

Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of February 23, 2025 - 7th Sunday in Epiphany
“Embracing Our Story”



Be still [2 Minutes]: As you hear these Centering Words, let us greet each other, greet the Holy Spirit, and begin with 1 minute of silence, breathing in the breath of God and allow the group to open themselves to the Holy Spirit today:

CENTERING WORDS: God calls us to serve, to grow in faith, and to build up the body of Christ. May we open our hearts, listen to the Spirit, and walk in love.

OPENING PRAYER: Loving God, You have called each of us into service, gifting us with purpose and strength. On this day, we celebrate the ways You work through us—teaching, leading, serving, and nurturing the body of Christ. May our worship today reflect Your grace, may our hearts be open to Your Spirit, and may we walk in unity, growing together in love. Bless this time, O Lord, that we may be renewed for the work ahead. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Be the Word Scripture Lesson: Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

L: The Word of God for all people

P: Thanks be to God

Be present: [Being mindful of others and sharing time]

1. Take a deep breath. *How is it with your soul?*

2. If you had to give the current chapter of your life a title, what would it be?
3. What is a story from your life—big or small—that has shaped who you are today?
4. Who is someone from your faith journey whose story has inspired you?

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

Paul writes this letter to the church in Ephesus, emphasizing unity and spiritual maturity within the body of Christ. He highlights that Christ equips the church with different leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers—to guide believers toward growth and unity in faith. The ultimate goal is that we all attain the full measure of Christ, working together to build something greater than ourselves.

This passage reminds us that faith is not just an individual journey but a communal one. Each of us has a role to play, and our stories—when shared—help strengthen the body of Christ.

1. This passage speaks about how God gives us different gifts to build up the body of Christ. How have you seen your own gifts at work in your faith journey?
 - a. Here are ways United Women in Faith uses their gift:
<https://youtu.be/IG2H5zH-ulM?si=bbTi15sq6mhzqzee>
 - b. Cooking, selling food, making rope, and sewing: These are all small business ventures supported by United Women in Faith through the Pasumai Ulagam program in Erode, Tamil Nadu, India.
2. Kara Mark encouraged us to *remember* and recognize how full and amazing our own stories are. What part of your faith story have you perhaps overlooked or taken for granted?
3. The church is filled with incredible stories of faith. What is one story from Faith UMC—past or present—that has impacted you?
 - a. Here's another story of ways United Women in Faith is faith and love in action:
<https://youtu.be/p7mBvu4d7Mc?si=6W0fwjnCgXHH-X-1>
 - b. With a grant from United Women in Faith, women in Sierra Leone started a small business producing oil from a local oil-palm field. The profits are shared as revolving loans among the women so they can attain economic independence.

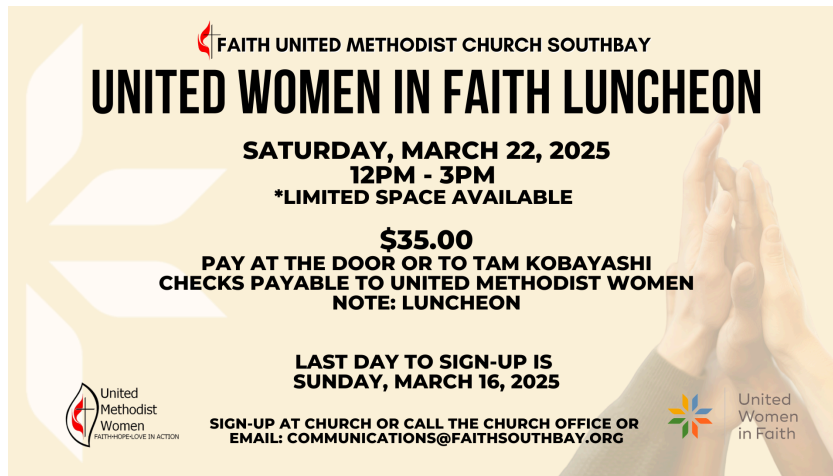
Be transformed: [Faith in Action]

Our stories are sacred. They shape who we are, how we serve, and how we build up the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13 reminds us that we are each gifted for a purpose—to grow in faith, to support one another, and to move toward unity in Christ. Kara Mark challenged us to remember and embrace our own stories, recognizing the fullness of God's work in our lives.

Take a moment to reflect deeply on these questions:

1. What part of your story do you hesitate to share? How might God use it to encourage or uplift someone else?
2. Think of a moment in your life where God's presence was undeniable. How has that experience shaped your faith today?
3. Is there anyone —past or present—who has embodied faith in action for you? What can you learn from their story?
4. Faith is not meant to be lived in isolation. Who is someone at Faith UMC that you can

intentionally connect with this week to share stories of faith and encouragement?



FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SOUTHBAY

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH LUNCHEON

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025
12PM - 3PM
*LIMITED SPACE AVAILABLE

\$35.00
PAY AT THE DOOR OR TO TAM KOBAYASHI
CHECKS PAYABLE TO UNITED METHODIST WOMEN
NOTE: LUNCHEON

LAST DAY TO SIGN-UP IS
SUNDAY, MARCH 16, 2025

SIGN-UP AT CHURCH OR CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE OR
EMAIL: COMMUNICATIONS@FAITHSOUTHBAY.ORG

United Methodist Women
FAITH.HOPE.LOVE IN ACTION

United Women in Faith

Joys & Celebrations:

- Alice Mark & Amara M-S bdays! (Feb 6)
- Christine Bone (Feb 10)
- Ally Kubo (Feb 13)
- Jolie Miyake (Feb 22)
- Jayne Watanabe (Feb 24)

For Healing and Wholeness:

- Diane Ueda-Banda
- Harry Lum
- Audrey Goto
- Sayaka Shigeta's MOM
- Fred Oshiro
- Masako Akiyama
- Florence Uchida
- Alvena Fukuhara*
- Victoria DelaTorre*
- Austin Maeda
- Nancy Matsushima
- Mary Tamura
- Harriet Tateyama*
- Brian Okumura (Sandy Ueyuenten's brother)
- Glenn & Millie Shimizu
- Larry Takumi
- Yoshi Yamasaki
- Pastor Sid Wilson (Walteria UMC)
- Claretta Foster
- Ryonos
- Maria Arevalo
- Baby Joel
- Sachiko

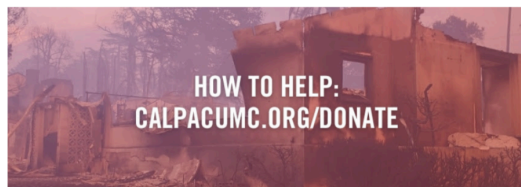
Life Transitions:

- Bess Kawamura (?)

- Sumi Horii
- Jack Hamada
- Emma Horiuchi, moving to San Diego to be closer to family by December
- Doris Kato, living in transitional boarding care
- Rev Harry Fujimoto's Transition to Japan
- Life transition for the Minei family, Dave & Soyoung Minei as they are transitioning to new jobs in Texas.

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord:

- Hannah Yamamoto (February 12, 2025) - Charter Member - RSVP
- Kanji Sahara (February 15, 2025) - JAFL, Wall at Columbia Park - RSVP
- George Toya (February 15, 2025)
- George Nakakura (November 2024)
- Melissa Utsuki (March 1, 2025)
- Faye Toma (December 26, 2024); Celebration of Life, Jan. 18, at 11am,



As we have been waiting to hear what the needs are for our sibling communities that have been affected by the multiple fires in Los Angeles County, the assessment of donations of items has been pared down due to the inundation of generous donations and lack of storage spaces. Here are the following ways we can help:

LOCAL DONATIONS

Two immediate needs are for **high-capacity generators** and **bottled water**.

Additional needs:

- **Gift Cards: Target, Grocery, Home Depot, Meal deliveries**
- **N-95 and Disposable face masks**

We will add more to the list as the requests come in.

West District COLLECTION SITES for the Mission Areas of El Tordondo, 605, and Being the Church, Long Beach:
Faith United Methodist Church: 2115 W. 182nd Street, Torrance, CA 90504 (off the 405, 91, and 110 fwys)

Lakewood United Methodist Church: 4300 Bellflower Blvd, Lakewood, CA 90713 (off the 605, 19, and 10 fwys)

Los Altos UMC: 5950 E Willow St, Long Beach, CA 90815 (off the 405, 605, and 19 fwys)

VOLUNTEERS

Our Disaster Recovery Task Force is working with local agencies, and we will announce volunteer opportunities as they are identified. Opportunities to distribute water and personal protective equipment will be first, followed by support with sifting through affected areas.

MONETARY DONATIONS

We've set up a special fund - the Los Angeles Fires Recovery Fund - where you can contribute directly towards relief and recovery from the effects of the winds and firestorms this week.

www.calpacumc.org/donate

Check donations payable to the California-Pacific Conference can be mailed to:
 California-Pacific Conference,
 Los Angeles Fires Recovery Fund,
 PO Box 6006, Pasadena CA 91102.



RESOURCES

LA COUNTY CHURCH SERVICES

Are you having regularly scheduled or special worship services this weekend? Please tag us in your social media posts so we can help spread the word about places to gather.

Cal-Pac Facebook: [@umcCalPac](https://www.facebook.com/umcCalPac)
 Cal-Pac Instagram: [@calpacumc](https://www.instagram.com/calpacumc)

SHARE YOUR NEEDS

Please share immediate needs from your communities with your District Superintendent or our Director of Justice and Compassion Essential Ministry, Rev. Dr. Denyse Barnes at dbarnes@calpacumc.org.

And Know that He is God:

Closing Benediction

Leader:

Go forth, embracing the story God is writing in your life. May your gifts build up the body of Christ, as so many faithful have done before us.

People:

We go, ready to share our stories, uplift one another, and serve in love.

Leader:

May the grace of God, the love of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit be with you always.

All:

Amen.