

Today we read two beautiful stories of call. In our Old Testament reading, the young boy Samuel is awakened repeatedly by a voice he mistakes for Eli, the elderly priest Samuel serves in the temple. But the voice does not belong to Eli. It is the very voice of God. Samuel was called to be a prophet. My Old Testament teacher in seminary said that any time we hear the word “prophet” in the Scriptures, we should substitute the word “preacher.” So Samuel’s great work was preaching. He is considered an important figure in all three of the world’s major religions- Jewish, Christian, and Muslim.

In the gospel text, it is Jesus himself who recruits his disciples. In this account, he calls two men, Philip and Nathanael, to leave their families, homes, and jobs to accompany him, an itinerant rabbi. That brought the disciple count to four, as earlier, Andrew and Simon Peter had joined Jesus.

It is fitting that we should focus on these two texts today, because we have just completed the process of calling men and women to serve Christ and his church as elders. You may remember that we held an election of officers many months ago. Due to the pandemic, we did not have an opportunity to come together in worship, and the five people called to serve had not yet been ordained and installed.

So, last Sunday, before our monthly session meeting, and in full observance of Covid safety precautions, we ordained and installed Kevin Dennison, Merritt True, and Jon-Tyler Roach as Ruling Elders. We also installed Nancy McIntosh and John R. Thomas to active service on the session.

We have included the brief video for today’s worship service and seek your prayers as we go about our work.

As we consider the life and faith of our congregation, the session adheres to the tradition and practice of generations of Presbyterians before us, as found in the Great Ends of the Church:

- the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind.
- the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God.
- the maintenance of divine worship.
- the preservation of the truth.
- the promotion of social righteousness.
- the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world.

As we begin the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, observe the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and anticipate the inauguration of a new President of the United States, let us all think on these things, and consider them Christ’s call to all of us in 2021.

Affirmation of Faith (from *A Brief Statement of Faith*)

We trust in Jesus Christ, fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed and blessing children,
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts, forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.
Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,
Jesus was crucified,
suffering the depths of human pain
and giving his life for the sins of the world.
God raised this Jesus from the dead,
vindicating his sinless life,
breaking the power of sin and evil,
delivering us from death to life eternal.
With believers in every time and place,
we rejoice that nothing in life or death
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
Alleluia. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Holy One, as we have called for your justice to roll down like waters, we are painfully aware that many in our nation and in the wider world have never or rarely known justice and righteousness. As we pause to recognize Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we admit that the issues of racism are far from resolved. Most of us will never know the hurts and offences and even violence our brothers and sisters have suffered their whole lives long. Our experiences have been very different. Save us from contributing to their pain and all the offenses born of discrimination and the de-valuing of others. Help us to walk some miles in their shoes that we might be your faithful children seeking understanding. We pray for that day when we are all truly at peace with the differences in race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and any human attribute that can be used as a weapon against another. Forgive us for our failures and fill us with strength and conviction to live after the manner of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served, but to serve,

God, we know you help us in times of trouble. We continue to pray for the global community working through the pandemic. Remind us to do our part to prevent illness and to help those who suffer from this disease. We are thankful for the vaccine that is now making its way into our community and offering hope of protection against the ravages of Covid. Make us advocates that all our neighbors, here and around the world, will benefit from the promises of modern medicine.

Loving God, you know the concerns and needs on our hearts, the family, friends and others who are in need of a sense of your presence and care. You know the blessings and occasions for praise. We lift them to you now.

We praise you for those who have been called by the voice of this church as elders to serve on the session. Inspire and empower Kevin Dennison, Jon-Tyler Roach, Merritt True, Nancy McIntosh, and John R. Thomas as they lead the congregation and provide for their spiritual welfare. May their time of service be a blessing to them and to all of us.

We make our prayers in Jesus' name and in the way he taught us saying, Our Father...Amen.

Blessing

Go now. Listen for the voice of the Lord and follow wherever it leads.

Do not be dominated by anything.

Allow no room within yourself for deceit,
but offer yourself as a temple for the Holy Spirit.

And may God be with you and speak through you;
may Christ Jesus be one with you and raise you to new life.
and may the Holy Spirit dwell in you richly. Amen.

Postlude