

# We need ← young people → need Christ

## Session Starter #29

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### Prayer

God of truth, help us to listen for your voice calling us to faithful and joyful service even when the church tosses and turns in the moonless night of uncertainty and despair. Inspire our thoughts, guide our words, and empower our deeds. May a longing to glorify you and bless the church be what motivates us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

### Introduction

Book of Forms section 113.3

The session will arrange for outreach to children, youth and adults in the community by encouraging them to participate in worship and programs of education and fellowship, and by inviting them to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

*Book of Forms section 113.3*

### Scripture

Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

*1 Samuel 3:10, NRSV*

### A Brief Commentary

With gratitude to God for the birth of Samuel, Hannah dedicated her son to the Lord. Still a child, Samuel was helping in the house of the priest Eli when he heard God call him in the stillness of the night. The Lord was also with Samuel as he grew up to serve Israel as judge and prophet.

### Reflection

At the General Assembly (2012), a commissioner noted that 50 years ago there were approximately 100,000 children registered in Presbyterian Sunday schools. He added the sobering observation that this total has slumped to 17,000 today.

Earlier this year, a professor asked a Canadian university English class how many of them had ever been to a Christian church. Only one student raised her hand.

Those of us who remember, or have heard stories about, burgeoning Sunday school classes find these realities disheartening.

A congregation called a new minister. The members of that congregation were excited because the minister had three young children. The hope was that such a minister (and family) would attract other young families to the congregation.

Many congregations long for more children and young people to fill pews and classrooms. We need to ask ourselves a question, though. Do we want young people in the church because it gives us hope that our congregation will survive...or...because we long to encourage young people to experience the Christian faith, be blessed by the wonder of God, and enjoy the positive influence of fellowship with other Christians? Of course, the answer could be all of the above, but unless the emphasis is weighted on the side of "inviting them to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord" we may be pursuing a misguided vision.

The story of Samuel can serve as a powerful reminder that God can call us at an early age and bless us throughout our faith journey. May we find ways to help the voice of God be heard in our congregation and by young people in the surrounding community.

### Discussion

1. What motivates us to want children and youth to be part of our congregation?
2. How might we arrange for outreach to children and youth in the community that is genuine, inviting, and in touch with the realities of today's culture?