

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship in Jesus' name, we remember that we do so on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the W̱SÁNEĆ. We acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting injustice and asking God to lead us along paths of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

➤ *He is Lord (repeat)*

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Call to Worship

In a spirit of love and gentleness, let us worship God.

In a spirit of listening and hopefulness, let us worship God.

In a spirit of anticipation and purpose, let us worship God.

In a spirit of waiting and wondering, let us worship God.

Come, let us worship God who loves – who speaks. The one whose purpose for us is good. The one who waits for us, and on whom we wait. Come, let us worship God!

† Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

Loving God, we gather in Jesus', united by the Spirit, remembering that the stories we hear about you today have transformed so many other lives for so many centuries. It is amazing to consider how lives not so very different from our own carried your love from one generation to another, from one church to another, from one part of the world to another. As we join together in worship, open our eyes to new opportunities to express our love for you – to new opportunities to share your love in the lives we touch.

Week by week we open our lives before you, acknowledging ways we lose track of you. We are driven and feel busy, or lulled by routine, so we let other things come before you in our lives. Changes upend us and we don't know where to turn. Forgive us when we forget that you are with us day by day. Renew us in your love, we pray. Amen

On the Emmaus Road, Jesus met friends who were discouraged and distracted by his death. Yet when he spoke God's word to them, their hearts burned within them. Hear God's word of forgiveness today. May the fire of God's love warm our hearts with God's promise of peace and new life.

➤ *Be still for the presence of the Lord (remain seated)*

† Prayer for Understanding

Living God, you speak to us in sacred story, through friendship and conversation, in bread broken and wine poured out. Send us your Holy Spirit as the Scriptures are read. May our hearts burn within us as we encounter your truth, through Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen

Scripture **Acts 2: 14a, 36-41** [NT 119]

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

Therefore, let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."

And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

1 Peter 1: 17-23 [NT 232]

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Luke 24: 13-35 [NT 90]

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?"

They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, "What things?"

They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him."

Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening, and the day is now nearly over."

So, he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!"

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

After his wife died, C.S. Lewis wrote that he thought his grief might be less if he intentionally avoided places he and Joy had frequented by limiting his travels to only those places where they had never been together. So, he switched grocery stores, tried different restaurants, walked only along streets and paths that he and Joy had never taken. But it didn't work. To paraphrase Lewis, *"I found out that grief is like the sky above – it is over everything."*

The two travelers in Luke 24 seem to think that by *getting out of Dodge* maybe they, too, could walk away from their grief – leave the bad memories of the previous Friday behind. Jerusalem had become like an empty house from which all the children had gone. It was haunted with memories – haunted by hope deferred. Jerusalem was the place where their dreams had died. It was more than high time to hit the road and see if they could leave their troubles behind.

Of course, it didn't work – *grief is like the sky...*

They thought Emmaus maybe would be the place to go but as they trek that way their conversation keeps circling back to the death of the One they had loved, the One in whom they had hoped. ***Had hoped*** – how wretchedly that sums it all up.

Frederick Buechner says all of us travel the Emmaus Road eventually. Where is your Emmaus? Do you have a place you go to get away from it all – a place to which you escape so you don't have to think about how lousy life in this world can sometimes be? Maybe it's the mall where the noise of commerce and the rush of people keep you from thinking about life. Maybe it's a bottle that helps numb you to the more bitter truths that swirl in your mind or in the world. Maybe it's the escapist fare of movies, TV, or books that take you away from it all. We try to escape our troubles. That's when we head to Emmaus.

As they trudge the seven-mile journey remembering Jesus, an oblivious stranger comes up to them: *"Shalom! What's up, friends?"* The question catches them off guard. After all,

doesn't everybody know the latest?! *"Where have you been, friend?"* they ask. *"You must be the only one in the whole province who hasn't heard about the recent disaster!"*

It is probably a sign of the enormity of their grief that they reacted in that way. Probably there were lots of people who hadn't heard what, to the disciples, was headline news. To some it may have been noted only in passing – just another Roman crucifixion – happens all the time. Just a side story buried on page three of the *Jerusalem Gazette*. Big deal – pass the comics and the crossword please...

This stranger on the road must have been one such indifferent tourist because he didn't seem to know a blessed thing about any of it. So, they explain things to the stranger – retell the gospel story of Jesus' ministry, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection – more or less admitting in the end that the One on whom they had pinned their hopes did not pan out. They had made, it appeared, a rather large mistake – a life-shattering mistake. *"How could we have gotten things so wrong?"* they wonder.

