

THE MAGNOLIA MESSENGER

Volume 3 Issue 04

January 24, 2021



Special points of interest:

- * "Answering the Call in 2021"
- * Crossword - *National Trivia*
- * Announcements — Family Worship!
- * A Retelling of Jesus' Baptism — Ben Witherington
- * Youth & Treehouse Kids Events at Magnolia FUMC
- * Liturgical Colors and Misc.



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Answering the Call in 2021

1 Samuel 3:1-10 Meanwhile, the boy Samuel served the Lord by assisting Eli. Now in those days messages from the Lord were very rare, and visions were quite uncommon. ² One night Eli, who was almost blind by now, had gone to bed. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was sleeping in the Tabernacle near the Ark of God. ⁴ Suddenly the Lord called out, "Samuel!" "Yes?" Samuel replied. "What is it?" ⁵ He got up and ran to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you," Eli replied. "Go back to bed." So he did. ⁶ Then the Lord called out again, "Samuel!" Again Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" "I didn't call you, my son," Eli said. "Go back to bed." ⁷ Samuel did not yet know the Lord because he had never had a message from the Lord before. ⁸ So the Lord called a third time, and once more Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am. Did you call me?" Then Eli realized it was the Lord who was calling the boy. ⁹ So he said to Samuel, "Go and lie down again, and if someone calls again, say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went back to bed. ¹⁰ And the Lord came and called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel replied, "Speak, your servant is listening."

"Mr. Watson, come here — I want to see you." "These are the famous first words that were ever transmitted by telephone, spoken by Alexander Graham Bell on March 10, 1876, into an early telephone prototype and heard by his assistant, Thomas A. Watson, in

their Boston laboratory. The proof that Watson, who was in another part of the lab, heard those words on a device at his end was that he came as summoned. Watson, we can say, was the first to 'take the call.'"

Of course, we've been taking calls ever since, and some have been memorable. In 1969, astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Neil Armstrong took a call from President Richard Nixon on the moon.

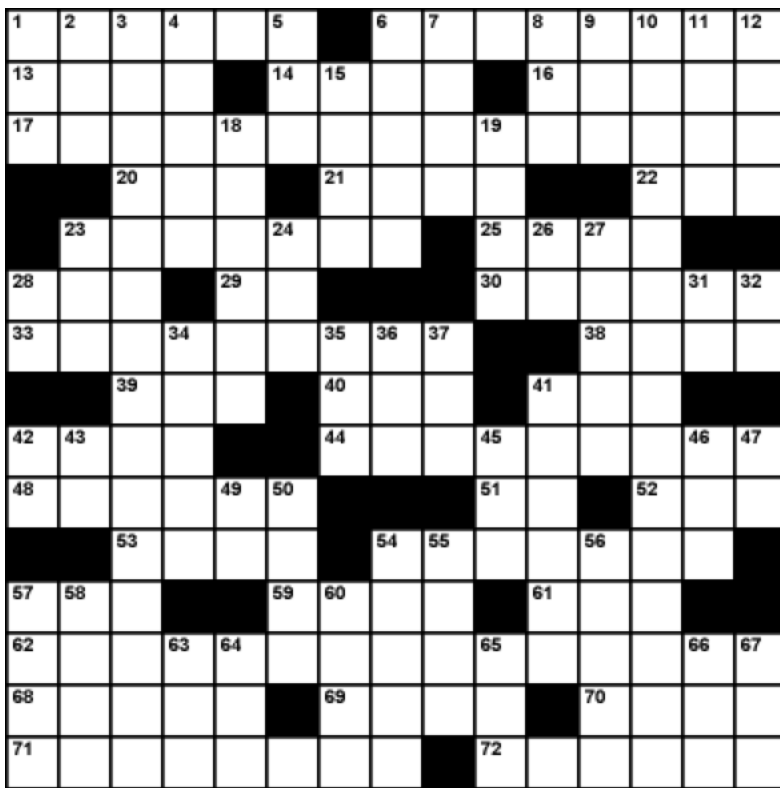
Some calls are more infamous than famous, of course. On the night of June 17, 1972, Washington, D.C., police took a call from a security guard named Frank Wills, telling them he had found duct tape over a lock on the Watergate complex door. That call set into motion the discovery of a great political scandal that eventually led to President Nixon's resignation.

Although we probably won't be receiving any phone calls from famous people, we can pick each other up with a positive phone call from a loved one or friend!

