

JANUARY 17th : 2nd SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

DIGITAL PRINT SERVICE: FIRST SACKVILLE PRESBYTERIAN

Call to Worship

Leader: In a difficult time, God called to Samuel.

People: God called Samuel to speak the truth in love.

Leader: In a tumultuous time, Jesus called the disciples,

People: Jesus called them to help him proclaim the Good News.

Leader: God calls us.

People: May we answer that call with a "Yes, here I am!"

Prayer of Adoration

Almighty God bless us in this time of worship with the assurance of your presence. Surprise us with your mysteries in the midst of our living. Transform us with the deep assurance of your love. In all we say and do, help us to follow Jesus and live in the mission you have for us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn 39 God of mercy, God of grace

Prayer of Confession

O God, we are told there are costs and challenges in serving as disciples of Christ. Lord, who loves us, we confess to our failure to answer your call to discipleship, to share the Good News of your gospel, to bear fruit from the seeds you have planted, to be your body in a wounded world. Forgive us, and grant us faith to see the resurrection in all things. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: Friends, hear the Good News! God raised the Lord Jesus.

P: God will also raise us as followers of Jesus.

L: Friends, believe the Good News!

P: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Hymn 773 Jesus bids us shine

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021

“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31

Mission Capsule – Paving the Way for a Brighter Future

Anxious and unsure about his future, Abdul was 14 years old when he joined the electronics and computer program offered by the joint Christian Committee for Social Service (JCC) in Lebanon. Now 19 years old, equipped with a diploma and five years of experience, he has a good job and an income to support his family. JCC’s vocational training programs teach marketable skills and offer hope for many young Palestinian refugees who are out of school and living without a dream or ambition. Through gifts to Presbyterian Sharing, the PCC has been supporting this lifegiving program since 2018. **Sylvia** Haddad, JCC Director, shared that “equipping youth, and especially refugees who have nothing, with a skill or vocation is very important. The challenge is great, but we cannot give up and are grateful for your support.”

READINGS for January 17 – God speaks through the Scriptures

READING	VERSE	REFLECTION
<i>Old Testament</i>	1 Samuel 3: 1-20	
<i>Psalms</i>	Psalms 139: 1-6, 13-18	
<i>Epistle</i>	2 Corinthians 5: 14-21	
<i>Gospel</i>	John 1: 43-51	

Hymn 500 *Open my Eyes*

SERMON: “See for Yourself.”

The boy Samuel, who was perhaps seven or eight years old, was sleeping in the sacred tent which served as the Temple. One wonders if the boy was scared sleeping there while his teacher Eli and his family slept in another tent.

One night Samuel heard a voice calling his name. He assumed it was Eli calling him. Samuel went to Eli’s tent only to find out that Eli wasn’t the one who called him. This happened several more times, and Eli finally concluded that God must be calling Samuel. As it turned out, Eli was right.

When God calls someone for whatever reason, the essential point is that it is always God who takes the initiative.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021

“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31

This was true for young Samuel as it was for the Apostle Paul, and as it was for Nathaniel. The call comes in many ways, sometimes as a light along the road to Damascus that is blinding and a still small voice saying, "Follow me." More often than not, the call comes in fleeting moments that arise and then fade away, or in flashes of light and times of confusion and uncertainty. As with the characters in our lessons today, there are always supporting actors.

For Samuel it began with his mother and father dedicating him to a life of service in God's temple. In that instance, the supporting actor was Eli the priest. For Nathaniel it was Philip, and for Paul it was those determined followers of the way like Stephen. According to John, Nathaniel was approached by Philip who tells Nathaniel:

"We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth."

Imagine the response of Nathaniel, closing his eyes momentarily, playing the prerecorded tape of a blind prejudice which sees nothing, yet knows everything.

"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

Philip responds with these words which embrace everything the church meant and means by evangelism,

"Come and see for yourself."

Come and see what? What is it we are called to see? Well, if authentic, it is always Jesus Christ. Sometimes that is very clear, as it was to Nathaniel and as it was for Paul. At other times, Christ comes incognito, at a Bible study, the singing of a hymn, an anthem, or a sermon. At other times, he comes outside the church altogether.

We, like Philip and so many more, are called to be witnesses. We are never simply on our own. All kinds of forces, principalities, and powers seek to rule over us. It might be the economy, a relationship, a career, drugs, the search for acceptance, or love of power.

