

**ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**SOMERSET, PA**                      **SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2021**

*No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here!*

Dear St. Paul's Family,

*"As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground" (1 Samuel 3:19)*

What does a leader look like? What do you expect from a leader? I doubt most of us would look toward a child for leadership, but that's exactly what happens in today's text from 1 Samuel. The Prophet Samuel's call story begins before his birth. His mother Hannah had been unable to have any children and was considered barren. In the ancient world she was considered to be to be cursed, and out of her pain spent years praying for God to bless her with a child, which is exactly what God did. Hannah's response to this gift was to give her first born son back to God. She presented him to the high priest Eli at the holy site at Shiloh.

Samuel's story gets more intriguing in that God spoke to him while he was still a young boy. The message that God wanted him to tell was not the type of work that most of us would entrust to a child, but God saw fit to give him an important message to deliver to his mentor, Eli. The message that Samuel was called to proclaim was one of judgement upon Eli, his sons, and all of the generations that would come after him. Eli's sons had misused their positions of authority as priests to get rich and exploit those who relied on them to do God's work. Eli, for his part, failed to discipline them, so God decided to revoke the divine mandate that made Eli and his offspring priests of Israel.

There are a lot of things we can learn from this ancient story. Two important takeaways are that God does care about those who are called to lead his people, and that any of us may be called on by God to lead. Samuel's young age did not disqualify him from holy work. The arrival of Jesus further distributes the divine work that will need to be done in the world. Disciples from all ages and walks of life will answer Jesus' call to "Come and follow me." They will be entrusted to the important leadership work of building God's peaceable kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. This work continues to this day. Each of us are called to lead in our own way. May we follow the examples of Samuel and the first disciples as we commit ourselves to words and actions that show others God's love and peace.

May God bless us on this journey of discovery and faith! Please don't hesitate to call me if you are in need of pastoral care. My number is: 814-279-5504.

*Blessings,  
Pastor Matt*

Here are our worship opportunities for the week ahead:

**Sunday, January 17th-Sunday, January 31st:** **No in-person** service. Worship on telephone or online platforms.

*While in-person services are suspended, you are invited to attend self-guided prayer and meditation in the Sanctuary this week from 9:00am-11:00am. Pastor Matt will be on hand if you need to pray or talk with him.*

***Worship by Telephone.*** We are very pleased to announce a toll-free worship option. The toll-free conference call number is 1-844-855-4444. The automated service will then ask for your access code or PIN. Please enter: 512013#. The audio service will begin at 11:00am.

***Online.*** This Sunday's Service streaming live on the church's Facebook page and YouTube at 9:30am. You can find the church's YouTube channel by searching for St. Paul's UCC Somerset in the YouTube search bar. The streamed service will be available on demand on both digital platforms following its streaming at 9:30am. (This service is pre-recorded but is streamed as live for the online community.)

## **Worship Resources for this Week**

***Sunday, January 17th***

***The Second Sunday after Epiphany***

The Call to Worship: *Rev. Thom Shuman*

In the silence of a lonely night, in the songs children sing in the morning, God calls to us.

We are here, God who is always with us, listening for your words of life and love.

When we would decide to go it alone, when we think no good can be found anywhere, Jesus calls to us.

We are here, Friend who knows our longings, ready to come and see where you would lead us.

When we think we have license to do whatever we want, when we are convinced we need no map, the Spirit calls to us.

We are here, Peace we are longing for, so that we might help others find the way to life.

Opening Hymn: "The Summons" Sheet music resource

The Greeting

Call to Confession *Rev. J. Matt Deal*

Sometimes we are foolish enough to think that we can hide from God or ignore God's presence.

Hear us now, O Holy One, as we open ourselves up to you, confessing our sins.

Prayer of Confession *Rev. J. Matt Deal*

Almighty God, we admit that our sins take various forms. Through our pride, our timidity, or simply our indifference, we have condoned words and actions that have led to violence, division, and cynicism. The challenges we face individually and as a community often invoke feelings of anger, confusion, or helplessness in us. Our minds spin and our blood pressure rises. Loving God, anoint us with your Holy Spirit so that we have righteous convictions to courageously bear the truth of your

presence and love in the world. Empower us to go about the holy work of mending the fraying fabric of society, so that we may complete Christ's reconciling work. In his name we pray, amen.

