

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit**  
**SERVICE AT HOME:**  
**Sunday 14 January 2024**  
Prepared by Graham Hepburn

Welcome to this week's service at home, looking at the calling of Samuel, and the calling of two of the disciples of Jesus.

*You may like to have a visual focus of something representing your Christian calling - perhaps a Bible, or something representing an organisation you support because of your Christian faith, or perhaps a membership ticket - to focus your thoughts on during this act of worship.*

**Listen, read, pray or sing along**

We begin with the hymn 'I, the Lord of sea and sky (StF 663)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zr9SMm1gll>

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard my people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
my hand will save.  
I, who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard you calling in the night.  
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.  
I will hold your people in my heart.*

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my people's pain.  
I have wept for love of them.  
They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak my words to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. ....*

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will send the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them.  
My hand will save.  
Finest bread I will provide  
till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give my life to them.  
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am, Lord. ....*

*Daniel L Schutte, (b 1947)  
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Permission.*

Our opening prayer, and the prayers of intercession, are taken from Day 14 of 'Hidden Treasures', the 2023/24 Methodist Prayer Handbook.

**Prayer of Approach,**

Enfold me in the stillness of being,  
As you unfurl my true self  
To the ocean light of perfect love.

It is enough to wait,  
In a wordless silence, that grows thick  
With the expectancy of you.

I pour out myself,  
To the passing tide of goodness,  
Lost in the vast ocean of love.

I am not afraid to to be held and possessed,  
By the love that spoke me into being,  
And gently calls me back  
To the place of true rest.

A place both familiar and strange,  
The heart of myself, in the heart of Christ,  
Caught in the living flame of holy love.

**Amen.**

*(page 41, Julian Purse, District Chair, East Anglia)*

**The Lord's Prayer.**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for ever.  
**Amen.**

### **Bible Readings,**

#### **The Lord calls Samuel, 1 Sam 3 v 1-10**

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions.

One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, 'Here I am.' And he ran to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.' But Eli said, 'I did not call; go back and lie down.' So he went and lay down.

Again the Lord called, 'Samuel!' And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.'

'My son,' Eli said, 'I did not call; go back and lie down.'

Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

A third time the Lord called, 'Samuel!' And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am; you called me.'

Then Eli realised that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, 'Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!'

Then Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'

### **John 1 v43-51,**

#### **John's disciples follow Jesus**

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, 'Look, the Lamb of God!'

When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning round, Jesus saw them following and asked, 'What do you want?'

They said, 'Rabbi' (which means 'Teacher'), 'where are you staying?'

'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.'

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephass' (which, when translated, is Peter<sup>[a]</sup>).

#### **Footnote**

[a] *Cephas* (Aramaic) and *Peter* (Greek) both mean *rock*.

#### **Reflection**

Reverend Angela Berners-Wilson delivered the Christmas Meditation - 'Hope For Heavenly Peace' - on Christmas Day 2023 on BBC Radio 4. If you want to listen, it is on BBC Sounds for the next week or so. Writing in the Christmas Radio Times, Angela recalls how in 1994 the ordination of female priests was a controversial issue in the Anglican Church. She was one of thirty two women at the first Ordination of Women in the Church of England. As they were ordained alphabetically, she writes that she was the first by about two seconds! In her retirement, Angela has taken on a new role as a spiritual tour guide and this Christmas she was away in Austria on the Eve of Christmas Eve, in Obendorf, the village where the much loved carol, Silent Night, was first performed on Christmas Eve 1818. Angela writes, that she always believed that when God calls someone

to serve, it has nothing to do with their gender. She joined the movement for the ordination of women in 1978. When the legislation was finally passed, Angela felt it was a wonderful occasion, and that all the prayers really had been answered. Angela was also present in 2015 at York Minster in 2015 when Libby Lane was the first Anglican Bishop consecrated, as Bishop of Stockport.

What an outrage that people were denied for so many years from pursuing the calling in which God was directing them, due to irrelevant issues like their sex. To have actually heard the voice of God speaking to them and then to find that the prejudice of others prevented that.

Our lessons today are two stories of people being called clearly by God. The young Samuel heard the call but did not realise it was God calling him. Thank God for the wise old man Eli, who at the second time of asking realised that the voice that was talking to Samuel was the voice of God.

