

**Faith Bible Study Guide
For the Week of January 18, 2026
Third Sunday after Epiphany Sunday
“We Are the Ones We Are Waiting For”**



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/ WORDS TO PONDER:

Place your feet on the ground. Remember that God meets us exactly where we are.

A Poem for South African Women

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of thousands
by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land
into new dust that
rising like a marvelous pollen will be
fertile
even as the first woman whispering
imagination to the trees around her made
for righteous fruit
from such deliberate defense of life
as no other still
will claim inferior to any other safety
in the world

The whispers too they
intimate to the inmost ear of every spirit
now aroused they
carousing in ferocious affirmation
of all peaceable and loving amplitude
sound a certainly unbounded heat
from a baptismal smoke where yes

there will be fire

And the babies cease alarm as mothers
raising arms
and heart high as the stars so far unseen
nevertheless hurl into the universe
a moving force
irreversible as light years
traveling to the open eye

And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet compa
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea:

we are the ones we have been waiting for.

By June Jordan

OPENING PRAYER:

Holy one, may our spirits be polished arrows in the quiver of your searching love. May our words ring true with shouts of praise. Use us, Gracious God, as instruments of your mercy and compassion. Fashion us into vessels of your abiding Spirit, that a world torn

by brokenness and pain might touch your healing love through our fellowship with you and with one another. Amen.

Be the Word:Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 49:1-7

Historical & Biblical Background

Isaiah 49 comes from what scholars often call **Second Isaiah**, written during or just after the Babylonian exile.

- The people of Israel are displaced, discouraged, and unsure of their future.
- They feel forgotten by God and powerless in the face of empire.
- Into that moment, God speaks a word of **calling, identity, and purpose**.

Read Isaiah 49:1–7 aloud, slowly.

Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the **LORD** called me;
from my mother's womb he has spoken my name.
2 He made my mouth like a sharpened sword,
in the shadow of his hand he hid me;
he made me into a polished arrow
and concealed me in his quiver.
3 He said to me, "You are my servant,
Israel, in whom I will display my splendor."
4 But I said, "I have labored in vain;
I have spent my strength for nothing at all.
Yet what is due me is in the **LORD**'s hand,
and my reward is with my God."
5 And now the **LORD** says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am[a] honored in the eyes of the **LORD**
and my God has been my strength—
6 he says:
"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."
7 This is what the **LORD** says—
the Redeemer and Holy One of Israel—

to him who was despised and abhorred by the nation,
to the servant of rulers:
“Kings will see you and stand up,
princes will see and bow down,
because of the LORD, who is faithful,
the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.”

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. What word best describes how your soul feels today?
3. Where have you felt heavy, discouraged, or tired lately?
4. Where have you felt joy, hope, or light—however small?

Be rooted: [Bible Study]

Themes for today's Bible Study: Calling, Light to the Nations, The Beloved Community, MLK Day







Exegesis & Commentary:

A. “Listen to me, O coastlands...” (v.1)

- The opening words stretch beyond Israel to the edges of the known world.
- God’s concern is never small or contained—it reaches outward.

Discussion Q:

1. Who are the “coastlands” today? Who is far away—from power, from safety, from hope?

B. “The servant” — Who is this?

Biblical interpretation offers multiple layers:

- An individual prophet
- Israel as a people
- A future messianic figure
- *And a community called by God*

Rather than choosing one, scripture holds them all together.

Faith Insight: Scripture works on more than one level at once. It speaks *then* and *now*. It speaks *to them* and *to us*.

Action:

2. Invite participants to hear the text again, silently inserting their own name where “servant” appears.

C. “I have labored in vain...” (v.4)

This is not triumphant language. It is honest.

- The servant feels exhausted.
- The work feels ineffective.
- Hope feels fragile.

Discussion Q:

3. Where does this verse resonate with your own experience of faith, justice, or service?

D. “It is too light a thing...” (v.6)

This is the heart of the passage.

- God’s vision is bigger than one group, nation, or identity.
- God’s people are chosen *for the sake of the world*, not protected from it.
- Light is meant to travel.

Key Theological Claim: God’s salvation is expansive, inclusive, and outward-facing.

E. We Are the Ones

The sermon reminds us that:

- Calling often begins with a simple yes.
- Faith is lived not only in belief, but in presence.
- The church is not meant to wait on the sidelines.

Reflection Questions:

4. Where have you seen “ordinary” people become carriers of light?

5. What does it mean for the church to *show up* rather than stand by?

F. MLK Day & Contemporary Connection

Why MLK Day Matters

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did not imagine change coming from a single hero.

