

**January 17, 2021**

**Second Sunday after Epiphany**



**St. John**

**United Church of Christ**

10207 Lincoln Trail

Fairview Heights, IL

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**SECRETARY – JUDY HARTMANN**

**Rev. Rosemary Captain**

Prayers and Liturgy by

Rev. Lavon Bayler

**NOTICE:** Because we have been spending so much time at home lately, perhaps you started a new hobby or restarted a project you have not had time to work on for a while. For me, it has been jigsaw puzzles. I received a new one for Christmas, and now I'm hooked. So today our scripture texts will challenge us to "put it all together", to recognize

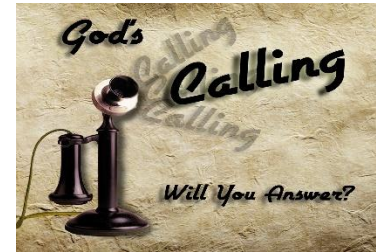
God's lessons, to move beyond baptism that we read last week, to the life that follows it. Let's do a "word search" for each of our lection readings.

*1 Samuel 3:1-10, Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18*

*1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51*

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 139**

God is calling. Do you not hear? You are being called by name, for a purpose. God, you have searched us and know us.



You discern our thoughts

from far away. Do not confuse the siren calls of the world for God's call. Do not confuse the values of this world for God's values.

You know, O God, when we sit and when we stand.

You know when we lie down and where we go.

Your words and your deeds are known to God.

You were known to God before you were born.

Your knowledge of us is more than we can

understand. Your thoughts embrace us amid all you have created.

**INVOCATION:**

We have come together, listening God, because you have spoken your word of summons and welcome.

We are drawn irresistibly to the promise of your

presence and by the persistence of your call. Speak to your servants here in ways we can understand. (Putting the puzzle together.) We want to hear the message you intend for us. We want to listen, not because someone else needs to have it told to them, but because we ourselves are needy sinners. Your expectations of us are high and holy. We tremble before you, eager for the heavens to be opened in our midst for our transformation. Amen.

### **SCRIPTURES from the Common English Bible:**

#### **1 Samuel 3:1-10**

**3** Now the boy Samuel was serving the LORD under Eli. The LORD's word was rare at that time, and visions weren't widely known. **2** One day Eli, whose eyes had grown so weak he was unable to see, was lying down in his room. **3** God's lamp hadn't gone out yet, and Samuel was lying down in the LORD's temple, where God's chest was.

**4** The LORD called to Samuel. "I'm here," he said.

**5** Samuel hurried to Eli and said, "I'm here. You called me?" "I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go lie down." So he did.

**6** Again the LORD called Samuel, so Samuel got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?"

"I didn't call, my son," Eli replied. "Go and lie down."

(**7** Now Samuel didn't yet know the LORD, and the LORD's word hadn't yet been revealed to him.)

**8** A third time the LORD called Samuel. He got up, went to Eli, and said, "I'm here. You called me?" Then Eli realized that it was the LORD who was calling the boy. **9** So Eli said to Samuel, "Go and lie down. If he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD. Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down where he'd been. **10** Then the LORD came and stood there, calling just as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel said, "Speak. Your servant is listening."

#### **1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

**12** I have the freedom to do anything, but not everything is helpful. I have the freedom to do anything, but I won't be controlled by anything. **13** Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, and yet God will do away with both. The body isn't for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. **14** God has raised the Lord and will raise us through his power. **15** Don't you know that your bodies are parts of Christ? So then, should I take parts of Christ and make them a part of someone who is sleeping around? No way! **16** Don't you know that anyone who is joined to someone who is sleeping around is one body with that person? The scripture says, *The two will become one flesh*. **17** The one who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. **18** Avoid sexual immorality! Every sin that a person can do is committed outside the body,

except those who engage in sexual immorality commit sin against their own bodies. <sup>19</sup> Or don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Don't you know that you have the Holy Spirit from God, and you don't belong to yourselves? <sup>20</sup> You have been bought and paid for, so honor God with your body.



### **John 1:43-51**

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus wanted to go into Galilee, and he found Philip. Jesus said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter.

<sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathaniel and said to him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law and the Prophets: Jesus, Joseph's son, from Nazareth."

<sup>46</sup> Nathaniel responded, "Can anything from Nazareth be good?"

Philip said, "Come and see."

<sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him and said about him, "Here is a genuine Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

<sup>48</sup> Nathaniel asked him, "How do you know me?"

