol is the sceptre or crook and obviously taken up in medieval political theology with the

mitre and the crown or the sword and the crook as kind of rival symbols there's a kind of split there through the medieval period between these two forms.

Sovereign power though at its worst dominates through arbitrary physical oppression, think torture, death squads, imprisonment, inquisition, crusades.

And at worst, pastoral power also has its kind of dark fallen side. In the name of ending suffering or providing prosperity, security, or health, pastoral power dominates through systems of governance and ideological control. So we can contrast old castoral systems or imprisonment systems where you might be put in the stocks or whipped or hung, drawn and quartered. That's the exercise of sovereign power over the body contrast with modern prison systems which you're kind of put in Bentham's panopticon, you're put in a kind of prison, you're monitored, you're surveilled, you're not kind of necessarily physically harmed but you kind of take on the identity of a prisoner and your whole way of being in the world is controlled through systems of governance and control, through administration. And these work via institutional mechanisms, thinks bureaucracy, and also relationally at the work of consciousness.

So think about something like consumerism. Consumerism is a picture, a vision which organises our life and it's a vision of prosperity, abundance, the good life which we then, and that's inhabited through things like the shopping centre or online, Instagram is basically a kind of glorified shopping centre, and we're kind of inducted and inhabit in our own being, in our own thought structures that this is somehow the good life and so we desire, it's a structure of desire that we kindof think and pursue through our lives. That's a, I would say that's a negative version of pastoral power that we're all living inside of.

And in pastoral power, the means of life become the means of control and domination as against sovereign power, where the means of death are the way to control and dominate. And it's obviously far easier to spot forms of sovereign power. Controversially, you might see that in Israel-Gaza, situations of war or in Ukraine, rather violent sovereign power being asserted over a population, it's much harder to spot kind of abusive and toxic forms of pastoral power.

Just very quickly, just five minutes, turn to your neighbour, think about what do you make of this distinction between sovereign and pastoral power? And then what questions does it raise for you about how you understand the nature of power and the nature of rule or leadership? Now, I'm not going to have time to take questions. I just kind of want you to kind of just quickly brainstorm that together to give you just a moment of processing before I move on. So just give you a couple of minutes, turn to your neighbour, discuss those two questions.

So hopefully that gives you a little bit of kind of sense, I'm aware these kind of big things to discuss, these are questions to ponder and I'm happy to kind of send out the PowerPoint to 'y'all', as I've learned to say it in North Carolina, kind of if that's helpful.

So I want to switch now to thinking about the kind of scriptural portrayals of pastoral care and shepherding as a form of rule and crucial here in contrast to those other ancient imaginings of good rule around shepherding. What we have is Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were herders, not kings or warriors or priests. Those who God first called and covenanted with were called to be shepherds. It's a point, forgive the slightly anthropocentric language that Augustine uses, but so Augustine picks up in his classic text, The City of God. God did not wish the rational beings made in his own image to have dominion over anybody, rational creatures,

not man over man, but man over beasts. Hence the first just men were set up as shepherds of flocks rather than kings of men.

So this has been a very corny pick. can read Anselm. There's lots of kind of early theologians meditating on this theme. And crucial things to notice here is that those first called were not rulers over territory. They didn't have an empire as in Egypt, Samaria, or Babylon. They were nomadic shepherds. So they were not secured in their relationship with God through territory or through controlling a territory and their mode of rule was by means of virtue not by and the kind of character and quality of their relationship with God through covenant not through military victory, increase of land or even providing order and stability. They themselves were subject to a radical contingency in how they related to each other and to God that being on the move of not being able to secure themselves through controlling a territory or through military force or those other strategies of control often rulers resort to.

And the other thing to notice about this is in stark contrast, we have many ancient imagery, imaging of rulers, ancient rulers in the hunt. And this is a kind of theme that runs through literature. But the place of the ruler signifying their rule through hunting, game, have in Gilgamesh, others.

