



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



*Shaped by love and
patience*

Epiphany 2a

18th January 2026

Dennis Webster

A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

Epiphany 2A

Isaiah 49.1-7

Psalm 40.1-12

1 Corinthians 1.1-9

John 1.29-42



Made with the assistance of AI,
including Grammarly® and ChatAtlas GTP5
Canva – Affinity Publisher and
Ulysses, and
church.tech

Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

Almighty and everlasting God, who
dost govern all things in heaven and
earth;
Mercifully hear the supplications of thy
people,
and grant us thy peace all the days of our
life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Shaped by Love and Patience

Today's worship invites us to reflect on how faith is formed — not at a distance, but through relationship.

Much of our world is shaped by efficiency and immediacy: words sent quickly, demands made from afar, problems solved without encounter. Scripture offers a different way. God, who governs all things in heaven and earth, does not address us from a distance, but draws near in mercy, knowing us by name and shaping us over time.

Paul writes in this spirit. He does not write to control a community, but to hold it together in love. He speaks as one who belongs, trusting that truth can only be heard where relationship already exists. Even when correction is needed, it is offered within gratitude, patience, and care, so that peace — not division — may grow.

Across today's readings, we see a shared movement: from distance to nearness, from uncertainty to trust. The first disciples do not begin with understanding — they remain with Jesus. The psalmist speaks faith from within the gathered people, and prays simply to be taught and led. Isaiah reminds us that God's work begins before we understand, in hidden places where we are already known and called.

Faith, then, is not about rushing to certainty. It grows as we stay, listen, speak truthfully, and allow ourselves to be led. In our shared life — through care, witness, patience, and love — we are shaped for peace and drawn more deeply into the abiding life God gives us in Christ.

May this worship form us in that faith, shaped by love and patience, and lead us into the peace God grants all the days of our life.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

Shaped by love and patience.

Isaiah 49.1-7

Psalm 40.1-12

1 Corinthians 1.1-9

John 1.29-42

Distance shapes our world. An urgent email demands action from an unseen sender, vanishing before the echo fades. It's efficient but empty. In old films, James Bond rarely looks up. "Miss Moneypenny, take a note." A letter is sent, and a problem is solved. The world moves on. Words become tools – efficient, distant, and emotionless.

Paul's letters differ. He doesn't write to control, but to bridge the gap. He writes to a community he loves, even at a personal cost. Beneath these voices lies a deeper meaning. In Isaiah, God doesn't speak from afar. He knows names and calls. Every word is spoken in love.

Paul does not write from a distance. He writes as one who belongs. He remembers how the community began. He knows the faces, the stories. He knows how things can fall apart.

Corinth, a lively port city, was a diverse hub of cultures and beliefs. The church, like the city itself, was restless, marked by spiritual gifts and the risk of division. Paul's letters aimed

to bring the community together, strengthening their relationships through grace.

The church in Corinth carried the noise of the world within it. Paul responds not with harshness but with gratitude and kindness, saying, "I thank my God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus."

These words reveal his gentle affection and patience. "I have not restrained my lips... I have spoken in the great congregation."

Paul writes knowing his words will be heard aloud, carried into the life of the community. He begins with trust—the soil where correction can grow. Correction without relationship hardens the heart.

In John's Gospel, the disciples initially lack certainty; they begin by remaining with Jesus. In the Psalms, faith is shown as a communal experience that impacts all areas of life. We are encouraged to pause and listen intently, allowing understanding to develop gradually.

Paul writes to form us through relationship, not control. Isaiah reminds us that God's work begins before we understand, and we are shaped in secret. Faith doesn't rush from uncertainty to answers but calls us from distance to trust, from surface to depth, from acquaintance to abiding.

Faith is the centre. Everything else gathers around it. Faith does not demand resolution. Faith grows through nearness, truth, and humility. God does not ask us to hurry from uncertainty to certainty. God calls us to move patiently from distance to relationship. To stay. To listen. To speak.

truthfully. To let ourselves be led.

