

*Readings for January 14, 2024*  
*United Church of Strafford, Vermont*

**Call to Worship** *from Isaiah 49 and MLK, Jr.*

Leader: Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention,  
you peoples from far away!  
The Spirit of God called me before I was born.  
It made my mouth like a sharp sword,  
in the shadow of its hand it hid me.

People: **And it said to me, “You are my servant, Israel,  
in whom I will be glorified.”  
But I said, “I have labored in vain,  
I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity;  
yet surely my cause is with my God.”**

Leader: And now the Spirit says, “It is too light a thing  
that you should be my servant to raise up  
the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will give you as a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

People: **This hour of history needs a dedicated circle  
of transformed nonconformists.  
Our planet teeters on the brink of annihilation.  
We as Christians have a mandate  
to be nonconformists.**

Leader: I do not minimize the complexity  
of the problems that need to be faced....  
But I am convinced that we shall not have  
the will, the courage and the insight  
to deal with such matters unless...  
we are prepared to undergo a mental and spiritual  
reevaluation, a change of focus.

People: **Only through an inner spiritual transformation  
do we gain the strength to fight vigorously  
the evils of the world  
in a humble and loving spirit.**

All: **Now let us begin.  
Now let us rededicate ourselves  
to the long and bitter—but beautiful—  
struggle for a new world.  
This is the calling of the children of God.**

*continued*

*1 Samuel 3:1-10*

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to God under Eli. The word of the Spirit was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple, where the ark of God was.

Then the Spirit of God called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Spirit called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

Now Samuel did not yet know the presence of God, and the word of the Spirit had not yet been revealed to him. The Spirit called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Spirit was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if the Spirit calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, God, for your servant is listening.'"

So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Spirit came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

*Matthew 9:35-38*

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages... When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."