

SUNDAY January 18, 2026 “Called to be Faithful and to Serve”

I Samuel 3:1-10 I Corinthians 1:1-9 John 1: 29-42

Cell phone check- how many of you have checked your cell phone in the last 20 minutes for whatever might be new? How often do you check your cell phone for missed calls, texts or do what is now known as doom scrolling? Cell phones have been banned in schools as this aims to reduce distractions, improve focus, and boost student engagement by keeping devices silenced and out of sight during class. Policies on this banning vary from total bans (Quebec) to restrictions (Ontario, Michigan, New Jersey), yet often allow exceptions for health, special needs, or education. This banning of cell phones is now also addressing concerns about addiction, mental health, and learning outcomes. But we are also knowing that enforcement remains a challenge. Yet our youth are almost as addicted to their phones as several adults who seem to have to keep looking up whatever has been posted to the internet. And why is this? Because they are searching for someone- to call them, talk to them, communicate with them and to find out what they are about. Yet what happens if those calls don't come? What if there is no text to tell you the information you need right away? What do you do? YOU text right away.. not call but text. But isn't it great that God doesn't text us? HE still calls us- by name, but only when we are willing to open our ears, hearts, and minds to do so. GOD's Spirit calls to us and we are to listen to this call. But the reality is that if one is so distracted by the matters of this time and age, God still calls, yes few are paying attention and ready to answer.

IT doesn't matter how old one is, either. God still calls for God has a purpose for each of us. This is the story reflected in our Old Testament reading of the young boy Samuel. Samuel is the son of Hannah and Elkanah who had pleaded with God for a child. She promised that if god gave her a child, that she would see to it that the child would serve God. Samuel is born and the time comes that he goes to stay with Eli the priest. It is during the night that Samuel heard a voice calling to him. But he thinks it is Eli and so he goes to his room and asks what eli

wants. After the third time this occurs, Eli realizes that it is God's voice that Samuel hears and when God calls again, he says, "Here I am."

It is difficult for us as people- whose minds are often cluttered and distracted to distinguish between God's voice and our self-interest. Samuel seeks help from Eli and then he hears God's words of warning and wisdom for Eli's family and their future. But it is in this act of stating, "Here I am," that Samuel and God connect. This is God's Spirit speaking to Samuel and he responds to this call.

I wonder how many of us hear or feel God's Spirit. There are moments that we have shared in recent weeks when God was present but we did not hear or want to hear. There are moments when also we know God is here as the Spirit touches our hearts and often our tears may come. God calls us all, but do we listen?

What often happens is that our ideas lead our lives instead of what God wants us to do and see. It is God who must wait until the scrolling in our minds stops, or when we realize that we need direction and help for discerning life's purpose. It does not matter your age as Your life changes with every day challenges and choices that you make. But are we willing to answer?

Last week we reaffirmed our faith sharing in the words of John Wesley who wrote the Covenant in 1747 as part of the Methodist tradition (one of the 3 founding denominations of the UCC). This covenant helps us to reaffirm baptismal vows and commitment to Christ and emphasized that we belong to God. The statement focuses on grace and dedication of oneself for the year ahead. It also reminds us that we have a role to play in creation and that we are God's.

The Covenant

...I give myself completely to you, God. Assign me to my place in your creation. Let me suffer for you. Give me the work you would have me do. Give me many tasks or have me step aside while you call others. Put me forward or humble me. Give me riches or let me live in poverty.

I freely give all that I am and all that I have to you. And now, holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. May this covenant made on earth continue for all eternity. Amen.

As we have shared in renewing our faith with “A New Creed” we also felt the waters of baptism along with the Collier family. The water reminds us that we were each called into fellowship with Jesus. Just as Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. We do not lack any spiritual gift as we wait for Jesus. God is faithful and will guide us in this life because we are made one with Jesus. Not only because He too was baptized but because we have faith and believe that Jesus will guide our lives. But we must be willing to serve. We must not wait for a text or a phone call, but open our hearts to possibilities or sharing of oneself when others are in need- whatever those needs are. Sharing of oneself so that others may see GOD’s Spirit in us and working through us. This is what it means to be called.

Our reading from John 1 is a pivotal passage where the day after Jesus is baptised, John looks up from where he is near the river and he sees Jesus coming to him. John the Baptist speaks loudly and identifies Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." He tells the story from his viewpoint of what happened when Jesus was baptized. He tells anyone listening that he saw the Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove. And he says, “This is the Son of God. The next day John was with two of his followers, and he sees Jesus again. HE exclaims to those with him,” Here is the Lamb of God.” These two men ask where Jesus is going. And Jesus invites them to "Come and see," leading Andrew to find his brother Simon (Peter). This marks the beginning of the call of Jesus’ disciples and the start of Jesus’ teaching about who he is. John the Baptist points the people to Jesus as the Lamb o God who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and calls him the Son of God. And Jesus says, Come and see.-- thus opening up discussions between Andrew and Simon Peter and Jesus about what is to come!

Today’s reaffirmation and baptisms marks a beginning of welcoming people into God’s family. As a minister, it is in these moments when waters of baptism flow- tears run down the faces of parents and children and those who witness these sacred moments- that matter the most. God’s Spirit is working-- in the lives of children who have heard the message; in the lives of adults who reach out and speak kindly of one another; who are transparent in their

responsibilities and hopes. And in the life of this community of faith, it is an assurance that God in Jesus Christ is here. We are living in the Light of Christ because there is hope as we renew our faith and as we seek to know God in new ways as His Spirit leads.

And this reminds each of us that we are called-- by God and we belong to him.

Remember our Fall theme-- Belong Believe Be a Bridge-- we believe and so we share our faith with others as they respond to Christ's call. This is our faith. This is our hope. Thanks be to God.

PRAYER

God of grace we praise you this day that you have spoken to us as individuals and as a family in faith. Bless each of us as we strive to answer your call to serve you this day and in the days ahead. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.