

CONNECT GROUP – MARCH 9, 2026

Introduction and welcome

Everyone is welcome whenever you can attend, even only occasionally.

Opening prayer (Collect from March 8 service)

Eternal God, give us insight to discern your will for us, to give up what harms us, and to seek the perfection we are promised through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **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.

Excerpts from Gospel reading of March 1 (The Woman at the Well **OR** The First Evangelist) **John 4, selected verses**

Jesus said to [the Samaritan woman], “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water ... Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ... the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming ... When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you” ... Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him ... Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.”

Gospel reading of March 8 (Nicodemus) **John 3:1–17**

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the

flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹"Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

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

- Rev. Ali contrasted the people in the two Gospel readings:
 - The Samaritan woman on the margins of society, who was open to Jesus' words and prepared to accept him as the Messiah, to tell others in her city that he was the Messiah, and to bring those people to Jesus to hear His message for themselves
 - Nicodemus, an educated Pharisee, devout, religious, a leader and theologian, who had difficulty with the concept that Jesus was teaching, about being born again, not of the flesh but of the Spirit, a spiritual rebirth
- We cannot be perfect
- We cannot know everything
- Both faith and doubt can exist side by side in our hearts and minds.

Discussion points

- We have two examples of faith: the Samaritan woman's immediate acceptance by, and Nicodemus' slow, questioning, and private faith journey (we know he finally accepted Jesus' teachings, and brought a large quantity of expensive spices to help Joseph of Arimathea bury Jesus after the Crucifixion).
- The point could be made that the Samaritan woman had nothing to lose, whereas Nicodemus had very high standing among the Jews, and might lose a great deal of wealth and status by becoming Jesus' follower (which he ultimately did).
- Can we relate to Nicodemus, as an understandable figure for those who struggle with doubt or fear of social consequences for their beliefs, or who are slow to grasp the concepts?
- Does understanding this help us to encourage others to become disciples?
- Does understanding this help strengthen our own faith journey?

Closing prayer (blessing from March 8 service)

Into whatever wilderness the Spirit leads you, walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God; walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High; walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you. And may the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, be upon you, help you, and change you as we walk with the Lord during this season of Lent. **Amen.**

Let us connect again on Monday, March 23, 2026.