- He believed in the beloved community.
- He trusted organized, persistent, faithful people.
- He knew movements are built, not handed down.

Key Insight: Dr. King was part of a movement—not the whole movement.

Current Events Tie-In

Many people today feel:

- Disillusioned with leaders
- Overwhelmed by global crises
- Unsure where their actions matter

Isaiah’s message speaks directly into that tension:

The work is bigger than you. We are still building.
And you are still called.



Discussion:

6. Where do you feel tempted to wait for someone else to act? Where might God be inviting *you* to show up instead?

G. Multimedia Reflection

Video Option 1: “*We Are the Ones We’ve Been Waiting For*” Boston Children’s Choir / Sweet Honey in the Rock

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbhkJmDLGRk>)

Invitation to listen prayerfully.

- What words or images linger?
- What emotions surface?

Video Option 2: “*What If*” – India.Arie

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCKFFitNxy4>)

Reflect together:

- What changes because people *did* act?
- What becomes possible when love leads?

Be transformed: [Faith in Action Challenge]:

1. Spiritual Practice: From Pressure to Possibility

Guided Reflection

Invitation to consider:

- One small way they already carry light
- One place they feel called to show up
- One step that feels possible—not overwhelming

Reminding ourselves:

God is not in a hurry.

We are part of a project larger than ourselves.

2. This week, notice:

- Where light is already breaking through
- Where you feel nudged to say yes
- Where joy shows up unexpectedly

Because the story is still being built. And we are part of it.

Prayers & Concerns / Announcements:



We lift up prayers for all of God's creation. Lord Hear our Prayers.

continued prayers for Healing and Wholeness

Rev. Alan Mark Emi Hino Kian Tehrani Priscilla Kandel
Alice Kajiyama Ernie Santiago Kiki Hashimoto Raquel M. Martinez
Alvena Fukuhara Faith Tanaka Kim Foster Rev. Mike Hirunuma
Amy Higa Florence Nakakura Kraig Nakano Ron Hamaguchi
Anthony Anderson, Sr. Frank Sato Rev. Kim Montenegro Rick Katsuki
Apolosi Lokotui Fred Oshiro Kelsey DeGracia Ruth Hirata
Audrey Goto Geri Shiraki Kenny Medeiros Ruth Taira
Austin Maeda Glenn and Millie Kyle Ichikawa Sandra Minjarez-
Barbara Tamura Shimizu Larry Takumi Grange
Betty Kobata Grace Tochihara Layne Nakasone Sandy Uyeunten
Bill Morris Grant Hanada Linda Jung Scarlett Bone
Brian Okumura Harriet Tateyama Liz Harner Stan Miyasato
Cami Bruns Haru Yasunaga Lucas Yniguez Steph Matsumaga
Chic Miyake Hisako Shohara Marion Antoku Sue Hamada
Christine Keim Ingrid Peterson Mae Nakakihara Sue Hasegawa
Clarett Foster Irene Munessato Mary Jung Susan DeGracia
Dan Segawa Jack Honda Mary & Bob Keily Susan Mizuki
Danny Tokudomi Jayne Watanabe [siblings] Susan Slade
Dan Yamashita Jehiel Vinlun Mary Marchand Takai Finau
Deron Tokishi Jerry Osaka Mary Tamura Theresa Apicella
Diane & Destiny Joanne Sato Mary Tamura ([tsutsui]) Tom Fukuhara
Ueda-Banda Jordan Sasaki Maxine Butcher Tommy Sakaguchi
Dr. DoAnn Tsuneo Joye Barker Mutuko Nishi Tselyi Mantooth
Kaneko Juliet Koyanagi Nancy Matsushima Victoria DelaTorre
Dr. Nguyen Kaitlyn Sabedra Noah Miyagawa-Sue Walker Wilkerson
Elaine Yoshida Karlynn Fernandez Oscar Phillip Bland Jr. Wayne Shimizu
Eleanor Ngai Kay Saxon Pam Fink Whitney Nakayama
Kenny Medeiros Patty Kobayashi Winnie Osaki

those in Community Living & Homecare

Chic Miyake
Doris Kato
Emma Horiuchi
Faith Tanaka
Rev. Harry Fujimoto
Irene & Tak Ryono
Jane Kiyohara
Marion Antoku
Mary Jung
Nobie Shiohara
Ruth Hirata
Sets Asano
Sue Hasegawa

for our Worldwide Community

for the Leadership of our Country and our Churches
for the immigrants: migrants, refugees, asylees

for our siblings in Christ who struggle and in need of God's care

for those who live in through wars, unrest, and violence

for those suffering and rebuilding after national disasters and man-made catastrophes

for All Our Saints

The Sato family on the passing of Terry Sato (neighbors of Pearl and Mel Iizuka, friends of Iseris and Sasaki families (1/1/26).