*A time for personal reflection and confession.*

Words of Assurance *Rev. Elsa A. Cook*

Our God knows you by name. Our God knows what you fear. For you are fearfully and wonderfully made. In your name, God's works are revealed again to us.

Passing the Peace

### **1 Samuel 3:1-20**

3:1 Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD under Eli. The word of the LORD was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

3:2 At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room;

3:3 the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

3:4 Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!"

3:5 and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down.

3:6 The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

3:7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

3:8 The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy.

3:9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

3:10 Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

3:11 Then the LORD said to Samuel, "See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

3:12 On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

3:13 For I have told him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.

3:14 Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering forever."

3:15 Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the LORD. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli.

3:16 But Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son." He said, "Here I am."

3:17 Eli said, "What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you."

3:18 So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, "It is the LORD; let him do what seems good to him."

3:19 As Samuel grew up, the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

3:20 And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the LORD.

Sermon: "Chosen to Lead"

Pastoral Prayer

The Offering

The Prayer of Dedication *Rev. J.M. Deal*

Christ comes! Our hearts are full, our joy is boundless. May this offering be a living message of peace, love, spirit, joy and hope to this church, to this community, to this nation and world. Amen.

The Prayer of Our Savior

***Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.***

Closing Hymn: "Act Justly" Sheet music resource

Benediction

"Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit."

And may the blessing of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit remain with you forever. Amen.

**Our January Mission Offering: Church World Service Blanket Program**

Since its formation in 1957, the United Church of Christ has worked with Church World Service (founded in 1946) to accomplish more together than it could alone, joining hearts and resources to create a tradition of help and a legacy of hope. They work to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice around the world.

When disaster strikes, Church World Service is the primary agency through which the UCC gives support for relief and recovery efforts. This assistance may take the form of winterized family tents for Pakistani earthquake survivors, food packages and tankers full of water for displaced people in violence-torn Darfur, Sudan, or long-term recovery assistance for families affected by hurricanes, tornados, or flooding across the United States.

***We are grateful for your continued support of St. Paul's ministry. Your monetary gifts can be mailed to the church at 202 W. Union St., Somerset, PA. Please contact the church office for online giving options.***

**“These Days”** The January-March issue of “These Days” has arrived and is now available in the Edgewood Ave. narthex.

**2021 Offering Envelopes:** The 2021 offering envelopes are now available for pickup in the Edgewood Ave. Narthex. Please feel free to stop by and pick up your envelopes at your convenience. The Narthex is open Monday-Friday from 9am-3pm and Sunday morning from 8am-noon. It is also accessible by using your key-fob.

**We are pleased to offer an album for prayer and meditation!**

*Reflections: Music for Meditation*

Dave Neimiller, St. Paul's Director of Music is releasing a collection of original piano music.

*“Music has been such an important part of my life. It's helped me grow spiritually, offered comfort and hope in times of challenge and loss, and been an expression of joy for life's many blessings. My hope is that as Christmas and the New Year draw near, my music will help you find a spiritual center during all of the challenges we are facing. I felt called to compose this collection as a gift to our church family, hoping to share music's healing and peace and also to help support St. Paul's life giving mission and ministry”*

Dave's original collection of piano songs is available on CD or as a downloadable file. You can obtain a copy by contacting Dave. His email address is: [dneimillerstpaulsucc@gmail.com](mailto:dneimillerstpaulsucc@gmail.com) or by calling the church at 814-445-4534.

In keeping with the Spirit of this season of giving and in honoring Dave's request to help support St. Paul's work during these challenging times, a suggested donation of \$20.00 for the album will be split equally between St. Paul's general fund and mission initiatives that help families in our community during the pandemic. *We are aware that 2020 has been a very challenging year for many people financially, so if you cannot afford the suggested donation, but would still like a copy of “Reflections,” please don't hesitate to contact Dave. Financial challenges should not prevent anyone from enjoying music that helps to bring peace and healing to the soul.*