But, for many of us, most of the calls *on our home and cell phones*, however, are not from famous people but are increasingly filled with SPAM or potential SPAM callers. In fact, according to one website, over half the calls in the U.S. we now receive are the unsolicited messages called "spam."

I've missed a few important calls in

“National Trivia” — Crossword Puzzle



Across

1. * Desert in North Africa
6. * Animal of Australia
13. Is indebted to
14. Strip the Skin off
16. Hospital professional
17. * Dessert Menu listing in Germany
20. * Last Name of an Actor born in Belfast, Northern Ireland
21. Word with List
22. Cards shown in Bars, for short
23. * American movie of 1989: "New York ____"
25. * Song by The Beatles, of Liverpool, England: "Back in the ____"
28. NHL official
29. Indefinite article
30. * Philosophical System of China
33. * City in southwestern Germany
38. Nair's competition
39. Falsehood
40. Hair Color changer
41. Dickens character
42. Position of leadership
44. * City on the Coast of California, in the United States
48. * The Cardiff International Airport in Wales is located in this town
51. Hosp. food
52. * America's legendary baseball player
53. Gift Tag word
54. * Rich Middle Eastern dessert
57. Mr. Young, and others
59. * "Yesterday" in Italy
61. Vegetable, minus the "on"
62. * Great artist from Tuscany
68. Common
69. Brand of a Bar of Soap
70. * Certain European
71. * Castle that Britain's Queen Elizabeth II really likes

72. * Brie is a what of France?

Down

1. Word with Story
2. Pointed tool
3. * Song by The Yardbirds (Sixties band formed in Surrey, England)
4. Business talk: "I'm gonna be hired ____ of that firm one day --I just know it!"
5. Tenderness, without the "ection"
6. * Jim Morrison's grave site in France
7. Strong Solutions
8. Explosive letters
9. * State in SE Mexico, without the "atán"
10. * Manitoba in Canada
11. Nightfall, all shook up?
12. Looks
15. "The West Wing" (TV) name
18. * Martial Art of Japan
19. Close
23. Arrange
24. End of a Verb
26. * Locale of Brazil, for short
27. * Band that formed in New York, in the United States: ____ Youth
28. * Singer (Initials) born in London, England on January 10th, 1945
31. Ms. Hinton
32. * It's on the border of Nepal and Tibet: ____ Everest
34. * Island in the Indonesian archipelago
35. Promos
36. * Shag Rug made in Sweden
37. Countdown starter
41. * Russian physiologist
42. Period of Time, briefly
43. * Interjection heard in Canada
45. First-Aid completer, all jumbled up?
46. * Ms. Hagen, the Actress from Germany
47. * Initials of the 12th President of the United States
49. Word before What
50. * Title in Turkey
54. Word seen in a cooking recipe
55. * Opera by Giuseppe Verdi who was born in the Italian village of Le Roncole
56. * Herb that is indigenous to Egypt
57. * Popular band of the Eighties from England, with "Culture"
58. Heard in Summer: "____ cold glass of lemonade would quench my thirst right about now. Thank you!"
60. * Icelandic literary work
63. * Republic (for short) where there was a controversial war
64. * Hawaii in the United States, minus the "ha State"
65. * Rocky Island in San Francisco Bay in the United States, without the "atraz"
66. Type of lettuce
67. Ending to "Graph"

January 2021 News and Announcements



2020 is finally behind us!

And all of God's people said, "Amen!"

Here we are in a brand new year, but it seems like some of this new year might just be part 2 of 2020! From COVID-19 spikes to violence in Washington D.C. we are starting the new year with a disappointing bang.

As I consider these days and times, I am reminded of the many "but God" passages in the Old and New Testaments. One comes to mind right now. In Matthew 19:26 we read, "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" Indeed, with God, many things are possible!

I am not sure what surprises this new year will bring, but I know that God is still on the throne and He will guide and lead us into a brand new day!

Meanwhile, know that God loves you, we love, and wish you a Happy New Year

Pastor Gary

Our love and congratulations go to Hannah Kaar! Hannah has been elected as President of the U of A Wesley Foundation. They are changing the year to parallel the university so she will serve three semesters.



Undie Sunday

SPONSORED BY MAGNOLIA JUNIOR CHARITY LEAGUE

Postponed — TBA

MJCL is collecting new socks, undershirts, and undies for Columbia County's Schools. Please see your local church's bulletin for drop in information or any MJCL member to donate!

