

**Text:** [Jeremiah 1:4-12](#)  
**Date:** June 4, 2023 – Confirmation & Grad Recognition  
**Title:** “Created to Be Called”  
**Theme:** The young, old, and everyone in between is created and called to do God’s work.

1

Today we celebrate Confirmation Sunday: it’s one of the most hopeful things any church can do  
It’s an annual reminder that God still calls young people to faith  
And I’m glad to be part of a community so committed to this truth that we’re willing to make an investment in them

So on behalf of Isabelle, Lilly, Amelia, Kyleigh, Jake, and Aiden, I want to start by saying thank you  
<To the parents, first, for your commitment to the church  
They learn first from you>

Thanks to all those who have worked with these kids throughout their lives: to our pastors and staff, to the volunteers in Sunday School and Bible School and youth group and confirmation over these past 13-14 years –  
what you are seeing is the fruit of investments of time, energy, and care

<And to our confirmation class, I thank you for putting in the effort, for showing up, participating in the discussions and doing the homework  
You are all awesome and we – the pastors, Mrs. Carl, the mentors – all think the world of you>

This is a hopeful and hope-filled day  
Not only do we celebrate these young people, but also our graduates, who go forth from here to make an even bigger impact  
On a world that honestly *needs* their help in so many ways  
On a world that is crying out for kindness, and justice, and love

## 2

Today I want to send us forth with a reflection on the call of the prophet  
Jeremiah

I imagine these words are familiar to many of us - the words Jeremiah  
heard from God:

“Before I created you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I set  
you apart.”

It’s a profound statement about a God who was reaching for us long before  
we ever thought to reach back

Long before we ever thought to take Jesus’ hand

Long before we ever felt the inspiration of the Spirit

God knew us and gave us a mission: to take part in the re-creation of the  
world

This is Jeremiah’s book, so it tells Jeremiah’s story

But we shouldn’t think that message was just meant for him

It’s for us too: “Before I created you in the womb I knew you; before you  
were born I set you apart.”

And if that message is meant to be universal, so are Jeremiah’s objections  
Specifically, the idea that we’re not up to the task

It’s thought that the prophet was in his late teens or early 20s when he first  
began to proclaim the Word of God

And it’s clear he wrestled with the calling, and even argued with God about  
it: “I don’t know how to speak; I’m only a child”

This isn’t uncommon

Even in the Bible, almost everyone who is asked to do something for God  
argues at first – to the point where I think God comes to expect it

Even Jesus has his 40 days in the wilderness!

And I think maybe there are two reasons why people have this reaction to  
the idea that they’re called

The first is this – and I want you to think about it

If someone DIDN’T argue, would you actually trust them to be about God’s  
work?

Because aren't people who are SO sure they're doing God's work actually the scariest people of all?

It's humility that keeps us checking in, to make sure that we're not getting it wrong – so it's useful

In worship, in prayer, in community with others – it's our lack of certainty and doubts in our own abilities that actually help us to stay on the right track

But the second reason we struggle to imagine being called to do God's work is that so often, we're led to believe that our voices don't matter  
Jeremiah is acutely aware that the world doesn't want to listen to young people

What was true then is still true today

Remember when you were in high school?  
There were a ton of dumb rules. Did you ever try to fight one?  
How successful were you? I know I was not.

Older generations always find fault and say, "kids today"  
As far as I can tell, there was never a time when this *didn't* happen

But here's the irony:  
as people get older, they often feel exactly the same way  
Like their voices matter less and less

And then people in the middle?  
They start out thinking no one will listen,  
Then when they start trying to bring change, they often get so burned out that they just...give up

### 3

So who is left to do God's work?  
If people at both ends of life perceive no one cares, and those in the middle are too discouraged, then who?  
The world NEEDS people who believe that God calls us and that God empowers us to bring change by raising our voices  
Young people, older people, and people in between

Because the world is a mess  
And it needs help  
This was true in Jeremiah's time, too

He was born as the nation prepared for war  
When Babylon was the rising empire preparing to invade his homeland  
During his lifetime, Jeremiah saw Jerusalem fall, the Temple destroyed,  
and his people carried into Exile  
And yet, he continued to speak the word that he'd been given to speak  
Because he believed what God said: that his words created worlds

"This very day I appoint you over nations and empires, to dig up and pull  
down, to destroy and demolish, to build and to plant."  
He recognized that the words that had been given him were not his own  
That their power did not come from him: "I'm putting my words in your  
mouth" – that's what God said  
"Don't be afraid of them, because I'm with you to rescue you"

The world will try to convince us that we don't matter, that our voices don't  
matter  
That the more just, more peaceful, more loving world that God dreams for  
us can't happen and won't happen  
That we should just give up

But here's the thing I want to say today:  
When you're called by God, when you've got God's vision, when you know  
God's presence – there is nothing that's impossible  
"I'm watching over my word until it's fulfilled"

#### 4

Today, we celebrate the six young people who make a choice to be part of  
what God is doing in the world  
We give thanks for their voices and their vision for what's good and right  
and holy  
For their commitment to "resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever  
forms they present themselves"

Today, along with our graduates, we send them forth with our blessing  
And the conviction that God created them in order to call them  
Setting each of them apart for a purpose

Today, we also give thanks for all those who have helped them receive this  
truth  
And we invite you to consider how you might get involved in this ministry

If you believe, like we do, that investing in the lives of young people is one  
of the most important things a church can do  
Then I want you to take some time to look over a booklet we've put  
together listing opportunities in our children and youth ministry area  
for next year

Talk to us  
Get more information  
And make a commitment to help kids recognize that they were created to  
be called  
That their voices matter  
And that they too can do God's work – that we all can

Congratulations to our 2023 confirmation class  
Congratulations to our 2023 graduates  
And thank you to every one of you has made an investment in these young  
people through the years  
It matters.

Amen.

**By Joe Monahan, Medford UMC, Medford NJ**