

Coming through the Night

The challenge of Ordinary Time is to hold it as dear as we hold to the high feasts and holy days. The readings for this week urge us to stay awake and responsive to our true calling and identity as children of God. We are given Ordinary Time to explore with urgency so we may grow in this great, green season of the Christian year.

Focus scripture: 1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–10)

In this story of God's call to Samuel. The writer discloses very personal and private information about the nature of Eli's family dysfunctions, Samuel's relationship to Eli, and God's concern for the whole community under Eli's care. When God calls Samuel, it is clear to Eli that God had remained silent but will not be patient any longer. We see what happens when a family forgets who they are and what they represent in their community. We come to understand that God will awaken the prophets to hold the priests accountable. There is a sense of urgency in the story: "Wake up!" It seems to say, "know your worth and privilege!" Samuel is asked to guide the people toward self-reflection, repentance, and honesty, because all too often religious leaders and laity alike fall asleep, or we need help to recognize God's voice.

Psalm 139 focusses on personal growth and identity development through self-reflection. The writer describes what it is like to develop an identity based on knowledge of God's role in our lives. This psalm is about what it means to know who I am based on my understanding of who God is.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20 explains how countercultural it is to see each person's intrinsic value and individual worth. According to Paul, we can grow closer to God and each other when we know and respect our bodies and the bodies of others. Paul explains why our spiritual practices help us to understand our appetites for food or sex. This

letter would have been useful to the believers in Corinth who were surrounded by religious traditions that condoned or encouraged gluttonous behaviours as a way to experience or explore the human relationship to gods other than the God of Abraham. It would have been countercultural for followers of Christ to resist overindulging, and they would have been mocked for basing their spiritual identities in justice, equity, respect, and trust in the unconditional benevolence of God. Most people were well aware of how rare it was to seek truth about self and others.

John 1:43–51 is another glimpse into what it means to be honest with each other about God's purpose in an individual. John the baptizer called attention to Christ's identity. Nathanael makes it clear that John can proclaim whatever he believes is true about Jesus, but there would have been a bias against Jesus because of his hometown. Christ applauds Nathanael's truth-telling impulse and reflects that this desire to know and be known is a vital part of who he is created to be.

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Stories about awakening to God's call foreshadow the ways that God brings us through the unknown. God's ways are mysterious, yes, but these stories hinge on seeking truth and wisdom about ourselves and each other. The unknown does not thwart us; we pursue understanding about God and our call as God's people.



Focus scripture
1 Samuel 3:1–10
(11–20)

Additional scriptures
Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18
1 Corinthians 6:12–20
John 1:43–51

**Calling God,
your servants are
listening. Help us
recognize your
voice. Help us
respond to your
instructions with
courage and
honesty so that
we may show love
for you and your
people. Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events with
this week's scriptures. Go
to www.seasonsonline.ca
and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Children in this age group know what it is like to hear their name called. Sometimes it is their parents calling them to come in for dinner. Sometimes it is a friend calling them across the playground. Listening is also a big feature of a child's day – they listen to music, or to the television. They listen as parents or grandparents read them a story. They listen to the waves, or the birds, when they go for a walk. They are called to listen in many ways: to parents, to leaders, to instructions. As listening is a big feature of a child's day, the session begins with a simple activity of listening to sounds inside and out.

The focus scripture this week moves away from the gospel of Mark to a story from the Hebrew scriptures. The story of God's call to Samuel offers the children in your group an opportunity to hear one of the few Bible stories where a child plays a key role. It also offers an opportunity for children to consider that God also calls them to help others and share God's love. The story this week is an active one which will involve all the children in a drama. Pray that the children will experience the call of God in the life of Samuel, and in their own lives, as a blessing.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 45).
- ☐ Prepare a worship space with a green cloth, candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in the book of 1 Samuel.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), resource sheet ["Additional Songs"](#) (p. 76) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring a puppet (see information on p. 2) or a variety of items that make sounds (bells, bracelets, whistle, rhythm instruments, stones).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet ["Samuel Hears a Voice."](#)

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the necessary materials.