This stranger responds to their grief – their dejection – their shock and horror regarding what has happened – how Jesus, a good man, a prophet, a man powerful before God and people – has been crucified and buried – and how his body has disappeared from the tomb. And suddenly, the stranger, who appeared so clueless a moment before, changes. He has the audacity first of all to call these disciples foolish, and before they can object, the stranger has launched into a quite serious and thorough Bible study.

He responds by taking the despairing disciples on a journey through the law and the prophets. He opens God's word to them – showing how the scriptures foretell all that Jesus did, all that he suffered, even how he would die – and what purpose it serves. The rest of the trip to Emmaus just flies by! With breathtaking sweep and exegetical precision, this anonymous fellow traveler retells the story in a new way. The last time they'd heard anyone talk about scripture in such an invigorating fashion was... well, never mind.

The stranger on the Emmaus Road taught the travelers about the mind of God and the purpose of God and how Jesus fit in with it all. He not only clarified God's word, but interpreted their experience in light of that word. Their hearts burned within them as the stranger talked – as he *opened the Scriptures to them*. We have been taught – we know – that the reading and study of scripture – the proclamation of the message – the living out of the good news is the way we meet Jesus – the way we meet God. The gospel story is retold and interpreted. Yet, the travelers – the believers – still do not recognize Jesus. They know the story but not its deeper meaning. They experience burning in their hearts but do not yet understand why.

Before they know it, they are standing in front of the *Motel Emmaus*. With a slight wave and a nod, the stranger says, *"Nice talking with you"* and then keeps walking. So, Cleopas pipes up: *"Sir! Look, the sun is setting which means the thieves along the highway will be coming out soon. It's not safe to travel alone – stay with us at least tonight."* They invite a stranger to eat with them – offer the hospitality for which Jesus is known and the man agrees. After having washed the dust of the journey off faces, hands, and feet, the three find a place to eat. And before they know what's happening, the stranger reaches for the flat bread, lifting it up in a strikingly familiar way.

The unknown guest becomes the host – breaking, blessing, sharing bread with Cleopas and his friend – the gathered community. It is in this act that the disciples recognize the stranger as Christ. In the breaking of bread suddenly it all comes together, the penny drops, the puzzle pieces fall into place – Jesus is present again with them – revealed. They know instantly who he is but just as they are ready to cry out, *"Jesus!"* – he is gone.

The moment of revelation is fleeting – however it continues to fuel their memory and to empower the weary travelers to carry on. They now know that Christ walked with them on their journey – walks with each of us on our journey – they now see that in the breaking of bread, Christ comes to be known to them – comes to be known to us.

It is in that act – in the breaking of bread and the prayer of thanks offered – that the two people, whose minds were clouded by anxiety and grief as they walked from Jerusalem to Emmaus – have their eyes opened.

It may be precisely on the Emmaus Road where we are most apt to find Jesus. He cares enough for us to be there with us. Maybe he meets us on the way and walks along side as we silently trudge step after step – maybe we find him waiting once we get to the destination. But Jesus is there. We catch a glimpse of him in the kindness of a stranger – see him in that note of encouragement that arrives just in time – in whatever sign has meaning for us.

The simple fact is that we don't spend all our lives in obviously holy places like Jerusalem. Sometimes we even think that a holy place is the last place we want to be and so we head out of town – head to Emmaus – go someplace where we don't expect to run into anyone from the community of faith. But then we do see Jesus – even if our glimpse is fleeting – and we know for sure he is with us – we know all over again that the world changed in the Easter moment – that it changes in us today.

The travelers recognize that the stranger who is with them – the stranger whom they have invited into their fellowship is the risen Christ. Now that they see and recognize Jesus with them, they are changed – filled with joy and excitement.

"I knew it!" Cleopas exclaims. *"Didn't you wonder about this, too? The way he taught us – the way he applied scripture – wasn't it eerily familiar all along?!"* Then, stuffing the bread into their pockets, they sprint back to Jerusalem – covering those seven miles in record time. In the dark and danger of night they return to Jerusalem to bear witness to the disciples and to bring them needed assurance.

Grief is like the sky. It's over everything. But so now, apparently, is hope.