And that's not the image we're given of those first covenanted with. It's an image of shepherds in a shared household. I would say it's a human, non-human household. It's a picture of environmental justice of a shared household, not predation and domination over the animals, but a shared household where there's a mutual dependence. Each needs the other to survive under nomadic conditions and is kind of interdependent. And then we have the kind of classic kind of paradigm, enigmatic portrayal of shepherding, scriptural shepherding rule in Moses. And Moses crucially learns how to rule first in Pharaoh's household. And his first act of trying to exercise rule is to kill someone. He exercises rule through sovereign power.

And he has to go away to Jethro to unlearn the ways of Egypt and relearn like all those first, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, learn rule through shepherding flocks.

And so there's a process of unlearning and relearning what good rule. And then when he returns to Egypt, we have this classic conflict. The ten plagues, what are they? They're a conflict over pastoral power. Who has pastoral power? Pharaoh wants those enslaved to be a disparate, disaggregated, atomised population who can easily be controlled to serve his interests or the elite interests of his day. Moses sees them and sees not people to enslave and exploit and extract their labour. He sees the potential of a people, the people of God who must be cultivated into a people who can then exercise their freedom in relation to each other and with God through covenantal relations.

And so this through running through that early stages of exodus is who holds pastoral power, who can bring life through controlling the water, through controlling the air, through who enables life and who actually can't. And is there real life for these people or are they just going to be a subject population subject to the rule of sovereign rule of others. And crucially, Moses is not a king. He constantly refuses kingship. He always remains in the role of a shepherd like Jesus in John 6 15. God is sovereign. God exercise sovereign power. Moses exercises pastoral power. And we can see here, I think it's a kind of manifesto or charter for what shepherding and what good rule involves.

So it involves provisioning, think manna, water, quail, enabling life in the midst of death, desert, barrenness. It involved bringing healing. Think about the bronze serpent incident. It involves guiding through the desert to the promised land, governing, establishing religious moral order and conditions of social peace through laws and institutional structures, temple structures, laws, etc. Representing them before God and as a for

their well-being to God, teaching and then forming a people from a population or crowd. And so all of these things combine to take a crowd of fugitive slaves and form them into a covenant and covenantal people. And that is our job. That's tall order, but that's basically what we should be doing. That's our role. That's our call to be pastoral leadership and form a covenantal people together who can, with and for each other and with and for God.

Moving on from that, we have the biblical portrayal of David. Now, you could read figuratively the conflict between David and Goliath as a kind of conflict between pastoral power and sovereign power. We could kind of meditate on that. Or you can actually read the story that David is a kind of tragic move from pastoral power to the recording about Bathsheba and kind of military commander model. Perhaps more kind of problematic, but it's an interesting reading one can give.

The key thing to note, though, in relation to David is how the figure of David and it's directly echoed in the coronation service we just had of how David becomes this kind of symbol, this paradigm of the integration of in sacral kingship of the warrior king and the shepherd of kind of what a righteous integration of those two things. Very key in medieval political theology that's kind of taken up. Yeah.

So that's the kind of ideal figure. And then obviously we have the prophets who are giving a very stringent critique based of bad rule, of tyranny, of oppressive, of dominatory rule, based on the failure to be a true shepherd. But where, crucially, the abuse of the shepherding role fundamentally distorts and corrupts and advises, abuses the people in their care. this turns, it's not, they don't suddenly become a different kind of ruler. It's using the very means of shepherding to be a means of abuse. And that's the kind of problem with it. So rulers who exploit the sheep for selfish gain, who become an oppressed and abused population, in a sense, they return

to the condition of being in Egypt, scattered, alienated from each other, and therefore much more easy to control. I think that's what we see in our own day, the kind of destruction of places where people can gather and have independent assembly and so we all are kind of left as a mass unable to act with them for each other and therefore much more easily controlled because we're an atomised and disaggregated and alienated individuals from each other. If you want a kind of very powerful meditation on that read Hannah Arendt's The Origins of Totalitarianism is kind of roots totalitarianism that prior move of atomisation.