Crossword Puzzle Solution - "National Trivia"

1	S	2	A	3	H	4	A	5	R	6	A		7	P	8	L	9	A	10	T	11	Y	12	P	13	U	14	S					
13	O		W		E		S		14	F		15	L		A		16	Y		N		U		R		S		E					
17	B		L		A		C		18	K		F		O		R		E		19	S		T		C		A		K	E			
					20	R		E		A			21	W		I		S		H				22	I		D		S				
			23		S		T		O		R		24	I		E		S			25	U		S		S		R					
28	R		E		F				29	A		N								30	T		A		O		I		S	32	M		
33	S		T		U		T		34	T		G		35	A		R		36	T					38	N		E		E	T		
					39	L		I		E				40	D		Y		E			41	P		I		P						
42	H		43	E		L		M						44	S		A		N		45	T		A		C		R	46	U	47	Z	
48	R		H		O		O		49	S		E								51	I		V			52	O		T		T		
					53	F		R		O		M			54	B		A		55	K		L		56	A		V		A			
57	C		58	Y		S						59	I		E		R		I			61	O		N		I						
62	L		E		O		N		63	A		R		D		O		D		65	A		V		I		N		66	C		67	I
68	U		S		U		A		L				69	D		I		A		L			70	S		C		O		T			
71	B		A		L		M		O		R		A		L					72	C		H		E		E		S		E		

Answering the Call in 2021

recent years, thinking they were spam calls from unknown salespeople trying to scam me. It turns out that some of those phone calls were valid. This missing of phone calls can happen with important calls, both calls in the natural and calls in the supernatural!

One such call is recorded in this morning's text!

Samuel gets a call - All of this leads us to the Scripture story about the young boy Samuel, who was snoozing in the worship center at Shiloh, when he heard his name called. He answered the call but assumed the caller was the elderly priest Eli. Samuel went to Eli, who said it wasn't he who called. After this happened three times, Eli finally realized that it must be the Lord summoning the boy, so he instructed Samuel to take the call, but from the right party this time. And so began Samuel's role as a prophet of the Most High God.

I think our problem with taking calls from the Lord is somewhat similar to that of young Samuel, i.e., we're not sure who's calling. We might ask ourselves, "Is it the Lord calling me, or is it just an idea that popped in my head?" If you've got such questions, fear not, for you are not alone.

E. Stanley Jones - Let me share a story with you about a fellow named E. Stanley Jones and the dilemma he faced. He was an American Christian who served as a missionary in India for many years. He had given his life to Christ at 17.

1.) College president - When he was 23, a college president asked him to teach at the college. The president told him, *"It is the will of the student body, the will of the townspeople, the will of the faculty and we believe it is the will of God for you to teach in this college."*

2.) Friend - At the same time, however, a friend wrote to him saying, *"I believe it is the will of God for you to go into evangelistic work here in America."*

3.) Mission Board - During the same period, Jones also received a letter from his denomination's mission board saying, *"It is our will to send you to India."*

4.) Himself - And if all of that were not enough, he suspected that God's will for him was to go as a missionary to Africa.

Jones described this as a "traffic jam of wills." In the end, after much prayer, he eventually became convinced that he should go to India, which he did, and where he ministered faithfully until his death. But at the time of the competing calls, he had no foolproof way to be sure which, if any, was God's will.

So what can we gather from all of this?

I believe that our biblical account and the account of E. Stanley Jones reminds us that even in times when the world around us is not tuned in, *God does speak and calls*. In terms of the Bible's timeline, the period when Eli and his two ungodly sons were priests of the Lord, the judges ruled the land, and, as the book of Judges notes: *"All the people did what was right in their own eyes" (21:25)*. And of course,

Answering the Call in 2021

what many decided was "*right in their own eyes*" was nowhere close to what was right in the eyes of God.

That sounds quite a bit like today, doesn't it? Even those working in the church aren't all that tuned into the possibility of the Lord speaking. Notice that it wasn't until Samuel had run to Eli three times that it occurred to Eli that God summoned the boy.

As tough as it is to discern the voice of the Lord, sometimes He will give us a challenging task or message to deliver. *What did Samuel receive as his first task?* Samuel had a powerful word of judgment against Eli and his sons! That was not a fun task, to say the least. Eventually, Samuel received better news from God, and he became a prophet to all of Israel.

How can we tell when God is calling?

