

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

All of you know the story of young Samuel. He was a special gift of God to his parents, a child given in answer to prayer. Whenever Hannah looked at her little boy, I am sure her mind journeyed back to Shiloh, to her prayer and encounter with Eli. Here was God's answer to her prayer. Do you think a prayer of thanksgiving may have formed on her lips? I think so.

As Samuel grew up, she no doubt told him the story and began instilling in him a love for the Lord, for His Word and work. Was Samuel one whom God would call to serve Him in a special way? Hannah sensed he was and she nurtured him with the promises of God, preparing him for that day when he would begin his formal priestly training with Eli. What a wonderful job she must have done. The Bible tells us that Samuel began at an early age to prepare and to "minister to the Lord under Eli the priest."

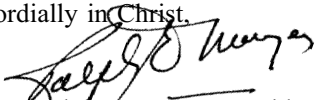
Samuel's story is the story of how God continues preparing future pastors and deacons for action in the church. It's a process that begins in the home with loving parents like Elkanah and Hannah who in loving the Lord share that love with their children. They recognize them as special gifts of God, taking seriously their parental stewardship. They pray for and with their children; they feed them with the Word and promise of God given in Jesus Christ. They help their children to consider how they might serve God with the gifts and abilities He gives to them.

This year's synodical recruitment initiative, *Prepare for Action – RSVP 2000* accents the Christian home. We pause to thank God for Christian parents everywhere and for all they do in bringing children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We also want to encourage them in this vital work, helping them to recognize the important role God has given to parents in preparing servants for the Lord, some of whom may be called at a future date to be like Samuel and enter into full-time service in the church.

Is it possible that some of those future full-time servants might be in your congregation? Indeed it is and you can help identify some of them. Look around in your congregation and in your congregation's families. Are there one or two whom you think God might be calling to serve Him as a pastor or deacon? Share that name with your pastor so that together as family, congregation and Synod we can nurture and encourage them as they consider how they might serve Christ and His Church.

May God continue to bless you and your congregation. May He fill you with every spiritual blessing so that with boldness you might declare the wonderful deeds of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Cordially in Christ,


Rev. Ralph E. Mayan, president