They recognize Jesus and they turn around – head back to town – their despair becomes hope and joy. It is the same road, the same people – but the experience changes their direction and destination. It is the same road, the same seven miles between Jerusalem and Emmaus – but their return is upbeat. It is the same road, the same two disciples – but there is something new and different about the travelers. Their excitement moves them naturally toward their friends who have been trapped in the same hopelessness. They feel great urgency to share this good news – to witness to others – making special note of the fact that Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This is the beginning of the church. The followers experience the living Christ in word and sacrament – in the interpretation of the scripture and the breaking of bread. The living Christ is key to perceiving the word of God – he reveals it to those who journey on the Emmaus Road. The living Christ is key to the revelation of Jesus with us in the sharing of bread. His presence at the table invites each believer into an intimate, firsthand relationship – makes our faith intensely personal and truly communal.

The Emmaus story is about remembering, studying, sharing, and responding. The gospel story is recalled, retold – what we do each week in worship – what we do whenever we read scripture. God's word is studied, unraveled – it happens as we ponder what we read in the quiet of our own homes, or discuss in study groups, or question the interpretation of the offered message. The meal is shared, bread broken – whether the sacramental supper of communion or the afternoon tea poured, a family supper, a congregational lunch or Knox Café. We respond with a changed direction, a new outlook – confirming, strengthening, encouraging and deepening faith as our experience is joined with that of others – with the gathered community.

Jesus travels the Emmaus Road with us, whatever that road is for you – blessing and transforming – causing our hearts to burn with hope and conviction. Jesus invites us into

a relationship of solemn intimacy and is present with us as we share that experience with others. We may be uncertain of the story and what it means – we may not see all things clearly, yet Christ Jesus will open our eyes – our minds – our hearts. The word will be a light to our path and his holy meal will sustain us on the journey. Jesus comes looking for ordinary people to receive God's gifts of grace, forgiveness and love. And as we receive, we are invited – encouraged – to share...

We are those ordinary followers encountered on the Emmaus Road – transformed to serve God. Remember... study... share... respond...and may your hearts continue to burn within as we journey together in faith, knowing that while *grief, like the sky, is over everything* – so too, is hope. **Amen**

➤ *Come to us, beloved Stranger*

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Offering and Prayer *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

Our lives overflow with God's blessing and goodness in Christ and in creation. Out of the bounty of our lives, let us offer God our gifts with overflowing gratitude.

Generous God, you bless us with life, purpose, and opportunities to serve in the world you love. We offer our gifts in Christ's name, not seeking greater gain, but desiring to enrich life around us with your love. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

➤ *When I call upon the Lord with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Lord of amazing surprises, you put a catch in our breath and wings on our heart. We praise you for this joy which is too great for words. We praise you for this wonder of love that embraces our tears, our songs, our experience. We praise you for this mercy that blots out our betrayals and bids us to begin again – to mend what is broken in ourselves and to forgive what is broken in others.

Holy One, you offer life and laughter and love to each of us. We praise you for this kingdom unleashed in us and us in it – for its enduring hope. We praise you for this resurrection madness which is wiser than we are and in which we see how great you are, how full of grace. We praise you...

➤ *When I call upon the Lord with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

We bring our requests to you because you told us to do so. Behind all our asking is the deeper longing for you – we praise you, O Lord, and desire you above all else.

Hear our prayers for friends and family, co-workers and community figures...

➤ *When I call upon the Lord with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Hear our prayers for health and healing, for strength and courage and hope...

➤ *When I call upon the Lord with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Hear our prayers for the world and for all who strive to make it a better place, especially...

- all who are valiant for truth,
- all who work for justice and peace,
- all who are engaged in the relief of poverty,
- all who seek to rescue the fallen,
- all who struggle for the restoration of unity in the church,
- all who bear witness to Christ,
- all who suffer for righteousness' sake.

➤ *When I call upon the Lord with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Lord of marvelous revelation you put a catch in our breath and wings on our heart. We praise you for this joy which is too great for words. We seek you in all of life – in our delight and in our need we come to you in the name of the one who encourages us to pray with confidence... ***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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

➤ *I'll love the Lord*

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Blessing

May we go with Emmaus faces – full of surprise and wonder – for God is among us. May our eyes be open, our hearts freed, and our minds unlocked. And may the grace of the Risen Christ, the love of God and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit, embrace us all. Amen

➤ *Jump with joy*

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