

Home Service for January 18, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Even the smallest person can change the world. Even the least among us can be a light that banishes the darkness.

Call to Worship:

Listen, O coastlands. Pay attention, people of God. We are called to be a light to the nations. We are created to sing of God's salvation. Shout praise for God's faithfulness. Rejoice in our many gifts. Come! Let us worship.

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.

Prayer of Confession:

Merciful God, when we succumb to despair and get lost in our fears of inadequacy, remind us who we are and whose we are. We long to feel worthy of your love and to rest secure in your call to be a light to the nations. Remind us, Loving Presence, to speak words of hope like Isaiah, and words of encouragement like Paul. When others ask us if we have found the Lamb of God, give us the courage and the faith to boldly proclaim: "Come and see!" Amen.

Words of Assurance:

*God polishes us as arrows in the quiver of holy love.
Christ calls us and sanctifies us to be the saints of God.
The Spirit fills us with light and leads us home.*

Read Psalm 40:1-11

I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.

² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.

³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.

⁴ Blessed is the one
who trusts in the Lord,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods. ^[b]

⁵ Many, Lord my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.

None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.

⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened ^[c]—
burnt offerings and sin offerings ^[d] you did not require.

⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll. ^[e]

⁸ I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart.”

⁹ I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, Lord,
as you know.

¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.

I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness
from the great assembly.

¹¹ Do not withhold your mercy from me, Lord;
may your love and faithfulness always protect me.

Prayers of the People:

Most gracious God: For your choice of one people among the world's peoples for the revealing of yourself and of your will for human life, we praise you. Through Moses, you gave your people the Law. Through your prophets, you charged them so to live by your Law that their lives might be a guiding light for all the nations. In your own good time, O God, you moved to reveal yourself firsthand, fully, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We give you thanks for the cherished stories which surround his birth, particularly for the story of that bright and wondrous star that guided wise men from far away to his side. With them, we hail the light of your love, for your creation and for us, which shone from that little boy and would shine with dazzling radiance from the adult he grew up to be.

On this holy day, we praise you for expanding your circle of witnesses to include, beyond his people, all those who find in him the Light of the World; for creating, out of his sacrificial death and resurrection, a new people, a worldwide community of his disciples, his ecumenical church. We pray for the church; for that strange, richly diverse company of women and men who have found in your divine Son a fresh start for human history and an unquenchable source of light.

Help us, O God, to let his light shine from us that we may be sources of light for others who stumble about in ignorance, anxiety, self-destructive passion, hatred or any other form of darkness. Grant that we may serve as messengers of your grace for loved ones and friends whose lives have been darkened by illness or who are at this very time walking through the valley of the shadow of death. In Christ's Holy Name. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is The kingdom, and the power and the glory forever and ever. AMEN

Read the Lesson: Isaiah 49:1-7

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.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

³ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech

and with all knowledge—⁶ God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 1:29-42

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

³² Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”^[a]

³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!”

³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?”

They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?”

³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon.

⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter^[b]).

Message

Our gospel lesson and our second lesson are about people being called by Christ. In our Gospel, the two disciples of John the Baptist who followed Jesus were Andrew and scholars believe that the second one was John, so Peter, Andrew, and John were called to be disciples that day. In 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks about his calling. Peter was called to be an apostle, called to change his life, called to serve

the Lord Jesus as a witness to God's grace in his life. Paul's watchword became, "Not I, but Christ." His only concern was that he would always be sensitive to the voice of God who had called him.

As members of the body of Christ, we have been called by God to be his people, called to be saints, called to be his church, called to be the ones who bring God's grace into this world. We think of God coming to us in his means of Grace, his word and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion, but we many times forget that we are called by God to be his means of grace in this world. We are called to be a means by which God's love, his forgiveness is brought into this world. You are a means by which God comes to those who are hurting, a means by which God comes to those who need to be forgiven, a means by which those who need love are loved. God works through people, through believers, through Christians which means through you and me.

