



# Worship Notes

Friday, January 15, 2021

## FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Dear Friends and Family,

We pray this week for the ongoing safety of our nation. In light of recent events, we pray that protesters may peacefully have their voices heard, that those desiring violence may have those desires quelled, that law enforcement may safely protect the proceedings, and that our national transition of presidential power may be peaceful, carrying on our national legacy of democracy.

For all who govern, O Lord, may they serve according to your will for the world, that all may know justice and your reign. Amen

*Thank you for your generous support of our ministry*

Your continued giving makes an impact in our community as our church continues to be a beacon of hope.

Mailing your donations to the church office and maintaining your automatic giving helps support ministries across the nation and around the world.



*Please keep in prayer the following:*



Bradley Anderson, Josie Blake, Bev Coulter, Nancy Dowell, John Ellison, Linda Ellison, Dave Erlandson, Jim Erlandson, Brad and Jodie Haist, Cassie Jern & Family, Delores Johnson, Graham Johnson, Bob Kerschke, Ila Roseberry, Norman Worthington, Evelyn Volz, Darrell Thirtyacre, Donna Larson, Beckie Bean, Joy Johnson, Pat Root, Diane Bradley, Anna Lovdahl, Kim Anderson, Matthew Council, Rose Youngquist, Kathi Cruce

*Please let the church office know any updates that are needed to our prayer list.*

### Online Worship

At the recent council meeting, the council made the decision to maintain our online only worship presence for the foreseeable future. News agencies are reporting that our region of Illinois may begin following what is called Tier-2 mitigations, but the limitations for indoor gatherings remain the same as under Tier-3 mitigations. That limit is set at 10 people.

Our council is striving to balance two competing truths—we want to return to in-person worship and we want to maintain the health and safety of our community.

The council will revisit their decision in February and make future decisions based on available guidance from the Illinois Department of Health and the CDC.

### This week in worship



Our Gospel lesson this week is a special one to my family, it is the reason we chose our second born child's name.

Nathanael (with the "ae" vowel combination, instead of the more common "ie" vowel combination) is invited by Philip to come and see the new messiah, a man from Nazareth called Jesus. Nathanael initially balks at the invite, but humors Philip and goes to meet Jesus. The encounter changes Nathanael's life.

What does this story say to us in our own Pandemic days? Join us this week with our online worship and learn more.

## Congregation Meeting

This year's annual meeting will look very different than year's past. We are not able to gather in person for this meeting. We will be able to meet by Zoom.

A letter will be sent by our council president, Rose Sandstrom, sharing all the details. Here is a brief recap:

**Sunday, January 24th at 9 AM, we will have a practice Zoom gathering.** This will be a chance to figure out how we visit with everyone all at once on Zoom.

**Sunday, January 31st at 9 AM we will have our actual Annual meeting** on Zoom. We have items to be discussed, and your input and questions are valued. Please make sure you are able to join us for this meeting. Zoom has an option for using the phone to call in, if you do not have computer access.

**Then voting will happen on Sunday, January 31st from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM** in the church parking lot.

## Hybrid Annual Meeting

The Zoom portion of our annual meeting allows us to take attendance of who all joins, helping establish quorum and making our annual meeting official.

The drive-in voting allows us to have ballots to demonstrate the votes for our budget and our constitutional amendment. Those driving to the church will also be counted and will help establish quorum. No one will be counted twice.

When you arrive, pull up to the day care door. You will be marked on our attendance sheet and handed a ballot. You will be asked to pull forward to mark your ballot and hand it to a person standing by the rear entrance to the sanctuary building.

If you cannot drive to the church and would like a ballot, please call the church office. A council member will come to you on Sunday, January 31st, to ensure you are able to vote.

## *Blessings*

Then the Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" Samuel ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call you; lie down again." 1 Samuel 3:4-5

As we enter into the life of Samuel, a famed prophet in Old Testament times, Samuel is a young boy serving under a high priest named Eli. Samuel is not yet a prophet, he is more akin to a glorified acolyte with gopher duties. When he hears God's voice the first time, he thinks he is hearing his mentor call to him. But it is not Eli. In fact, three times Eli has to tell the young boy, "I did not call you, go back and lie down again." On that third time, Eli figures it out. Eli realizes the Lord is calling to speak to the young boy, and Eli directs Samuel on how to listen to the voice of the Lord. From this moment, Samuel will grow into a very important prophet leading Israel from the time of the Judges into the time of the Kings.

Samuel's story is an easy one to understand for us today. In a world of many voices, it is hard to discern which one we are to follow. This is a religious question, it is a political question, and sometimes we get tricked by voices we think we should trust in our emails. With all sorts of voices crying out, claiming to be the true voice, it is easy to misunderstand the voice we hear, and turn to someone else thinking they called and not the Lord.

This era has been called post-truth, in the sense that factions of political leaders and religions alike all claim to have the exclusive truth over all the others. Just take a moment and listen to someone who believes the earth is flat or that NASA never went to the moon, and you will quickly see how another person can live with an entirely different basis of truth. Even when confronted with evidence to the contrary, many of these won't believe the evidence instead opting for their selected truth instead.

In this story with Samuel, there is another important character. Eli is the high priest. Eli is expecting to hand over the role of high priest to his eldest son, and eventually his grandson. The Lord has other plans, since Eli's sons have not been faithful. This is why the Lord has come to Samuel. But before Eli's house is removed from power, Eli has a chance to mentor the young glorified acolyte in how to listen to the Lord. It is this moment that we are called to emulate Eli. We are called to be mentors to others, helping others discern the voice of the Lord in a world of competing voices. We are called to do this by training people how to listen to God's voice. Samuel was taught to simply say, "here I am, Lord. Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." And then we are called to emulate Samuel, to recognize we are servants of the Lord and we are to listen to him.

Listening to the Lord is actually easier than we make it sound to be. It takes time, and dedication, and a willingness to be still in the presence of the Lord. We are called to not presume of the Lord, but to let the Lord make himself known to us. It is a journey and one best done accompanied by the saints of God, the community of faith. May we be the servants, opening ourselves to hear the Lord speak, silencing the confusing voices and leading us on the path to truth once more. In peace, Pastor Jamie