

Listen, God is Calling: 1 Samuel 16:1-13
October 19, 2025

Pastor Kristin Schultz
All Saints ABQ

This past month, we've heard a series of stories focusing on God's call
Bible stories –

God calls Moses to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt,
through the wilderness and into the promised land
God calls the boy Samuel in the temple to be a prophet

And contemporary stories –

Pastor Meredyth shared her story of being called to professional
ministry in the church and to be a chaplain, and how God used the people
around her to invite her into seminary.

Maggie Neiberger shared her call to serve as a Young Adult in Global
Mission, and how that call involved moving out of what she expected into new
areas of growth and strength.



Today we read the story about God choosing and calling David,
a shepherd boy who will become a great Israelite king.

But really, today's story is mostly about Samuel, and Samuel's
continuing obedience speaking and acting for God in hard ways.

Let's back up a bit to the beginning of Samuel's story.

You may remember that the book of 1 Samuel begins with Hannah,
the wife of Elkanah, who has no children.

She comes to pray at the temple and makes an offering,
promising that if she gives birth to a son,
she will dedicate him to serve God in the temple.

She conceives, and Samuel is born,
and as a young child Samuel goes to the temple
to be cared for and taught by the priest Eli.

And Samuel has an important role to play in the history of God's people.
Samuel is a young boy, living in the temple, when he hears a voice
Samuel, Samuel.

He thinks it is Eli, but Eli realizes it is the voice of God.

So Samuel responds as Eli tells him:

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening”

And so begins a life-long relationship of intimacy with God
and obedience to God.

The first thing Samuel has to do is denounce Eli, the priest who cares for him.
Then Samuel will be asked to anoint Saul as the first king over Israel.

Samuel serves as the prophet to King Saul, working alongside him.

But Saul’s reign fails.

Saul takes his power to heart, and oversteps the bounds of his role,
and God rejects him.

So, once again, Samuel has to speak a word of judgement
against a companion.



Then, God asks Samuel to do something not only difficult, but
dangerous.

While Saul still reigns, God tells Samuel to go to Bethlehem,
to the household of Jesse, and there to anoint the next king.

It’s an act of treason,

and God gives Samuel a cover story for his trip:

I have come to offer a sacrifice.

So we come to the moment when Samuel stands with Jesse and all his sons.

Samuel sees that the oldest son is strong and handsome – much like Saul –
and he gets out the anointing oil.

But God says, No, that’s not the one.

You are looking only at his appearance –

but I am looking for the one with the proper heart to be the next king.

For the ancient near east, the heart was not just the seat of emotion,
as it is regarded in our culture.

Yes, the one who will be king needs a heart of compassion and love
for God and God’s people.

But Heart in this context also means reason, discernment, and wisdom.

God is taking no chances – this king will be a man of character.

Of course, this sounds ironic when you know how David’s kingship plays out.

David is a complex and deeply flawed figure – musician and writer of Psalms;
military leader; and father of a dynasty.

God makes a promise to David – but that's next week's story

Back to Samuel.

He looks at Jesse's sons, one by one – and God rejects them all.

And Samuel says, is there not another son?

And Jesse and his sons reply – Well, yeah, there's David –
he's out in the pasture with the sheep.

There is irony here, almost a joke,

because shepherd is a common metaphor for a king in that time.

It's foreshadowing, that David will become the one
to shepherd God's people, God's nation.

And indeed, when the young David comes in from the fields,
God recognizes him and Samuel anoints him.



This past summer, the ELCA –
the whitest church denomination in the country –
elected an African American man to be our presiding bishop.
And an African American woman, Rev. CeCe Mills, to be the church
secretary – a significant administrative role in the church.

It's wildly hopeful and maybe just a bit ironic.

It's a symbol of the change so many of us long for,
wishing and working for the ELCA to be a place of wider welcome
and a better reflection of the communities around us.

And, first and foremost, it is a recognition of the skills for leadership that
Bishop Yeheil, who served as a pastor on the south side of Chicago and as
bishop in the Metro Chicago synod; and CeCe Mills, who served as a pastor
and Assistant to the Bishop in the North Carolina synod, bring to our church.
Our church is in good hands with these two experienced leaders.
Leaders with courageous and compassionate hearts.

Bishop Curry and Secretary Mills step into challenging roles in the church.

This church has not always been kind to leaders of color,
and that is one reason we have taken up the habit of praying regularly
for them, as well as our synodical bishop, Meghan Johnston Aelabouni.
The role of bishop is a very public role.
One thing the presiding bishop does is make public statements on behalf of
the ELCA, in keeping with the social statements this church has adopted.
To speak boldly on behalf of a God on justice, mercy and compassion.
A challenging but necessary role in these precarious, divisive times.

Abraham – Samuel – Moses – David

All lived their lives in obedience to God, serving God as leaders and voices

Elizabeth Eaton – Yeheil Curry – CeCe Mills – Meghan Aelabouni

These leaders also have heard and followed God's call to lead and to speak.



On October 4, Bishop Curry was installed as Presiding Bishop during a festive worship service in Minneapolis.

The preacher was Rev. Kevin Vandiver, Pastor of Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Washington DC – the church that hosted Gathering at the Gate, just one block from the capitol building.

He ended the sermon with these words – which you can hear in his voice in the video sent out with Friday's email.

*“As much as we are in the realm of the precipice, as close as we are,
we must remember that we have something to say.*

We have something to offer.

We proclaim and declare that the just shall live by faith.

And no matter what the narratives are out there,

we are interested in building a wider and longer table.

*As we are fueled by our baptism, we live according to the creed of
Jesus' first sermon in Luke chapter 4 – bringing good news to the poor,
and sight to the blind, setting free those who are oppressed.*

We make no apologies for it.

It is a call that you may have to say yes to every day,

even when it seems like all heck is breaking loose.

But Ring, Ring – there is a call coming from the portals of heaven.

It's for you.

And Rev. Vandiver sat down.

Mic drop.

In that moment, he reminded all present that day – and each one of us –
that it is not only the ones elected to ecclesial office, the ones ordained
to professional ministry, who are called by God.

It is not just the ones who serve in the halls of power
who have a role and a voice.



In our baptism, God claims, and blesses, and calls each one of us
to listen, and to follow in obedience
in the way of justice, mercy and compassion.

When we follow Jesus, we too may be asked to go into hard places
and speak hard truths in love.

Today, much of that work looks like resistance – resisting authoritarian
systems which deny the full personhood of all God's people.

Resisting budgets that would take away funding for food and health care
from people in need;

Resisting ICE arrests and detention of people based only on color of their
skin or the language they speak;

Resisting all who would deny the full dignity and personhood of our gay
and transgender family, friends, and neighbors.

We have something to say in this time and place –
words about the love of God, and the justice of God,
which is for everyone.

Lifting our voices in response to the narratives of hate and division,
working to build a wider and longer table.

God's work. Our hands. Our voices.

Our hearts listening and choosing obedience to God's love for all the world.

Ring. Ring. God is calling.

It's for you.