- ☐ **Activity sheet:** copies of resource sheet ["Here I Am,"](#) craft knife, construction paper; review instructions
- ☐ **Cup puppet:** disposable cups, yarn scraps
- ☐ **Message poster:** large sheet of poster board

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, the song "I Am Amazing" (p. 11 in *SGF Songbook*, #7 on *SGF Music CD*).



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Coming through the Night

Scripture

1 Samuel 3:1–10,
(11–20)

FOCUS To hear God's call in the story of Samuel

Gather

Welcome children by name; invite them to be really quiet for a few moments and notice what sounds they can hear.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table and invite a child to help light the candle, a reminder that God is with us. Point to the Bible and explain that it is a special book with stories about God's love. Explain that this day we come together to sing and pray and learn how to live in God's way.

Receive the offering.

Sing "God is With Us" (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)

Pray Dear God,
thank you for filling the world
with beautiful sounds.
Amen.

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

- ❑ **Puppet conversation** *Before bringing out Priscilla, call her name with different voices (loud, quiet, squeaky).*

Priscilla: Hello, everyone. That's my name! You were calling me!

Leader: That's right. What are some of the times that we hear our names called? (*Encourage responses.*)

Priscilla: Let's have some more fun and call out everyone's name. (*Priscilla uses different voices to call out each child's name. The children copy her voice and repeat the name.*)

Leader: That was fun. You know, God knows us each by name and can call us, too. Today's Bible story is about a young boy who heard God call his name. (*Place Priscilla nearby or have her say goodbye.*)

- ❑ **Listening activity** Provide a variety of items that make sounds and invite children to take turns choosing an item and making a sound. What makes a big sound? What makes a quiet sound? Use different voices (loud, quiet, squeaky) to call each child by name, with the rest of the group copying the voice. Talk about how it feels when their names are called.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the first book of Samuel. Explain that there are two books in the Bible with this name – first Samuel and second Samuel. Use the resource sheet "[Samuel Hears a Voice](#)" to present the story.

After the story

Action poem Invite children to pretend to be asleep. Say the poem to each child, inviting them to respond, as below.

Leader: (*Child's name*), God is calling.
Won't you wake up and listen?
(*Child's name*), God is calling.

Child: (*jumps up and says*) Yes, I will!

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Activity sheet** Children enjoy re-telling stories they have heard. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Here I Am](#)" and invite children to colour the image. Follow the instructions for cutting around the figure. Practice telling the story with the children as they make Samuel stand up and say, "Here I am, God. I am listening."



- ❑ **Cup puppet** This week's story encourages children to know that God calls them to help others too. Give each child a cup and invite them to draw their own facial fea-



tures on the cup and glue yarn scraps on the top as hair. Have them put their hands inside their cup puppets and say, "Here I am, God. I am listening."

- ❑ **Message poster** God asked Samuel to deliver a message to Eli, an older person. Invite children to think about what messages about God's love they might give to older people in their congregation. Print words and phrases from these messages on a sheet of poster board and invite children to use markers to decorate around the words. Think of a title together and display in the church hall.

Bless

Gather around the worship table and light the candle again.

Sing or listen to, if possible, "I Am Amazing" (p. 11 in *SGF Songbook*, #7 on *SGF Music CD*).

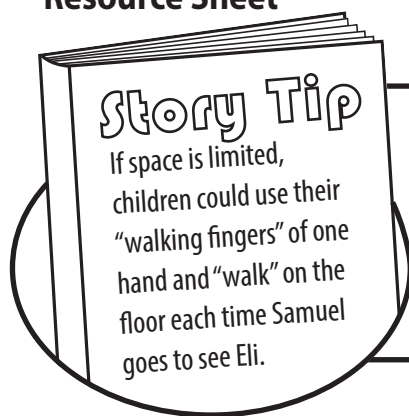
Pray Loving God,
help us to listen with our ears,
and help us to listen with our hearts.
Amen.

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), God loves you and knows you by name."

Reflect

How well do the children listen to you and to each other? In what ways did the children respond to the idea of God calling them?





Samuel Hears a Voice

(based on 1 Samuel 3:1–10, 11–20)

(Have one child be Eli. Indicate where Eli's bed will be. All the other children will be Samuel. Indicate where they will sleep. Encourage the children to listen and do the actions as much as possible.)

