

Worship #2 Listening To Our Lives - Hearts Strangely Warmed

INVITATION TO GATHER

ONE: In the beginning there is a Story
TWO: **told around campfires in the desert**
ONE: shared around tables when bread was broken.
TWO: **written on pieces of soft leather**
ONE: then in pages bound together in a book.
TWO: *(Holding a Bible.)* **These are our sacred stories.**

Open and place Bible near the campfire.

ONE: Our spiritual journey is made of stories.
TWO: **a flickering of the Divine here**
ONE: a spark of hope there
TWO: **a flame of insight**
ONE: a kindling of faith.
TWO: **These are our spiritual memoirs.**

Light a candle and place by the Bible.

ONE: Here in this place,
ALL: Gathered around this light,
(1) We are pilgrims, *(places a stone)*
(2) Walking the road of faith *(places a stone)*
(3) Listening to our lives, *(places a stone)*
(4) Sharing stories. *(places a stone)*
ALL: Our hearts strangely warmed.

SONG

“Storymaking God” by Jan Berry

In the stories that surprise us,
when we find the words to tell,
in the meaning that delight us,
with their liberating spell;
in the dawn of hope awaking,
in the wisdom that we find,
God-with-us in storymaking,
speak the words that free our mind.

PRAYER

God of our Emmaus journey
Finding us where'ever we are
Walking beside us

Listening to Our Lives #2

PREPARATION

This is a basic outline. Adapt as you need for your setting or tradition.

You may wish to have a stone for each one to take home. You will need a stone of varying sizes for the Invitation to Gather and will need to prepare stones for the Theme Conversations. See below.

INVITATION TO GATHER/READERS

You will need four readers, each to carry a stone to place around the campfire or on a table with the light and Bible. The four might be the same readers for the scripture reading and the four reflections.

THE SONG: Storymaking God

This song is suggested for use in the four Worship Services prepared for this series. This is the first verse. It is sung to the familiar tune: Abbot's Leigh.

You can buy a PDF download from the Iona Community for a very reasonable price. It includes several other prayers/resources. See - <https://www.ionabooks.com/daily-life-pl10148.html>

It is also found in *Bare Feet and Buttercups* by Ruth Burgess, pg .233

Opening our eyes
Warming our hearts
to the gift of Holy Presence:
Here is this place,
connecting with us in community,
may we find such presence
in our singing and praying
in our giving and living.
Listening to our lives
may our hearts be strangely warmed. Amen.

THEME CONVERSATION

Make sure you have stones for everyone. They can be of varying sizes; some to fit in pockets and some large and smooth enough to write on. For the theme conversation, you might want to write, with a sharpie marker, your favourite bible verse on one rock. Write a one-word prayer on another. Do you have a special rock? Bring it and share the story.

Sometimes you just need a rock! Have you ever had a special rock? (*conversation*) Some people carry a special stone in their pocket. If they feel a little scared or lonely, they can reach into their pocket and hold it. It helps remind them they aren't alone. It's their prayer rock.

Some people write words on their prayer rock. Maybe words like "thank you" to remind them to be grateful. Some people write a scripture verse.

Some people paint beautiful rocks and put a word on them like Love, or Hope, or Trust, or Joy and then hide them in places where people find them. It's like finding a surprise gift.

We have a prayer rock for everyone today. (*Pass them out.*) Perhaps you will write your own words on your stone.

We can hold our prayer rock while we sing.

SONG

"Like A Rock" (Linnea Good) More Voices #92.

SCRIPTURE - READERS THEATRE

You will find a script at the end of this document for Luke 24:13-33 (NRSV) It is written for four voices, the Narrator, Cleopas, Cleopas' friend and Jesus.

SONG: I Am Walking a Path of Peace, More Voices #221

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURE READING

[Read by Narrator] We're not sure where this ancient place Emmaus really is, but that doesn't matter. This is a story that happens everywhere. This is a story that happens over and over again.

THEME CONVERSATION

The theme conversation breaks open the scripture for the service. We recommend using it with all ages, whether children are present or not.

SONGS:

"Like a Rock" by Linnea Good is in *More Voices* #92

You can listen to it here. [Like A Rock](https://soundcloud.com/linneagood/like-a-rock)
<https://soundcloud.com/linneagood/like-a-rock>

"I am Walking a Path" is in *More Voices* #221. This song, with a different word each time, is threaded throughout the reflections.

Take a moment and think of a time when you were going through a tough time. Was it hard to put one step in front of another? Did it feel like stuff kept piling up and you couldn't make sense of what was happening? Can you remember being disappointed by a dream that shattered beyond repair? Was there a death that gutted you and left you in anguish?

That's what it was like for these two people on the road to their Emmaus. Crushed. Sad. Hurting.

Now, can you think of a person who quietly crept in beside you to support you in your hard time. No fanfare. No glory. Just a casserole here, or a kind word there.

When we take the time to reflect, I expect our life is a parade of folk who are always joining us, walking along with us, helping us make sense of things or just being there until the burden of time shifts.

Spiritual memoir helps us claim our stories of invitation and hospitality. We look back upon the hard times and often find stories of how our hearts were strangely warmed. We find great hope in the company of others. In our turn, we bring great hope to others. And, in the gift of human relationship, there is the possibility of finding God when we need God most.

We're not sure where this ancient place Emmaus really is, but that doesn't matter. This is a story that happens everywhere. This is a story that repeats in every life. We are always finding God in the guise of friend and stranger in many situations in life, even if we didn't know it at the time.