In our congregation, witness takes many forms: reaching out, supporting those whose voices are overlooked, and offering care to those who struggle. In these simple acts, the ancient call becomes present. Vocation becomes presence. Each of us finds our place in the unfolding story.

Every role, no matter how small it might seem, is beautifully seen in Christian teachings as part of a larger story of faith. Each act and expression of love is appreciated and meaningful, reminding us that everyone has something valuable to contribute.

Like the unnamed disciple—the beloved one—who watched and came to know, this is the journey of a heart seeking truth.

I am that disciple.

You are that disciple;

The **entire community** is the disciple.

Each of us, in relationship with Jesus, is the **beloved disciple**.

The first disciples did not understand who Jesus was —
(short pause)
they stayed where he stayed.

The psalmist did not speak from a distance —
(short pause)

he spoke from within the gathered people.
And when the way forward was unclear,
(pause)
the prayer turned simple:
(slow)
teach me... lead me.

That is how God works —

(longer pause)

not by demanding certainty,

(beat)

but by calling us into relationship

not by forcing understanding,

(beat)

but by transforming us as we remain,

(slow)

speak truthfully,

(slower)

and allow ourselves to be led.

The invitation of faith is not to know everything, but to trust enough to stay. In time, we discover we have been known all along.

The invitation is simple and profound.

Faith grows not by grasping answers, but by remaining with Christ until knowing is given, not called to certainty, but to stay — and to let God lead us into truth.

**Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience.**

**The Scriptures do not ask us to crack them.
They ask us to dwell in them.**

Questions for Reflection and/or Group Discussion

How can we practically build deeper relationships within our congregation this week, rather than remaining at a polite distance?

Faith is formed — not at a distance, but through relationship... It grows as we stay, listen, speak truthfully, and allow ourselves to be led.

Identify one person or group you normally greet briefly. This week, choose a concrete act of nearness: a longer conversation, shared prayer, a visit, or a follow-up message that listens rather than fixes.

When faith feels unclear or unsettled, what helps you remain patient and trusting rather than rushing to answers?

"The first disciples did not begin with understanding — they remained with Jesus... Faith does not hurry us from uncertainty to certainty."

Set aside a short, regular time this week simply to remain — in silence, prayer, or Scripture — without trying to resolve anything. Notice what it is like to stay rather than explain.

How does Scripture shape faith as something lived and spoken within community rather than held privately?

"The psalmist speaks faith from within the gathered people... 'I have not restrained my lips.'

As a group or individually, read Psalm 40:9–11 or Psalm 143:8–10 aloud. Reflect on how faith sounds when spoken with others, not just about God in private.

Who in our church community might feel unseen, uncertain, or overlooked — and how can we respond with patience and care?

"In our shared life, this faith takes shape in simple, faithful acts... supporting those whose voices are overlooked."

Name (without judgement) a situation or group that may feel marginal. Consider one collective action — prayer, practical support, or intentional inclusion — that expresses belonging rather than efficiency.

What personal cost might discipleship require of you at this stage of your life — in time, comfort, reputation, or emotional risk?

"Paul writes not to control, but to hold a community together in love... trusting that truth can only be heard where relationship already exists."

Reflect prayerfully on what it might cost you to stay, to speak truthfully in love, or to remain present when withdrawal would be easier. Ask where God may be inviting you to choose relationship over safety.

This five-day devotional will shed new light on the sermon from this weekend. Join us as we explore the themes of light, courage, and hope, encouraging us to turn the page in life with faith and trust in God's steady guidance.

Five Days of Light, Courage, and Hope

Epiphany 2A Devotional Study



Day 1 – Isaiah 49:1–7

Known Before We Know

God speaks through Isaiah of being known and called long before the servant understands his own purpose. The work of God begins in hidden places — before clarity, before confidence, before recognition. This reading reminds us that vocation is not something we invent, but something we discover over time, often quietly and patiently.

When life feels uncertain or unfinished, this passage reassures us that God is already at work. Our task is not to rush toward understanding, but to trust that we are being shaped by love and patience. Even when our efforts seem small or unseen, God's light is already reaching further than we imagine.