A long time ago there was a young boy named Samuel. Samuel lived in the sanctuary with the priest, Eli. Samuel was like a helper for Eli because Eli was old and couldn't see very well.

Every day Samuel would light the lamps in the sanctuary *(light lamps)*.

Every day Samuel would sweep the floors *(sweep floors)*.

Every day Samuel would help prepare their meals *(mix food in a bowl)*.

Samuel learned a lot about God from Eli. Eli was a very wise person.

One night, after Samuel had helped Eli settle into his bed, he lay down on his own mat *(lie down and pretend to sleep)*.

Suddenly Samuel heard a voice, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Samuel quickly went to Eli's room *(walk to Eli's bed)*. "Here I am. Did you call me?" he said to Eli.

The old man coughed and woke up. "I didn't call you. It must have been a dream. Go back to bed," he said.

And so Samuel walked back and climbed into his bed, and tried to sleep again *(return to mat)*.

But soon Samuel heard the voice again, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Surely it was Eli this time. So Samuel marched back to Eli's room *(walk back)*.

The old priest was snoring. "Here I am. I heard your call," Samuel shouted.

Eli woke up. Now Eli was confused. Eli knew that he hadn't called Samuel so he said, "Samuel, I do not need you. I did not call you. Please go back to bed" *(return to mat)*.

Samuel did as Eli said, but this time Samuel's head had barely touched the pillow when he heard the voice again, "Samuel! Samuel!" Now Samuel was worried. Samuel jumped out of bed and ran quickly into Eli's room *(run)*.

When Samuel reached Eli's room, he found the priest already awake. Eli said nothing for a moment and then Eli's eyes began to shine. "Samuel," said Eli gently, "I did not call you, but I think I know who did. If you hear the voice again, answer and say, 'Here I am, God. I'm listening. What do you want me to do?'" *(Children repeat Eli's answer.)* "Now go back and lie down" *(return to mat)*.

Samuel returned to his bed and lay as quiet as a mouse, hardly breathing in case he missed the sound of God's voice. And then Samuel heard it. Samuel heard God call out his name, "Samuel! Samuel!"

