

**Worship Material**  
**Choices and consequences**  
**Material from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 9th June**

**Begin with opening prayer**

God of each day and each moment,  
you call us to make choices:  
choices about how we will live,  
how we will use our time and resources,  
who we will look out for,  
and what we will commit to.  
As we come before you now,  
bless us with wise discernment and loving compassion,  
that we may serve after the example of Jesus.

**Amen.**

**Read 1 Samuel 8:4-11,(12-15),16-20, (11:14-15)**

**Bible notes**

Who was to be Israel's king? During the period of the judges, the answer was God. The judges emerged as charismatic leaders, often in times of crisis, but their authority depended on God's validation. God had called Israel to be a unique nation directly under his care, a community bound by covenant, a 'priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:6). But now Israel was asking to move away from this model and be ruled by a king, 'like other nations' (v.5). They were rejecting the special status offered by God and wanted to adopt the pattern followed by their neighbours. It's possible to identify social and political reasons for this choice. They were under pressure from the military threat presented by the Philistines, who had kings. Samuel was ageing and his sons were not suitable to take up his role. The elders of Israel recognised the possibility of a power vacuum and took steps to avoid it.

Samuel was clearly opposed to this move. God's words to him reassured him that they were not rejecting his prophetic authority but God, setting this in the long history of ambivalent relationships between the Israelites and God. Samuel shared God's words of warning: a king would build a new kind of economy where the land and its produce was held centrally, and the people would be forced into forms of employment that created luxury and glory for

the king and his courtiers, but left the sons and daughters of Israel demeaned and unprotected in servile roles. Yet God opted to allow the Israelites to make the choice for kingship. However, God set up a way of king-making that ensured the king was God's choice, not the people's. It was Samuel who would have responsibility for identifying Israel's king, and he would anoint him in line with God's direction. Elsewhere too it's clear that God kept control of the process – Deuteronomy 17:14-19 restricts the wealth and wives of the king, who is to be chosen by God. 1 Samuel 12:14 is explicit: the king must follow the Lord.

Though kingship is not God's preferred option for governing Israel, this passage describes a compromise in which God responds to the people's wishes in ways that ensure ultimate control remains where it belongs – with the Lord, with whom they are in covenant relationship.

### **Prayer**

#### **A prayer of thanksgiving**

Lord God, we thank you that you have placed us in community. Our lives are made up of clusters of different people; some we have no choice about. But we thank you, Lord, that in you we can always choose how we react. Today we choose your way of showing love to all. We thank you, God of the people, that you are our king. You can make us a community that is transformed by your love and our actions.

**Amen.**

#### **A prayer to conclude**

May God give us eyes of faith to see God's way in the face of the many choices we face.  
May God be in our choices and our plans.  
May God bless us and all those we seek to serve.  
**Amen.**