We are called by God to be sent; forth into this world, just as Paul says in our first verse from I Corinthians that he was called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. We are sent, we are not kept safe in these four walls, we are not kept safe in our homes, at any place, but we are called to be sent out into the world to be with those who do not know the love of God in their lives, to be with those who are hurting, to be with those who need forgiveness, to be with those as they are in their everyday lives, as they struggle with all the brokenness of this world. What these two lessons show us is that the church is not these four walls, but the people inside who are called by God through Christ and his spirit to be the church.

Our lesson from I Corinthians tells us we have also been called to be saints, called to be believers in God, called to be ones who believe the promises of God are true for our lives. We know that the covenant we have with God is a covenant between a greater party and a lesser party, God being the greater and we being the lesser. God has called us to live in his covenant, called us to be his people because He wills it for our lives. We do not seek God first, He seeks us. God claims us to be His because He wills it for us. Why? That is the unanswerable question of time. Why would God call people who reject him, who would rather believe in their own selves, in their worth, in their own pride? Why would God call people who have only selfish motives in life, people who cannot see beyond themselves, why God calls that kind of people to be His we will never know. But He has, that is the amazing grace in which we live. God has called us to be his, called us to believe in the promises He has made for us, called us to be His children. He calls us as babies, as those who have no choice, as ones who do not even understand what is happening. God calls us to be his, to believe in his promise for our lives.

Paul says further that the promises we are called to believe in enrich our lives with every spiritual gift. Paul says that the grace of God gives direction, gives purpose, gives meaning, gives vocation to one's life. We are called by God to give honor and glory to Him in all areas of our lives. All of us have been given gifts by God with which we support our families, take care of our homes, or learn knowledge for future use. Whatever we do, we have been granted that skill, that ability by God in our lives. With that gift comes a responsibility, to use these gifts to a worthwhile end, to use those gifts for the honor and glory of God and in service to our neighbor.

Finally, Paul says we are called into fellowship by the grace of God. We are called into the church, we are called into this place so that we might receive support, encouragement, forgiveness, love and respect one another. It is within the church that we are to care for one another. It is a feeling that needs to be kept alive in our church. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in ourselves, that we cannot see the hurt, the frustration, the loneliness, the sorrow, the pain, the despair, or the anger in the heart of our brother or sister in Christ.

But the Christian community is a place and should be a place, where brothers and sisters can come and share their brokenness, where they can come and gain peace and comfort from a brother and sister, where one can tell to another the pain of life and know there will be support, concern and compassion. The church in its beginning was a very compassionate entity, and I feel our church has held onto and continues to show that compassion. But I wonder and worry about the world and the worldwide church that we are a such a tiny member of. If it has lost some of that compassion throughout the centuries. Has the world caused the members of the church to turn more inward, more concerned about themselves than about their brother or sister in Christ? May we never lose our compassion for those around us and may we pray for the Body of Christ to do the same.

Paul says we are called by God to be sent forth to be witnesses in this world for the grace of God. He says we are called to believe, to be saints, to trust in the promises of God for our lives. He says further that we are called into a fellowship, called into the church, called into the body of Christ to care for one another. We are called to be compassionate, to be loving people to our brother and sister in Christ. We are called to reach out to others in this world who need to feel the grace of God through us.

What we are talking about this morning can be summed up in one word, discipleship. We are called to be disciples, or followers of Jesus as members of the body of Christ. Discipleship is not what we do. Being a disciple is who we are, it changes everything. Being a disciple of Christ changes us from the inside out and

as we truly take our faith to heart and truly live that faith, just like Paul we too will be saying, “Not I, but Christ.” Amen.

Benediction:

*As we leave this place, remember:
God, who chose you before your birth,
who calls you and knows you by name,
now sends you out into the world—
to bring light to those in darkness,
comfort to those who grieve,
hope to those who despair.
And may the blessing of God,
the love of Jesus Christ,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit
be among you and within you
as you seek to do God’s will. Amen.*