



**MomenToUs**

**Season 01.Episode 02**

**TITLE: Here I Am, Lord! (I think.)**

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Welcome to MomenToUs! I am Pastor Rebecca Grate, the Pastor Mission Developer for MomenToUs and the host for our weekly podcast.

At MomenToUs, we believe that God is present with us in each and every single one of our moments: the moments of joy, the moments of heartache, the moments filled with relationships, the moments when we feel lonely.

We believe that our stories are connected to God's story and to one another's stories.

We believe that this connection and relationship changes our lives and our entire world.

We are so glad to have you joining us. Before we begin, I invite you to take a deep breath in, hold it while you count to three, and then slowly release that breath.

This week, we are going to travel back in time about 30 years, to when I was in my first years of attending church camp at [Camp Luther](#) in Cowen, West Virginia, tucked deep into the hillsides of the Appalachian mountains. I am confident that throughout the podcast, we will hear stories of how we notice God's presence when we spend time in nature, in the mountains, separate from

the busy-ness of our regular lives. This isn't necessarily a story about that. This is a story about how I started to stretch my theological muscles and began arguing and questioning well-seasoned pastors while at camp.

Camp Luther is an enormously important ministry for the Synod where I grew up, the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. The word 'synod' comes from two ancient Greek words that translate into English as journey together. Within our denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), this word refers to how different congregations and ministries journey together to share the good news of Jesus within their territories. Some synods are as large as a city and others are as large as 4 entire states!

Camp Luther, West Virginia, is a ministry of all of the congregations within the West Virginia-western Maryland Synod. There are ELCA Camps all across the country, many of which have programs for the entire summer and a staff that is on site for the entire season. This camp meets for only one week each summer, the third week of June. And it is entirely run by volunteers, some who travel from across the country to return to those hills, some who serve as pastors or deacons within the synod, some who live locally and want to be a part of ensuring this ministry continues. All who volunteer are somehow deeply connected with the congregations and ministries of the Synod.

I remember growing up and hearing some of the older youth in our congregation talk about how amazing Camp Luther was - they would talk about how excited they were for the weeks leading up to camp and they would come

back, full of stories after camp was over. Campers could not start attending until they had completed 3rd grade, so the countdown was on for me.

As soon as I heard the announcement during worship that camper applications were available, I immediately began pestering my parents to make sure they picked up the form and submitted it. Finally. It was the year that I had been waiting for. I would go to camp! And, in my mind, it was entirely because I had made sure that my parents and my pastor and every other grown up had not forgotten to send in my application. I had done it. I had made it!

The first evening, we gathered for what we called 5 o'clock news. I don't know if it still has the same structure now, but at that point it would have some announcements about that evening's programs, information about how to sign up for the badminton or kickball tournament, lots of songs, and we would learn more about the theme for the week or the theme for the day.

That night, we learned the story about the Call of Samuel, which is found in the book of 1 Samuel, Chapter 3. This is a story about how Samuel was called by God to be a prophet, which is someone God uses to call God's people back to faithfulness. There's much more to Samuel's story - there are two entire books of the Bible dedicated to his story - but that's about all the background you need for this.

This is the story of how God called Samuel to be a prophet:

<sup>1</sup>Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

<sup>2</sup>At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; <sup>3</sup>the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. <sup>4</sup>Then the Lord called, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ and he said, ‘Here I am!’ <sup>5</sup>and ran to Eli, and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ But he said, ‘I did not call; lie down again.’ So he went and lay down. <sup>6</sup>The Lord called again, ‘Samuel!’ Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ But he said, ‘I did not call, my son; lie down again.’ <sup>7</sup>Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. <sup>8</sup>The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here I am, for you called me.’ Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. <sup>9</sup>Therefore Eli said to Samuel, ‘Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

<sup>10</sup>Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ And Samuel said, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’ <sup>11</sup>Then the Lord said to Samuel, ‘See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle. <sup>12</sup>On that day I will fulfill against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. <sup>13</sup>For I have told him that I am about to punish his house for ever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them. <sup>14</sup>Therefore I swear to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be expiated by sacrifice or offering for ever.’

<sup>15</sup>Samuel lay there until morning; then he opened the doors of the house of the Lord. Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. <sup>16</sup>But Eli called Samuel and said, ‘Samuel, my son.’ He said, ‘Here I am.’ <sup>17</sup>Eli said, ‘What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.’ <sup>18</sup>So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. Then he said, ‘It is the Lord; let him do what seems good to him.’

<sup>19</sup>As Samuel grew up, the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. <sup>20</sup>And all Israel from Dan to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was a trustworthy prophet of the Lord. <sup>21</sup>The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

So after the pastor had read that story, he made the very important point that each of us has a call from God because God calls each of us to make sure the world knows of God’s love for everyone. It’s not just something for grown ups. I was astonished that God would think that my 8 year old self was able to be a part of the same call that God has given all of the grown ups.

And then, this pastor continued on to say something along the lines of that call included God calling each and every single one of us to be at camp that week and we said yes. All of us already have everything we need to respond to God’s call. I was confused and frustrated and indignant that, in fact,

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<sup>1</sup> [1 Samuel 3](#) (NRSV).

I had made the decision entirely on my own to attend Camp Luther, thank you very much.