But all of this brings us back to the question of how we can tell when God is calling. It's not like we have a photo icon that appears when we get an incoming call on our smartphones. We need to listen and discern God's call and message carefully. By the way, I believe that God has a call for each of us; let's consider that thought.

First things first -- Just as a quick reminder, God has already called you with a general call to service, and 90% of that call and will for your life is the same as everyone else's all! "*Like what?*" I hear you say! Oh, like loving and worshipping God, loving others, being a positive witness for Christ, being honest, etc. And then there's also a definite "*Don't do this stuff!*" list as well. If you're not sure, then the Ten Commandments would be an excellent place to start!

These are the essentials of God's call and will for your life from Scripture.

Secondly, before any of us can move on to God's specific call and will for our lives, I believe we must be found faithful in these essentials. To be faithful in these areas brings us to the place where we can best hear His voice about the unique and particular 10% call and will for your life!

Thirdly, if you're good at math, then you'll realize that when we have both of these hearing and doing events in place, we are then 100% in place to do God's essential and specific will for our lives!

When we make a start at something to which we suspect God might be calling us, we are acting in faith. God calls, and we can "*Decline*" the call, or we "*Accept*" that call. Let's tap to "*Accept*" God's call and see what He has to say.

Once we fully understand what God is calling us to do, then we must begin to put those things into action in our lives. Putting our call into action requires persistence! We should not understate the importance of finishing what we start. Jesus said, "*No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*" (**Luke 9:62**). As you probably already know, nothing ever gets finished that doesn't get started.

What is waiting for a start in your life?

1. 1. Is there anything that you think God is giving you a nudge about in your life?

A Retelling of Jesus' Baptism by Ben Witherington

By **Ben Witherington** - January 4, 2021

Jesus walked slowly, picking his way through John's disciples, many of whom stood mesmerized by the sight of so many people entering the Jordan. Andrew led him to a good spot where they could both hear, down a path to a little sandbar next to the river. Jesus saw that all eyes were focused on John, who did indeed cut a remarkable figure in the blazing sun. He looked like a wild man, with his tousled hair, his scrawny frame, and his garment of animal skins. There were reports that he had taken to eating the insects of the desert—locusts—with a little wild honey to wash them down! There could hardly be a sharper contrast between John and some of the Pharisees and Herodians on the far shore, attired as they were in their immaculate robes, even here in the wilderness. John continued staring at them for a long moment, and then began to exhort them in a loud voice. "You children of snakes! Who warned you to escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon? Produce fruit that shows you have changed your hearts and lives. And don't even think about saying to yourselves, 'Abraham is our father.' I tell you that G-d is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones. The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire." Andrew turned to Jesus. "If looks could kill . . ." Jesus, seeing the expressions on the faces of the Pharisees, nodded in agreement. Andrew sneered. "You won't see any of that lot getting their pretty robes wet in the river with John. No, look there: it's tax collectors and soldiers. John tells them how to change their lives. What they must do before G-d's judgment falls on them."

They watched as John baptized those immediately around him, one after another. Then he addressed the crowd, speaking once more in a deep, clear voice: "I baptize you with water, but One who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. The rake he uses to sift the wheat from the husks is in his hands. He will clean out his threshing area and bring the wheat into his barn. But he will burn the husks with a fire that can't be put out." Andrew turned to Jesus again. "He keeps deflecting attention away from himself, keeps denying he is G-d's Sent One. But it's so clear that he is indeed G-d's prophet, preparing for the great and terrible Day of the Lord. It's all very confusing, but it's also breathtaking, to think that we might be living on the edge of the end of days!"

Jesus was silent for a while in reflection, as John returned to baptizing. Andrew looked at Jesus but could see that he needed to be left to his own thoughts. After several more minutes, Jesus suddenly stepped into the Jordan and started wading forward. John's back was turned, so he did not see Jesus silently and steadily moving toward him. Now standing in water up to his waist, Jesus reached out and touched the prophet, saying gently, "John." Hearing the voice, John jerked around abruptly. He appeared shocked, but before he could speak Jesus said, "Baptize me, John." Looking incredulous, John protested, "It is you who should baptize me, for you have come from G-d!" Jesus smiled at his cousin. Then Jesus' face stilled, as if listening to an inner voice. His eyes widened and then he said, "Still, let it be so, to fulfill all righteousness." John paused, looked deep into Jesus' eyes, and then nodded his assent. Placing his arm on Jesus' back, he held Jesus' two hands with his other arm. Very slowly he lowered Jesus completely into the water and then lifted him back out again. Time stood still.