Jesus answered, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."

<sup>49</sup> Nathaniel replied, "Rabbi, you are God's Son. You are the king of Israel."

<sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these! <sup>51</sup> I assure you that you will see heaven open and God's angels going up to heaven and down to earth on the Human One."

### **MESSAGE: "Putting the Pieces Together"**

This is the Second Sunday of Epiphany – the biblical word central to the Season of Epiphany is "revelation", for this is the time to celebrate the revealing of the Son of God. Last Sunday's lection centered on the baptism of Jesus and its implications for Christian baptism. Today we are moved beyond baptism to the life that follows it.

The reading from First Samuel relates the story of Samuel's call to service. The selection from Psalm 139 acknowledges God's nearness to us as well as God's intimate knowledge of our inner most being. The moral implications of the life of discipleship, or as Paul says, "in Christ," are spelled out in 1 Corinthians 6.

The Gospel text presents the witness to Christ by Philip. Those who hear are offered the invitation to trust, to "come and see." The search for trust begins by "abiding" with Jesus.

In reading each of these lections, perhaps you will find some key words – a shortcut to God's revelation and our message for today.

This is what I found in each of the 4 readings, in order: #1 a call from God.

#2 God is near enough to have intimate knowledge of us.

#3 Our acceptance to be “in Christ”

#4 Come and see and experience “abiding” in Christ and witnessing to others.

It almost looks like an anagram or word puzzle. God is revealing words to us and once we have found them, there is another revelation. The companion word is “witness.” To me, it’s a short cut to God’s messages to us.

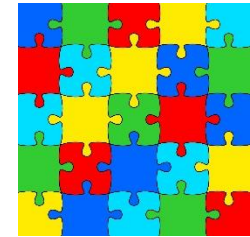


Not everyone can solve these “puzzles.” For example, the book of Revelation in the biblical sense is never open and obvious to everyone;

those who are interested or not, believer or not. There is always something about the words, perhaps a kind of radiant obscurity, a concealing that requires faith to grasp the revealing. We are not permitted a controlled, managed, guaranteed, no-risk response to Jesus. (There’s several pieces to the puzzle missing. Did you look in the box of pieces or under the table for the missing piece?)

Some people who have seen the glory of Jesus become flesh, cannot prove what they have seen, but they can witness. In other words, what do you

do when your puzzle is completed? You tell people, and then you tear it apart and put the pieces back in the box to enjoy again or to give to someone else to put together. You can’t prove that you figured out the puzzle but you can tell others. You witness and share what you did and invite your family and friends to give it a try.



If you decide to work the same puzzle again, it might be easier because you know where all the pieces fit. It is the same with faith and trust in God. The more you work on the puzzle, the more faith and trust you will have that all the pieces are there and they all fit together beautifully.

I invite you to reread all 4 of the day’s readings and see if you can reveal all the parts to the puzzle and complete something beautiful. You have been “called” to be “intimate with God”, as you are accepted to be “in Christ” and invited to “come and see.”  
Amen.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR OFFERING** and continued support of St. John.

### **BENEDICTION:**

Jesus said, “Follow me,” so Philip followed.  
Jesus says to us, “Follow me!” Will we follow?

**We do not always know where Jesus will lead,  
But we hear the call, and we intend to follow.**  
Philip found Nathaniel and led him to Jesus.  
There are many we know whom Jesus is seeking.  
**It is often difficult to share our faith with friends.  
But we hear the call, and we intend to invite them.**  
Jesus promised, "You will see greater things than I  
have shown you."  
We are Christ's messengers of revelation today.  
**Wonderful are the works of our God.**  
**Christ is our mentor, our Savior and friend. Amen.**



**PRAYER LIST: We pray for  
the health and well-being of  
all affected by the pandemic  
and we especially pray for:**

Rich Schmitt, Donna Isselhard, Shari Hamilton, Becky  
Ballard, Janice Petroff, Pam (Belleville) Bierman, and  
**all the people of the United States of America and  
their leaders.**



**ASH WEDNESDAY** is February 17. Ashes will be  
available by way of drive-through distribution at the  
church's parking lot,  
12 noon – 12:30 pm and 6 pm – 6:30 pm.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Congregational Annual Meeting  
for all members will be held Sunday, January 31 at  
10:30 via Zoom. If you do not have the internet, you  
can still attend the meeting by way of your  
telephone. More instructions will be sent in next  
week's bulletin.