This is my plug to ask you all to pray for every individual involved in any youth Christian education ministries because, my friends, they are tasked with teaching future church leaders, deacons, pastors, and bishops. And, they have questions. Because almost every day that week, I would seek him out and would ask him questions about this or just flat out tell him that God didn't call me to camp; I chose it. And he was equally persistent in telling me that God had worked through everyone who had told me about camp to call me to come to camp would not sway me.

I think every day that week, we sang the song: Here I Am, Lord, which has the chorus:

Here I am, Lord.

Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord,

if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

Every time I hear that song, I am transported back to Camp Luther, West Virginia, back to that particular week of my camping experience and remember how mad that story made me, how indignant that particular devotion had made me, but also how absolutely certain I was that I could approach this stranger,

this grown up, this pastor and tell him I wholeheartedly disagreed with what he said. And I knew that I was safe, that I would be heard, and that I wouldn't be brushed off.

This is one of the gifts of many church camps, particularly those I have experienced growing up and now becoming a pastor within the ELCA. As a camper, I remember experiencing a sense of belonging, for me and for all of my opinions and questions that I didn't have even at church and I didn't have at school or anywhere else my days took me. As a counselor and then as a chaperone, I have seen how campers continue to experience these moments of belonging, of recognizing God knows and loves them, and beginning to learn that they have gifts and calls given to them by God, right now, even though they aren't a grown up yet.

Church camps across the country are in their final planning stages for the summer - finalizing registrations for campers, contracts for their staff and volunteers, mending cabins, equipment, and supplies to make sure that everything is ready for their first campers to arrive in a few months. If you have a story about noticing God at camp, we would love to hear about it. I bet the camp you attended would love to hear about it as well.

Our ELCA Camps have programs for all ages, some even have family camps where multiple generations can camp together. If you'd like to get connected to one of our ELCA camps to attend as a camper, to volunteer, or to work, you can find a camp near you by visiting: [www.lomnetwork.org/sites](http://www.lomnetwork.org/sites).

It took several years before I finally got over myself to recognize that God works through the people in my life to call me to different things and that God works through me to call the people in my life to different things. It is an entire paradigm shift to release the want to be the person in control of all of these things. And, it's something I continue to struggle with. And if you struggle with this idea, that's okay. We're in this together, with God right beside us.

### **A Prayer for Being Called**

God who knows us and loves us,

We are surrounded by noise - audible, visual, and emotional.

It's really hard to hear you.

It's even harder to know when it's your voice or when it's someone else's voice or when it's our own voice trying to be in charge.

How do we know for certain?

How do we know what you are calling us to do?

Help us find some time away from the noise and the busy-ness.

Help us be certain when we are noticing you.

Help us even more strongly to be certain when it is not you.

We know you hear every single one of our prayers.

Help us notice when you are calling us and give us the bravery to say yes.

Amen.



Thank you for joining us for our weekly MomenToUs. We are looking forward to growing with each of you and are so grateful you are a part of the MomenToUs community.

Thank you to our Mission Partners, the Southern Ohio Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Their financial contributions and prayer have been instrumental in bringing this new ministry into existence.

And, I want to say thank you to Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Columbus for calling me to preach and lead worship this morning, yes THIS morning, while their Interim pastor is taking a much needed sabbath following Holy Week and Easter. If you want to join us for worship, to learn more about one of the Gospel stories where Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection AND how our doubts can be how we share the good news of Jesus for the sake of the entire world, Lord of Life will be live-streaming their 10:30 AM worship service on [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#). You can find them on both platforms using the handle: @acceptingall. I've also direct linked their Facebook and YouTube channels in this podcast's show notes, which are located on our website: [www.momentous.social](http://www.momentous.social). It is a joy being able to worship with so many different congregations each week, whether it's in-person or joining in online.

If you have noticed God this week, either through something that happened or through something you experienced through our podcast, we would love to know about it so we can give thanks for God's presence with you. You can do that in several different ways:

You can send us a direct message through our Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter accounts.

You can send us an email using [dailymomentous@gmail.com](mailto:dailymomentous@gmail.com)

Or, you can leave us a voicemail which may be featured in an upcoming podcast episode. To leave a voicemail, you may record a voice memo on your phone and email that to us. There are some tips and tricks located on our website, as well.

However you are engaging with MomenToUs, we hope that it means you are growing in your faith and noticing God's presence with you. When a podcast or social media post resonates with you, we hope you share it on your social media or directly with someone you know, to help them grow in their faith. And, if you are listening to our podcast on a platform that allows you to rate and review, we hope you do so. Each comment, interaction, and share helps our community grow and expand every day.

If you want to support the ministry of MomenToUs, know that engaging with us online is one way to do so. If you are able to give financially, you can visit our website and use the donate link. Each one-time or recurring gift ensures the MomenToUs Community continues to grow.

We give thanks for every single one of you, for being a part of the MomenToUs community, for listening to God's call to try something new, and for beginning to notice God's presence even more frequently in your life, in our communities, and in our world.

Until our next podcast, remember to breathe deeply and to remember that God is present with you every single moment.

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Music:

Best Moment - Music by [SoulProdMusic](#) from [Pixabay](#).

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