

Sermon Title: **“Here Am I; Send Me!”**

Bible: **Isaiah 6:1-8 & Luke 5:1-11**

When: on Sunday, February 6th, 2022

Where: about 30 people (plus YouTube live streaming viewers) at Gilroy UMC

Opening Prayer

O Lord, thank you so much for calling us as your children, and as your servants. By the grace of God, we are here today. Let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.

1. Calling Story

Today’s scripture readings come from the lectionary. They are stories of calling. God calls us because we are children of God. God calls us because this world needs God’s love and grace. God calls us because God needs us for the kingdom of God. I believe that all of us have our own calling stories.

2. My Calling Story

I would like to share my calling story as a pastor. Since I was in junior high school, I wanted to be a pastor. That’s because I love the Bible, Sunday school, and the church. I wanted to be a pastor who teaches the Bible. So, my major in college was theology. I also attended seminary to get a Master of Divinity degree. I learned the biblical languages: Greek and Hebrew. I took many classes: Christian Education, Pastoral Care, Preaching, Old Testament, New Testament, and more. Even after seminary, I tried to further equip myself as a pastor. I

took church finance and administration classes, which were not taught at seminary. During the ordination process, my calling was testified to through many interviews and many reports that I submitted. I also discerned my calling as a pastor: What made me want to be a pastor? Can I be an effective pastor? But I never thought that I would become a pastor in the United States.

3. My Weaknesses

How many pastors have you met in your faith journey? Even though I became an ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church, I need to confess that this education and a long time of discernment do not make me the best pastor. Maybe, I can be one of the good pastors. But I am not the best pastor. I have a lot of weaknesses. I wish to have 48 hours a day. What I mean is that because I serve two churches, sometimes I cannot serve this church fully. If I had 48 hours a day, I might be able to know and serve you better and better. I wish I could become an extrovert. I am an introvert. So I need some time for myself. If I were an extrovert, I could spend more time with you. What if I had musical talent? What if I had a beautiful voice or played some instruments? Then, I might be able to serve you and the church more. What if I were a native speaker? Or what if I have a language talent? I learned that my tongue is very stubborn, even with all the practicing I do. I have an accent, and I cannot be free from relying on my sermon scripts. If my English were fluent, I could preach without a script, and be more fully engaged with you during this message.

4. By the Grace of God

To be a pastor, I pursued an education, earned a Master of Divinity degree, and I was ordained. But, I know that these do not guarantee me to be the best pastor. There are many challenges and reasons why I cannot be the best pastor. But, when I was called, after a long time of prayers and consideration, my answer was yes. That's because it is not I, but God who calls me. There might be a lot of reasons why we can be effective servants of God. There might be a lot of reasons why we cannot be effective servants of God. Beyond a lot of reasons, I decide to rely on the grace of God, who calls us. I am okay, not to be the best pastor. Please do not misunderstand this. I will do my best to serve you as a better pastor day by day. Who could have imagined that this Pandemic would happen? I had not been equipped for this. But, during COVID-19, I took some workshops about online and hybrid worship, and even metaverse ministries. I know that I am not the best pastor due to my weaknesses. But by the grace of God, I can be who I am and what I am, and I can serve you and this church as your pastor.

5. Our Outgoing Leaders and New Leaders

What is your calling story? When God was calling you, what was your answer? In the United Methodist Church, God is calling all of us as disciples of Jesus Christ. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. In particular, we elect lay leaders to serve this church. God calls not only pastors, but also our lay leaders. When they are called, they answer "Here am I; send me!" I hope for us to have a time to recognize our lay leaders, those who are outgoing and those who are new.

Outgoing Leaders

- Sonya Newton (Finance Consultant)
- Darroll Newton (Finance Consultant)
- Pat Freitas (Alternative Lay Member to the Conference)

Prayers for Outgoing Leaders

For our outgoing leaders, I prepared certificates of appreciation for their committed and dedicated service.

Let us pray. (edited from UM Book of Worship, p. 599)

Eternal God, whose steadfast love for us is from everlasting to everlasting,

We give you thanks for cherished memories, especially, our outgoing leaders' committed and dedicated services for this church and commend one another into your care as we move in new directions.

Keep us one in your love forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

New Leaders

- Roy Keeney (Vice Chair of Trustees)
- Val Kelly (Alternative Lay Member to the Conference)
- Jo Matheny (Financial Secretary)
- Kat Teraji (Treasurer)
- All of our Lay Leaders.

Prayers for New Leaders (edited from UM Book of Worship, p. 599)

(To Lay Leaders)

Our Lay Leaders, you have been called by God and chosen by the people of God

For leadership in the church.

This ministry is a blessing and a serious responsibility.

It recognizes your special gifts

and calls you to work among us and for us.

In love we thank you for accepting your obligation

and challenge you to offer your best

to the Lord, to this people, and to our ministry in the world.

Live a life in Christ

and make him known in your witness and your work.

Our Lay Leaders, if you are able, can you stand?

Our congregation, can you extend your hands toward our Lay Leaders?

Let us pray.

Almighty God, pour out your blessings upon these your servants

who have been given particular ministries in your church.

Grant them grace to give themselves wholeheartedly in your service.

Keep before them the example of our Lord,

who did not think first of himself, but gave himself for us all.

Let them share his ministry and consecration,

that they may enter into his joy.

Guide them in their work.

Reward their faithfulness with the knowledge

that through them your purposes are accomplished;

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Pastor to the congregation)

Dear friends, rejoice that God provides laborers for the vineyards.

Will you do all you can to assist and encourage [our Lay Leaders]

in the responsibilities to which they have been called,

giving them your cooperation, your counsel, and your prayers?

(Congregation) We will.

Let us give hands to our Lord!!!