We may think we are in charge of our own lives and do as we see fit with them, but our lives become living proof of how wrong this view is. That is what Paul was speaking about in our Epistle reading, as he reminds the people in Corinth of living in a new creation, in Christ.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021

"Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself." Mark 12: 29-31

In a certain church in a town in Arizona that was near the Mexican border, the session in this Presbyterian church was debating whether they would join with some other groups in sponsoring a local family health clinic.

The clinic had been established for the families of migrant workers because the public health resources were inadequate and burdened with red tape. In the debate, one of the elders spoke up forcefully against supporting the clinic because, as he put it,

“Most of the patients are illegal aliens.”

So he continued... “we would in essence be supporting illegal activity.” Then another elder spoke up saying,

“After all, these are people and they need medical care.”

Back and forth it went; the debate drew much emotion but no resolution. To take a vote would have been unwise and divisive, so the matter was wisely tabled to a later date. The following day, the minister of the church called the elder who had so forcefully and at times bitterly opposed the clinic, and invited him out to lunch. During the luncheon meeting, the minister asked the elder if he would consider taking a few minutes on the way home to visit the clinic in question.

The man agreed and the two of them arrived at the clinic to find a waiting room bustling with activity. It was packed with anxious mothers and squirming children. A nurse appeared from a door and called out the name of a child. A little boy around four years of age began to move toward the nurse. He was holding his arm knowing that soon he would be receiving an inoculation.

A few minutes later the boy appeared at the door. He was rubbing and holding his arm with tears running down his cheeks. He searched the room for his mother, but she had gone to the washroom with another child and the boy couldn't see her anywhere.

The boy kept looking around, and perhaps seeking a kind face he focused on the elder. He slowly walked over to the elder and then crawled up on his lap and lay his head on the man's chest.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021

“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31

First reluctantly, and then willingly and lovingly, the man wrapped his hands around the little fellow human being in need of care, and when he did so he was amazed by his own spontaneous compassion.

This was almost as amazing as the amazement his fellow elders experienced at the next session meeting when he presented a motion to sponsor the clinic. You know what changed his mind!

“Come and see for yourself,”

said Philip to Nathaniel, and what did he see? You have to be there yourself to know. Amen.

Prayers:

Holy God, God of Hannah, mother of Samuel, who wanted a child so badly she could not pray in words. Here us as we pray, O God of peace, for like Hannah we are often left empty, have hoped and labored, expected and trusted, but so often our hopes failed to materialize, our labor lost, expectations fell short and trust was broken. O God, send us today the peace that came to Hannah.

O God of Eli, father of rebellious sons and priest of a rebellious people, who so longed for a word from the Lord that he would even listen to the word of a child. Grant us your light for like Eli we have been unseeing. We have wandered in dark corners of our own making, stumbling on bricks and stones that we have laid. O God, send us the presence that came to Eli through the words of the child of Hannah.

O God of Samuel, son of a barren woman and servant of the Lord, who so longed for the sight of you that he slept beside your lamp in the temple, receive our prayer. Grant us clarity of vision. For like Samuel, we have been confused. Voices shout, whisper, grumble at us from all sides. At the shouting, we tremble, at the whispering we shiver, at the grumbling we shrink. Which voice is yours? Which one ours? Which one theirs? Yes, Lord, we know Samuel well. Send us the clear vision that came to him through the guidance of his blind friend Eli.

O God of Philip, man of Galilee, who so longed for Israel’s deliverance that he hurried to tell Nathaniel of the Messiah’s arrival, receive our prayer. Grant us courage. For like Andrew and his friends, we have been anxious. Who should be our leader? Many would rule us, many would teach us, many would tempt us. But the ruler’s domination allows little freedom. The teacher’s instruction yields little enlightenment, and the tempter’s persuasion offers little satisfaction. Yes, Lord, we know Andrew well. Send us the courage that came to him when he found where Christ was staying.

O God we are not our own. Our hearts are yours; fulfill them. Our hearts are yours; reassure them. Our hearts are yours; inspire them. Our hearts are yours; empower them. Transform them into your temples, and we will listen for your voice, as we pray the words Jesus taught us to pray, saying... Our Father....

Hymn 634 *Will you come and follow me?*

COMMISSIONING/BENEDICTION

Let us go from here with the blessings of God to uphold us, the love of Christ to embrace us, and the friendship of the Holy Spirit to empower us in the task of serving God and neighbor day by day. Amen,

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – January 17, 2021

“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31