- Where in your life do you feel "hidden" or unsure of your purpose right now?
- What might it mean to trust that God knows you before you know yourself?
- How does patience become an act of faith rather than delay?

Pray for courage to trust God's shaping work in unseen places.

Give thanks that your life is known and held by God.

Day 2 – Psalm 40:1–11

Speaking Faith from Within

The psalmist speaks of waiting patiently for the Lord, and then of telling the story aloud — not privately, but within the gathered community. Faith here is not silent or hidden; it is spoken honestly

from lived experience, shaped by trust rather than performance. This psalm invites us to see faith as something shared. When we speak truthfully about God's faithfulness — especially after waiting — we strengthen one another. Light spreads not through perfection, but through testimony rooted in real life.

- What has God brought you through that is worth remembering or naming?
- Where might you be holding back from speaking faith because it feels unfinished?
- How does sharing faith within community build hope for others

Pray for the grace to speak honestly about God's faithfulness.

Ask God to use your story to encourage someone else.

Day 3 – 1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Held Together by Grace

Paul writes to a community under pressure, diverse and restless, and begins not with correction but with gratitude. He reminds them that grace has already been given, that God is faithful, and that they are held together in Christ even when challenges lie ahead.

This reading shows us that courage often begins with reassurance. Paul's words invite us to trust that God is at work not only in individuals, but in communities — shaping relationships, strengthening patience, and sustaining hope through grace.

- Where do you see God's grace at work in your community right now?
- How does gratitude change the way we face challenges together?
- What helps you trust that God is faithful even when things feel unsettled?

Pray for unity and patience within your community of faith.

Give thanks for the grace God has already poured out among you.

Day 4 – John 1:29–34

Recognising the Light

John the Baptist points away from himself and toward Jesus,

naming him as the Lamb of God. This moment is about recognition rather than understanding — seeing who Jesus is before fully grasping what that will mean.

Epiphany invites us to notice where light is already present. Sometimes courage looks like paying attention, listening carefully, and allowing our understanding to grow slowly. God's guidance is often steady and quiet, inviting trust rather than urgency.

- Where do you notice signs of God's light in your life right now?
- What helps you recognise God's presence without needing all the answers?
- How can attentiveness become a daily spiritual practice?

Pray for eyes to recognise Christ's light in ordinary moments.

Ask God for patience to let understanding unfold in time.

Day 5 – John 1:35–42

Come and See

The first disciples follow Jesus not because they understand him, but because they are curious enough to stay. Jesus' invitation, "Come and see," opens the way for relationship before certainty. Faith begins with presence.

This final day reminds us that turning the page in life does not require full clarity. It requires trust — the willingness to remain, to listen, and to follow step by step. As we stay close to Christ, hope grows, and light continues to guide us forward.

- What might "staying with Jesus" look like for you this week?
- Where is God inviting you to take a small step of trust rather than a big leap?
- How does patience shape the way you follow Christ?

Pray for courage to respond to Jesus' invitation, "Come and see."

Ask God to lead you gently into hope, one step at a time.

End notes and further reading

End notes and further reading

Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians
Andrew McGowan
substack.com/@abmcg
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A

**Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience.**

Brabarlung Totem

This is produced on
GunaiKurnai Country and
our respects are made to
the First Nations people
everywhere.



Prepared by Rev'd Dennis Webster, Rector of the Anglican Parish of Paynesville, Diocese of Gippsland for personal or small group use.

Acknowledgement of use appreciated

Subscription to "www.breaking-open-the-word.org" is available.

Also substack: substack.com/@tastigr

Published every weekend, usually on Saturday, AEST.

Biblical Quotes are from The New Revised Standard Version - Anglicised, which is © 1990 the National Churches of Christ, USA.

Study notes are prepared in conjunction and by subscription of www.church.tech, an AI open source for pastors. Content is modified for local use.

Images are either from public domain, theworshipcloud.org, original work or generate tastigr.info

is registered to D. M Webster
and all rights are reserved. © 2026

www.breaking-open-the-word.org
Email: dennis-at- breakingopenttheword.org