Jesus looked up, and his eyes grew wide. A single cloud had formed in the sky, which was suddenly rent in two, and people started at the loud clap of thunder that accompanied it. But as Jesus later told his disciples, he did not hear thunder, but instead a voice from heaven that said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." And there was more than just the voice. Jesus would tell them that he received power from on high on that day, the mighty Spirit of G-d falling upon him and remaining on him. In fact it was only after the Spirit descended that he heard the voice from heaven. The Spirit heightened all of Jesus' senses, and he could hear the voice of G-d so much more clearly from then on. Indeed, from that day forward, he felt empowered, equipped for the task before him. Yes, this was the time. His decision to leave his family, however painful, was part of his Abba's plan for him. The experience at the Jordan had been the confirmation he needed: not merely a confirmation of who he was, but also that it was time for him to begin to fulfill his calling, to engage in the work he had been sent to do.

But as suddenly as Jesus had come to John, he left and waded out of the Jordan on the Judean side of the river. Once on the shore, he walked rapidly away so as not to draw any further attention to himself. It was as if he had an urgent matter to attend to, a pressing task to complete. Andrew, who had seen the whole encounter, was left to ponder, muttering to himself as he stroked his beard: "I wonder who that man really was. And why did John say that Jesus should have baptized him?"



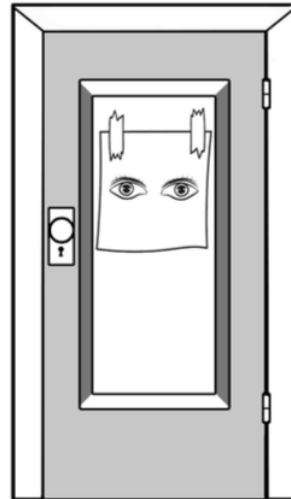
Numbers: God Makes Balaam's Donkey Talk Numbers 22:21-41

As Balaam travels to the Israelites, an angel stands in his path. Balaam doesn't see the angel, but his donkey does. By the third time his donkey stops, Balaam gets mad at the donkey, and God makes the donkey speak to Balaam. God wants to get our attention.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Through the Week

- Draw sets of eyes to remind you to look for God. (Or cut eyes out of magazines.)
- Place the pairs of eyes in places you'll see them often. Hang them on the fridge or front door, stick them to the car dashboard, or place them in backpacks and briefcases.
- Whenever you see the eyes, refocus on your surroundings. Remember that God is there with you. Say a quick prayer that God will help you pay attention to him.
- At the end of each day, talk with your family about what you noticed about God that day.



Talk About This...

- What are the top five things that get your attention? Where is God on your list?

THE MAGNOLIA
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

FAMILY WORSHIP 9:00 A.M.
ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
GENESIS SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:35 A.M.
SANCTUARY WORSHIP 10:45 A.M.

Mailing Address:

Magnolia First United Methodist Church
320 West Main Street
Magnolia, Arkansas 71753

Phone: 870-234-4530 (Church)

Pastor: The Reverend Dr. Gary L. Maskell

Email: homiletics2002@gmail.com

Webpage: <http://www.magnoliafumc.org/home>

Lectionary Texts for this Week
January 24, 2021

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Lectionary Texts:

*Jonah 3:1-5, 10,
Psalm 62:5-12 (UMH 787),
1 Corinthians 7:29-31,
Mark 1:14-20*

Liturgical Color: Green

Green symbolizes the renewal of vegetation and generally of living things and the promise of new life. It is used for the **Season of Epiphany** between the Sunday after Epiphany (January 6) and the beginning of **Lent**, and for **Ordinary Time** between Trinity Sunday (first Sunday after **Pentecost**) and the beginning of **Advent**.

Answering the Call in 2021

- 2.
3. Have you tested it?
4. Is it possible he is calling you to get training for something?
5. Is it possible he is calling you to start something?
6. Is it possible he is calling you to begin the walk of faith?
7. Are there discouragers or opponents or distractions that try to prevent your starting?

The Bible suggests that sometimes you have to make a start to find out what you should finish. Not everything should be finished, but sometimes, we won't know until we begin.

Like Samuel, the call you hear, or have been hearing, maybe your name, followed by "I've something special you to do." What will your answer be to God's call? Remember always that you have been blessed to be a blessing. So be one!

Pastor Gary