Thinking of this story, it reminds us we need to listen to be able to hear the voice of God, and we often need someone like Eli, a father or mother in the faith, to explain what it is and how we need to respond.

John the Baptist played a similar role in the lives of his disciples to the role that Eli played in the life of Samuel. John knew that he was only the forerunner, that he himself was not the messiah. So having called his disciples to follow and learn from him, John plays this wonderful role of directing his disciples away from following him, so that they can follow their true calling, as disciples of Jesus. A salutary and worthwhile reminder to us that whoever we receive the message from, and however much we respect or admire them, we should always remember that first and foremost we are disciples of Jesus.

### **Listen, read, pray or sing along**

We sing the hymn about the calling of Samuel, 'Hushed was the evening hymn, the temple courts were dark,' (Hymns and Psalms 523)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fP7j8EfpsY>

Hushed was the evening hymn,  
the temple courts were dark;  
the lamp was burning dim  
before the sacred ark;  
when suddenly a voice divine  
rang through the silence of the shrine.

The old man, meek and mild,  
the priest of Israel, slept;  
his watch the temple child,  
the little Levite, kept;  
and what from Eli's sense was sealed  
the Lord to Hannah's son revealed.

O give me Samuel's ear,  
the open ear, O Lord,  
alive and quick to hear  
each whisper of thy word,  
like him to answer at thy call,  
and to obey thee first of all.

O give me Samuel's heart,  
a lowly heart, that waits  
where in thy house thou art,  
or watches at thy gates;  
by day and night, a heart that still  
moves at the breathing of thy will.

O give me Samuel's mind,  
a sweet unmurmuring faith,  
obedient and resigned  
to thee in life and death,  
that I may read with child like eyes  
truths that are hidden from the wise.  
*James Drummond Burns (1823-1864)*

### **Prayers of intercession - On Day 14 we are asked to Pray for Christians in North and Central America and the East Anglia District in the U.K.**

Almighty God, help us to see the hidden treasures in our communities. People who quietly go about doing wonderful things that make a difference, yet not seeking the limelight. Our churches are made up of individuals who tirelessly try to show your love to others, and so bring hope and help to people in need. Often these 'hidden treasures'

are the catalyst behind a new project that encourages others to try something different. We bring them to you in gratitude for their selfless giving of themselves, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

**Amen.**

*(Aileen Fox, local preacher, Central Norfolk Circuit, page 41)*

We remember the mission of

- The United Church of Canada
- The United Methodist Church in the USA
- For the Methodist Churches in Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and El Salvador
- For the East Anglia District's partnership with West Harare District in Zimbabwe
- For the growing partnership between the East Anglia, Bedfordshire, Essex and Hertfordshire Districts.

**Lord, in your mercy, Hear our Prayer.  
Amen.**

**Listen, read, pray or sing along**

Our final hymn is 'Called by Christ to be disciples' (StF 660)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zz9qiZkaluo>

Called by Christ to be disciples  
every day in every place,  
we are not to hide as hermits  
but to spread the way of grace;  
citizens of heaven's kingdom,  
though the world is where we live,  
as we serve a faithful Master,  
faithful service may we give,

Richly varied are our pathways,  
many callings we pursue;  
may we use our gifts and talents  
always, Lord, to honour you;  
so in government or commerce,  
college, hospice, farm or home,  
whether volunteers or earning,  
may we see our kingdom come.

Hard decisions may confront us,  
urging us to compromise;  
still obedience is our watchword -  
make us strong and make us wise!

Secular is turned to sacred,  
made our precious offering,  
as our daily lives are fashioned  
in submission to our King.

*Martin Leckebusch (b 1962)*

**Sending and blessing**

You call us  
You call us, God  
You call us out of a harsh land into freedom  
You call us out of despair and apathy  
You call us into a vision of another way of living

You call us Jesus  
You call us into hope and friendship  
You call us to build your kingdom  
You call us to break bread with you and with the hungry

You call us, Holy Spirit  
You call us to transformation  
You call us to shine into the darkness  
You call us us into the world to change it.

Give us the strength to follow where you call.

**Amen**

*(From Dignity, Agency, Power, Prayer by Marie Paterson, Published 2022 by Wild Goose Publications)*

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