SONG: I Am Walking a Path of Joy, *More Voices* #221

CONTEMPORARY WISDOM READING

[Read by Cleopas] The writer, Frederick Buechner, advises: "Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace."¹

Let's take a few minutes now to reflect in silence about listening to our life. Allow key moments in your life to rise in your memory. Give thanks for times of amazing grace.

¹ Frederick Buechner, *Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation*. Harper, 1991.

Pause and read a second time.

“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery it is. In the boredom and pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it, because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”

SONG: I Am Walking a Path of Hope #221 *More Voices*

SPIRITUAL MEMOIR READING

[Read by Friend of Cleopas.] Breanna Sharpe is a young adult who compiled a recipe book for her extended family one Christmas. She gathered recipes of foods she remembers eating around the family table on ordinary and special occasions. They are more than just recipes, as the bread was more than bread in the Emmaus story. They evoke memory and hope. Breanna reflects on what is meaningful in her life as she thinks about her family gathering around food. This is her spiritual memoir.

Read the blog post on the Prayer Bench Spiritual Memoir page written by Breanna Sharpe, “Recipes from the Family Table.” (*See sidebar*)

Like Breanna, perhaps you have a recipe, an old photo or an antique that is a touchstone memory, a tangible way of connecting you with experiences that are important to you.

Let’s take a few minutes now to reflect in silence on this question: When you listen to your life, is there a touchstone memory that warms your heart and grounds your faith?

SILENT REFLECTION

SONG: I Am Walking a Path of Love. *More Voices* #221

OFFERING

Offering Song

Spirit open my heart
To the joy and pain of living
As you love may I love
In receiving and in giving
Spirit, open my heart

2. Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory.

SPIRITUAL MEMOIR READING

You will find Breanna’s post on the Prayer Bench Spiritual Memoir page. [“Recipes from the Family Table.”](#) You can print it by selecting the “more” button at the bottom and choosing “print.”

<https://prayerbench.ca/recipes-family-table/>

OFFERING

We suggest using the second verse and refrain of “Spirit, Open My Heart” as the Offering song for the series. It is found at #79 in *More Voices*.

Alternatively, “We Give You But Your Own” #542 *Voices United*.

ALTERNATE SONG for PRAYER:

Listen in the Silence (Linnea Good)

Here is the link to Linnea's website where she features “Listen in the Silence” ...
<http://www.linneagood.com>

You can listen to it and download the sheet music. Those with copyright coverage with CCLI or One Licence can print words.

CALL TO PRAYER

Song: Lord, Listen to You Children Praying, *Voices United* #400

PRAYER

We take our stone and hold it, as touchstone and reminder of God who is ground of our being, source of life upholding us, who is with us on our journey.

We come in prayer listening to our lives. We say thanks for the gifts of creation. (*silence*). We recall the gifts that are so big, we often don't see them, or so small we take them for granted.

Listen in the silence. (*silence*)

Sung Response. Lord, Listen to You Children Praying

We hold our stone, touchstone and reminder of God who is ground of all being, source of life upholding all, who is near to all.

We hold in prayer all who are walking life paths with a sad heart... all who have lost someone dear and loved all who are suffering and overwhelmed ... all who are on our heart as we pray today... Listen in the silence. (*silence*)

Sung Response. Lord, Listen to You Children Praying

We leave our prayer, and take our stone, touchstone and reminder of God who is ground of our being, source of life upholding us, and calling us to journey with others. May we find ways to walk alongside the world's deep need, bringing peace and bringing hope, bringing love. Amen.

SONG:

I was There to Hear Your Borne Cry. *Voices United* #644

A BLESSING FOR LISTENING TO OUR LIVES

ONE: We are witnesses and storytellers;
we are part of the unfolding tale of faith.
ALL: **Precious words and sacred memories are carried
by everyone of us.**
ONE: If we go and tell what we have seen, lived and heard...
ALL: **Each one of us has a story to tell.**
ONE: When we risk telling our stories,
ALL: **When we listen and speak,**
ONE: When we carefully gather these fragments up...
ALL: **We discover our hearts are strangely warmed.**
ONE: Blessed be.
ALL: **And blessed be. Amen.**

ALTERNATIVE SONG

Wherever You May Go, *More Voices* #216
We are Pilgrims on a Journey, *Voices
United* #595

BLESSING

Credit: **Joy is Our Banquet** by Keri
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SCRIPT

The Road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35 (NRSV)

NARRATOR

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.

JESUS

“What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?”

NARRATOR

They stood still, looking sad.

CLEOPAS

“Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?”

JESUS

“What things?”

CLEOPAS

“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.

FRIEND OF CLEOPAS

Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.

CLEOPAS

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.

FRIEND OF CLEOPAS

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.”

JESUS

“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?”

SPIRITUAL MEMOIR WORSHIP SERVICE #2

NARRATOR

Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. *(pause)*

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,

FRIEND OF CLEOPAS

“Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.”

NARRATOR

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.

CLEOPAS

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?”



This worship service is the second in a series of four that explores spiritual memoir stories in the Bible and invites us to listen to our lives and reflect on the meaning of our ordinary stories, discovering the Holy in our lives.

The worship series is part of the Spiritual Memoir Project hosted on the [Prayer Bench website](#). The project is a partnership between [Visions United Church](#) in Moncton, New Brunswick and the Prayer Bench.

The Spiritual Memoir worship series has been developed and written by Shawn Redden, Minister with Visions United Church and Janice MacLean, Host of the Prayer Bench.

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