But so rulers exploit the sheep for selfish gain they scatter not gathering the sheep, dissolving the people, so they cease to be the people of God, and they mislead and misdirect, leading the flock into idolatry. And then they do this through generating false visions of what brings life, rather than depending on God. The prophets point to how their leaders and priests are offering self-destructive ways of securing themselves in the face of scarcity and order, so rather than living into covenantal faithfulness with God, they're seeking alliances with Egypt or a Samaria or all sorts of other ways or idols and they're offering their children up to false gods and things. these are all ways in which the prophets point to what promises to bring flourishing is really bringing death. That is the problem of idolatry. It's a false vision of flourishing that offers life and actually produces yet more death.

And then they rather than wise judgment, they secures, guides and provides the leaders and pre-sac foolishly so as to bring catastrophe on the people leading eventually to invasion and exile. And they bring desolation, barrenness and death to the land. And you see my wonderful colleague, Norman Wirzba and others at Duke, did great studies on the kind of the agency of the land, of the trees, of the flora and fauna of Israel as agents within the covenant and the land itself mourns when the people are led badly. So there's an environmental justice dimension to all of this going

arcing back to that shared vision of covenantal household of human and non-humans together.

And we have all this articulated very, very explicitly with this wolf image, sheeps becoming wolves, Ezekiel 22. Its officials within it are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain. Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, thus says the Lord when the Lord has not spoken. And he kind of goes on in that is a very serious and frequent pathology of pastoral leadership. It's when shepherds become wolves who prey on their congregation, whether that's, we've obviously lived through various sexual abuse scandals or the kind of Mark Driscoll-esque toxic masculinity forms of abuse or embezzlement or the end of lists, you know, that I'm sure we're all drearily familiar with of the ways in which the role of pastoral legion kind of leads to an abusive of congregation, and shepherds become wolves.

But I think there's another pathology at work which we need to kind of name, which is that shepherds become sacrificial lambs leading to burnout or creating dependency among the people on the shepherd. And this leads us think to kind of the role of Jesus as the building on Moses as the paradigmatic shepherd. how do we understand Jesus I think and ways in which certain ways of understanding Jesus' pastoral leadership kind of leads to that second pathology.

And what we see with Jesus is this move from representation, as in the figure of Moses, to identification. Jesus is a full participant, hence the importance of the incarnation, in the life of the people. He's not born into a grand household, he's born as a kind of carpenter. He's not set over the people, but leadership is of, by and with the people.

And that's Jesus emerges from the people and exercises leadership with and for them. then, and so as we see in Revelation, the lamb becomes the

shepherd in this classic paradoxical move. And to think theologically, I think often is to think paradoxically and think at the site of paradox, three in one, fully God, fully human, et cetera. So the lamb of God or Agnus Dei is envisioned, the lamb itself is envisioned as a shepherd doing all the things that Moses did, protecting, providing water, shelter, guiding to what brings life, healing, ending their suffering, judging between sheep and goats. And so that classic phrase, the past the smells of the sheep, the cure of souls entails this deep kind of immersion in the life of the sheep. You know what is bringing fear. You know where the sites of suffering, where the wounds are, but also where the scenes of wonder are, what people are seeking to praise or what people cherish, what people love but they fear is being desecrated. One knows the life of the people and rules out of and leads out of that place rather than kind of claiming a representation outside of relationship.

So I think we need to reframe suffering servant, obviously that classic Isaiahan image. I think for us we need kind of let Jesus be Jesus and we as those who are bearing witness to Jesus and helping name the work of Christ and the Spirit among these people in this place at this time, are about kind of pastoral passion or a kind of pathic.