The Kwan-Magsayo family, on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Magsayo.

The Kinoshita family on the passing of Thomas Kinoshita. Celebration of Life: January 31, 2026, 11am.

Keith Tokuhara and family on the passing of Keith's aunt, Helen Nozaki (1/6/26). Celebration of Life: March 7, 2026, 2pm.

Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family, on the passing of John's cousin, Tim Ishihara (12/13/25).

for All Our Saints

Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto born to parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto on January 2, 2026. Proud Great-Grandma is Jane Kiyohara, whom Andie is also named after!

UPDATED 1.16.2026

Celebrations:

- Baby Adeline "Andie" Jane Yamamoto, proud parents, Jasmine and Matthew Yamamoto; great-granddaughter of Jane Kiyohara (1/2/26)
- Ryden Richard Wilkerson, proud grandparents, Teresa Sato and Rick Wilkerson (1/14/26)

- New Members! We welcome Risa Vargas and Stephanie Matsunaga!
- Retirement for Rev. Keith & Viki Inouye

Birthdays:

Scarlett Bone (1/21–Sweet 16)

For healing and recovery

- This week asking for prayers for:

FEEL BETTER SOON!

- Sandy Uyeunten
- Donna Iki
- Kenny Medeiros
- Pam Fink
- Diane Ueda-Banda
- Victoria DelaTorre
- Dan Yamashita
- Takai Finau
- Kraig Nakano **
- Alvena Fukuvara & Tom
- Mae Nakakihara
- Mary Tamuras (Kevin Tsutsui's g'ma on hospice)
- Jennie Shitakubo
- Douglas and Corinne Higa (Lynne Vinluan's parents)
- Apolosi Lokotui

- Always: Rev. Alan, Harriet, Victoria, Larry, Audrey, the Shimizus, Winnie, Tseyli, Walker, Nancy, Mary, Ruth, Faith, Irene, Tak, Winnie, Nobie...many who are homebound and those unable to be with us... and so many other that we all that we miss their presence next to us in the sanctuary and our groups.

- Frank Sato
- Mary & Bob Kiely (siblings of Ann Kiely)
- Audrey Goto recovery
- Alice Kajiya
- Larry Takumi
- Harriet Tateyama
- Tseyli Mantooth
- Kim Foster & Claretta Foster
- Walker Wilkerson
- Kiki Hashimoto (Sue Kunisaki

-friend)

- Rev's friends: Stan Miyasato, Darin Arntson, (Norma, Ashley)
- Susan Slade's friend, Sherrie
- Raquel Martinez (Julie's goddaughter)
- Mrs. Davis (friend of Kim Foster); lifting up her caregiving daughter and granddaughter

Traveling Mercies

- Nargis Basu - Traveling to India for 3 months

World Concerns:

- All who struggle, suffer, experience pain and grief...
- US government; restoration of benefits, medical, food stamps, social security...
- War-torn countries, Natural disasters...
- Immigrants, Refugees, Asylees losing rights and protections...

- Health Care system
- The homeless and impoverished
- The people of Venezuela and Nigeria
- Leadership (including clergy)0-

Absent from the Body, Present with the Lord

- Kelly Kwan & Peg Tadakuma on the passing of Kelly's grandma, Grace Megsayo
- Family of Terry Sato (passed 1/1/26) (Neighbor Iizuka's, Friends of Jason and Iseri's)
- Helen Nozaki (aunt of Keith Tokuhara) - Celebration of Life, March 7, 2026, 2pm
- Thomas Kinoshita (community) - Celebration of Life, January 31, 2026, 11am
- Rev. John Miyahara and the Ishihara family on the passing of Dorothy's son (100yo), Tim Ishihara (12/13/25)

And Know that He is God: Closing Prayer & Blessing

*God of calling and courage,
 You named us before we were born.
 You know our weariness and our hope.
 When the work feels too big, remind us we are not alone.
 When we feel small, remind us that light travels.
 Send us—not as saviors, but as servants.
 Not waiting, but willing.
 Amen.*