

CONNECT GROUP – FEBRUARY 9, 2026

Introduction and welcome

Everyone is welcome whenever you can attend, even if only now and then. The Connect group is a time to get to know each other and have some (hopefully) meaningful discussion.

Opening prayer

Gracious Lord, help us to be salt and light in this world. Give us the courage to show up, and to do what we can about hunger, injustice and homelessness, to show our faith, to act and to love. Strengthen us and surround us with your love and kindness. Thank you that, during times of difficulty and discomfort in following you, you uplift and sustain us. Thank you for being our light and salvation. **Amen.**

Sharing – how things are going for each of us

This is a time to share what is happening with us, if people are comfortable doing this.

Scripture reading from February 8 (Epiphany 5)

Isaiah 58:6–9a

⁶“The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice and let the oppressed go free.

⁷ Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives.

⁸“Then my favor will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side.

⁹ When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.

Matthew 5:13–20

¹³“You are like salt for the whole human race. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless, so it is thrown out and people trample on it.

¹⁴“You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead, it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true. ¹⁸ Remember that as long as heaven and earth last, not the least point nor the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with—not until the end of all things. ¹⁹ So then, whoever disobeys even the least important of the commandments and teaches others to do the same, will be least in the Kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, whoever obeys the Law and teaches others to do the same, will be great in the Kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ I tell you, then, that you will be able to enter the Kingdom of heaven only if you are more faithful than the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees in doing what God requires.

Comments by Rev. Ali in her sermon on February 8:

- The Gospel reading from Matthew (salt and light) is a favourite passage in the Bible. It's significant that it immediately follows the Sermon on the Mount.
- We must do more than just say we believe in Jesus' message to the world. We must 'show up', and do what we can about hunger, injustice, homelessness, oppression. We must demonstrate our faith, and love and act.
- We may not think we have much influence, but Rev. Ali gave the example of 150,000 people gathering last week in downtown Toronto to protest what is happening in Iran. (Following the communion liturgy, Rev. Ali also led a prayer service for the people of Iran, those who have suffered, those who are bereaved.)

Discussion points

- What are the practical functions of salt (preserving, seasoning) and light (guiding, exposing) in the ancient world, and how do these translate to being a disciple today?
- In what ways can a Christian 'lose their saltiness' or hide their light in today's culture?
- How does the command to be 'salt and light' immediately following the Beatitudes change the way you think about our daily interactions?
- What does it mean for our lives to be a 'city on a hill' in our communities?
- What was the nature of the scribes and Pharisees' righteousness, and why was it insufficient? What does it mean to have a righteousness that 'exceeds' that of the Pharisees?
- How does the Matthew passage challenge the idea that living by the law is purely about following rules, rather than about a heart transformation?
- Where has God placed each of us to be a preserving or illuminating influence?
- What 'hidden' areas of our lives need to be brought into the light to fulfill this calling?

Closing prayer

Creator God, you call us to love and serve you with body, mind, and spirit, through loving your creation and our sisters and brothers. Open our hearts in compassion. This we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**