And as we were hearing this morning, that can be costly. It's difficult. It's hard work. And, you know, the cranky elder who only ever seems to have a critical word for you, but somehow also is really gifted at getting kind of other folk of similar age to Bible study and has a tender heart. But boy, do they try you. You know, that's very hard. All right, from the kind of very real suffering, the that you see as the rights of impoverishment, structural injustice and all the rest of it. It's doing this kind of work with, from and for people is costly, it's difficult, it's a struggle, spiritual struggle, moral struggle, makes demands on us.

But it's that move not to crucifixion but to communion. How are we cultivating the possibilities and conditions that enable fellowship, enable the people to assemble, enable that sense of connection and that experience of grace?

So what we see here is not kind of an altruism. It's how people often talk about relations or you're doing someone a good turn. It's not a kind noblesse oblige, which has driven a lot of Anglican social and pastoral care. So I've got more privilege and therefore just give it to others. And it's not certainly, as one encounters, I think still to this day, a kind of stoic, magnanimous man. And I use the gendered language advisedly. It normally is a very male position.

So I don't suffer, I'm not emotionally involved, or I stand above and I'm kind of impassive to what I see. I'm just the leader. It's none of those things. It's this passionate accompaniment and fellowship and the struggle and the difficulty is born out of precisely because the Cure of Souls involves you in the life of the people you're caring for and seeking to cultivate that sense of shared covenantal relationship with.

And so think we can kind of compare and contrast here the shepherd as political ruler with the following. The shepherd is a political ruler recovering the political dimensions of being of past relationship. It's not the philosopher or theologian espousing ideas, much as I'd love it to be. It's not the guru inspiring through mystical insight. It's not the CEO operating through cost benefit analysis.

I can't tell you how many people I've trained who will then go off to business school, this in the States, to kind of think that that's the true model of Christian leadership. It's not the manager administering through procedures and programmes. It's not the technocratic expert treating people as data points and statistics. I've sat through a lot of kind of church

growth strategy meetings. And it's not the celebrity leading through personal charisma and status, prosperity preachers, and I'm sorry, Barno, but it's not you either.

And it's not a counsellor or therapist either, or a social worker or an activist. We're pastoral leaders. That's a different quality and vision of leadership than these other things. And these other things seem very legible to us and can feel more viscerally kind of connecting. And we feel like we can really do something through these kinds of mechanisms. But my challenge to us is to really kind of enter into this vision of your core.

All is to a political office and that political office is to form a people, the people of God, and that people is a political community. A lot of the language we have in the New Testament is of think about Ecclesia. That was the Ecclesia, the gathered assemble of the ancient city-sake, think Athens or Sparta, who would then gather to deliberate about the common good of the city. That was the language chosen to name the church liturgies, from liturgies, from the people who do public service to build up the life of the city, presbyter, all of our language is political language. So how did the writers of the New Testament envision, it wasn't just by accident that they chose political terms to envision this new kind of relationship between God and the people of God.

They chose political language for a reason. And our call as pastoral leaders is to cultivate a people, the people of God, as a covenantal people who can act with and for each other, love God and love their neighbour. So I want to kind of give us, we've got a bit of time, give five minutes or so just to think about this question. How does understanding your calling as a political one of forming a people, the people of God in a particular place and time, reshape your understanding of ministry?

So take about five minutes or so just discuss that. We might have time for a couple of questions just at the end. So take some time to discuss that now.

We've probably got time for one or two questions, if anyone had an immediate question.

Question 1

Why have you used the word your calling is a political one and not your calling is a pastoral one? I know you're academic and I just love this but I was sort of thinking ... You're using the word political in a way that I may not use it myself.

Luke

Yes, yes, very good. Now the full answer to that comes this afternoon at four o'clock. But I'll give you the mini answer.

So politics, just to give you a quick, quick answer to that. So I am deliberately kind of pushing us to think kind of slightly outside of our established language to help us kind of, you know, play with your synapses a bit and think, OK, you know, parcel office involves power, involves conflict, involves kind of kind of all these different things, which we often see as a problem or a failure. And conflict's not failure. See acts, it's just part of being church. So the question is, how do we engage and how do we think about our shared life together as an ecclesia, as an assembly?