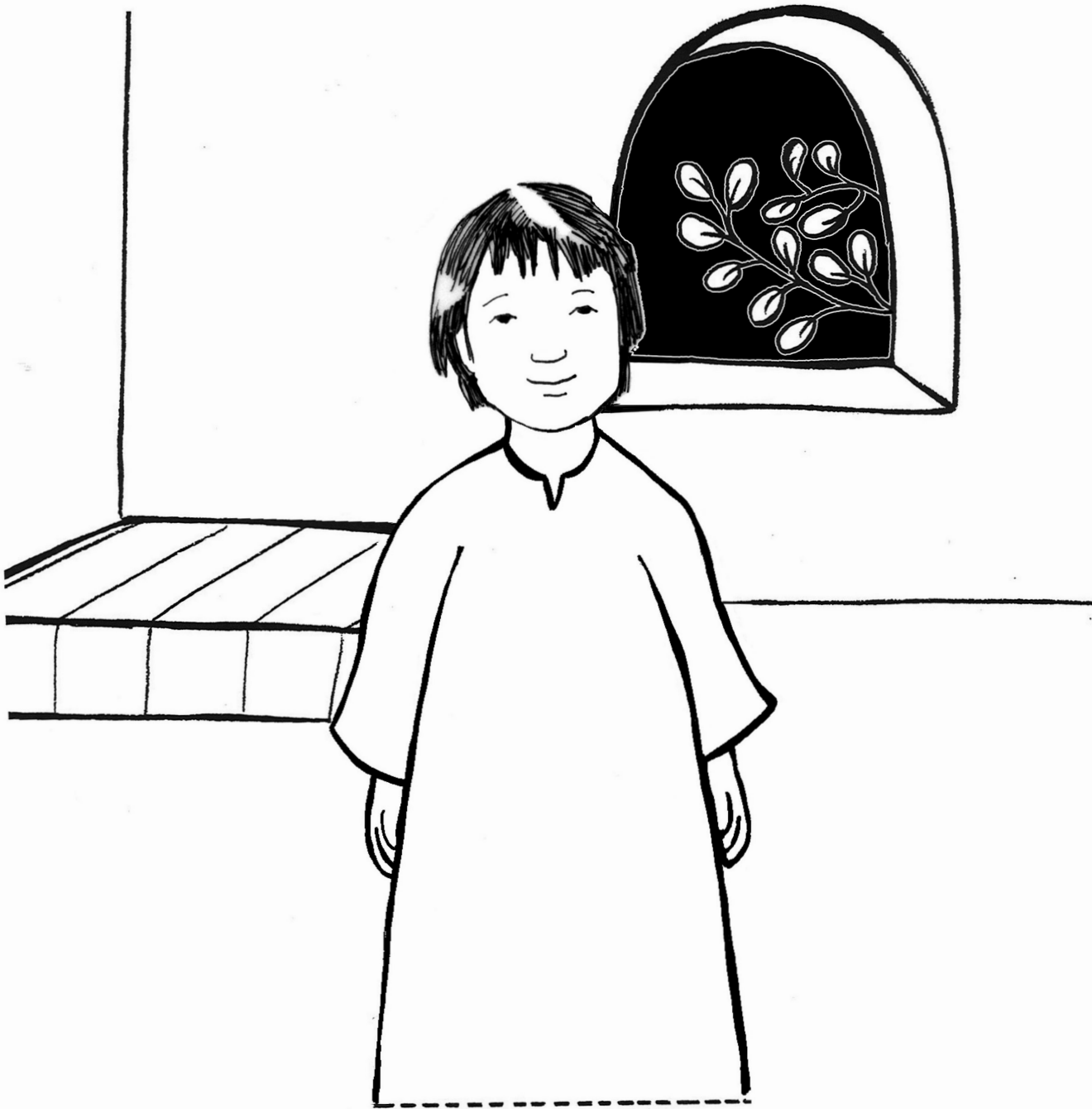
Samuel listened. And then Samuel answered. *(Children repeat, "Here I am God, I'm listening. What do you want me to do?")*

And God spoke to Samuel about things to come. Samuel would be God's messenger.

Wonder together about what God said to Samuel. Wonder together about what happened next in the story.



Here I Am



**Here I am, God. I am listening.
What do you want me to do?**

Instructions

- Cut off these instructions.
- After the children have decorated the picture, use an art knife or sharp scissors and cut along the solid bold line of Samuel.
- Fold along the dotted line.
- Each time Samuel needs to stand, lift the figure up to the fold mark.
- Lay him flat when he is in bed.
- Option: mount on construction paper to strengthen the figure.

Additional Songs

We Are Waiting

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

We are waiting, we are waiting,
every day, every day,
to celebrate a birthday,
to celebrate a birthday,
Jesus' birth! Jesus' birth!

Ring the Bells

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ring, ring, ring the bells.
Ring the bells today.
Jesus comes to share God's love.
Ring the bells today.

God Is With Us

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

God is with us, God is with us,
all the time, all the time,
comforting and loving,
comforting and loving,
Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

If You're Happy and You Know It

The musical notation is in 4/4 time, key of F major. It consists of four staves of music. The lyrics and actions are written below the notes.

Staff 1: *F* If you're hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. If you're
stamp your feet.
snap your fingers. *C7*

Staff 2: hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. If you're
stamp your feet.
snap your fingers. *F*

Staff 3: *Bb* hap - py and you know it, then your face will sure-ly show it. If you're
F

Staff 4: *C7* hap - py and you know it, clap your hands.
stamp your feet.
snap your fingers. *F*

Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry boo hoo.
If you're tired and you know it, give a yawn.
If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot.
If you're excited and you know it, give a jump.
If you're loving and you know it, throw a kiss.

God Loves Us

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will see.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God loves you and God loves me.
(Place hands over heart.)
We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)
Look around and you will know.
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)
God's love helps us all to grow.
(Bring arms up and hold hands above head.)

We Will Follow Jesus

(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Jesus
We will follow Je-sus
and do what Jesus did.