And I think the language of politics is, and when I say politics, most people think, you know, rage tweets, boring policy debates, what takes place in parliament or whatever. And I don't mean that. I'm trying to recover a very ancient vision of politics. And politics, really, you've got four choices when you meet someone you dislike, disagree with, find difficult, ideologically contemptible, whatever it is. And those four choices, you are going to kill them.

It's not a joke, like a of human history and fairly a lot of church history, that's the answer. A lot of contemporary politics, it's kind of the other way around. You can either create a system to coerce them into doing what you want so you don't have to talk to them, don't have to form a shared life with them, or you can make life so difficult that you cause them to flee, or you can do politics. You can form some kind of common life amid conflicting visions of the good, some people are Muslims, some people are Christians, some people are whatever, and asymmetries of power, some people are stronger, some are weaker, some are more intelligent, some have more money, without killing, coercing or causing to flee.

And that's really, I can teach you a very sophisticated, complicated course in political philosophy, but when you boil it down, that's what it is. You've only got four choices, kill, coerce, cause to flee or politics. I think Christians, for theological reasons and frankly pragmatic ones, should be pretty invested in the fourth option. Sadly, out not a lot of other people agree with me.

So, yeah. think that's when I say politics, I mean, and seems to be that so we need to reimagine pastoral leadership as political leadership and political leadership as pastoral leadership. It's about cultivating the conditions of forms of shared life amid conflicting visions of the good and asymmetries of power so that actually we can cultivate forms of shared flourishing. And I think that is the vision. That's a very ancient vision. That's what the shepherding image was all about. I think we've lost that vision. We kind of think of leadership in technocratic terms or managerial terms or whatever it is.

And actually it's about shepherding, is a political office to enable life amongst the people in this place at this time, which would be highly contextual, determine who is to be- And crucially, the people are the

program. And all that- I think one of our big temptations, we all think, I got this program. It's to be in a church. The priest was always online and thinking, oh, we're going to do this program and this program. then here's the program. And I tried to kind of force the people into it. And we often try and put program before people. And the real task of pastoral leadership is how do you work with what God through the Christ and the spirit is doing amongst these people in the place and enable that people to each discover their gifts, charisms, so that that sense in which each can exercise their agency together in a leader full community and enable that form of shared life to emerge.

And our job is to kind of cultivate that and curate that and enable that and therefore bless what the work of, and is central to the work of being a priest, bless what God is doing amongst these people in the place, rather than try and force them into some kind of program which we think would be a blessing to them. But one more.

Question 2

How would you go about cultivating that community in a church that is time poor, money rich, and is a very gathered and disciplined next Sunday community?

Luke

That's a very tough question. And I've done been involved in exactly that kind of ministry. And I think it's a very hard, it's but. think it's the same, it's- kind of engaging in one-to-ones, forming relationship building, finding what people are passionate about, identifying leaders and who themselves have the relational connections, finding modes of assembly and gathering that actually people have got energy for and then building out of that.

Often I think in those settings and that the kind of bad example I gave was exactly a setting like that. Because the priest in response to that thought, oh, I've got to set up some exciting programme, and then I can kind of sell it in a kind consumerist mode to these busy kind of middle class people and I'm like, no no no, what are the people- what is God doing amongst his people? And then then beginning from there and letting the program emerge from there.

But we've got to make a move. Yeah, I've got to rush, do catch me in the corridor over lunch or come to the workshop really a delight and honour.

And just quick word: God has called you, he has anointed you, the spirit as it works through you and God has given you authority to do God's work among God's people and really bless you for it and you are doing a work of great beauty.

My favourite line from is from Irenaeus of Lyons, who said 'The beauty of God, the glory of God is a human being fully alive', and you are each enabled and gifted to do that work, and really thank you.