

Worship #4 Living Fully -Treasuring These Things

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: Story is the gift
ALL: that is ours to give.

Basket of spiritual memoir papers is placed

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.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER

With our whole being we give you thanks.
**We are here for the stories. They start at the door with the sound
of our greetings and our interested inquiries about the week that
is past.**

With our whole being we give you thanks.

PREPARATION

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

You will need a spiritual memoir page for each one in worship to take home, and a basket to hold them and place during the Invitation to Gather. There are two questions on the page:

- Who helped kindle faith in you and how is it helping you live your life more fully?
- What story or words do you want to pass on to someone younger in your life?

INVITATION TO GATHER

The INVITATION TO GATHER may be used with two voices or responsively by Leader and All

THEME 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.

We're here for the stories. We love the stories voiced in the verses and coming alive in scripture and word.

With our whole being we give you thanks.

We're here for the stories. With grateful hearts we speak of our week and all that is held...

We wait in silent prayer.

With our whole being we give you thanks.

We're here for the stories, of grace and forgiveness, of blessing and hope. With our whole being we give you thanks. AMEN.

THEME CONVERSATION

The worship leader might show a picture of parents/grandparents and tell bit about how their faith shaped yours. Then, using your phone camera, take a picture of the congregation. Show the picture and say something like: We are always receiving faith and passing it on. Perhaps some people here have passed on the story of their faith to you. I wonder what story of faith are you passing on? Have a sheet of paper with the two questions: Who kindled faith in you? How is it helping you to live your faith? ... *Children pass out to everyone.* This paper is a page of your spiritual memoir.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCRIPTURE

As leaders age, they look to the next generation of leaders to carry on the legacy of faith. Today we read from a *Letter* sent to Timothy. Timothy is reminded that his faith and his vocation are part of who he is. The seed of his faithfulness was found in his mother and his grandmother. He is to kindle this faith in new, emerging circumstances with a spirit of loving power.

READING SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 1: 2-7

REFLECTION

Do you watch the television series, "Call the Midwife?" In a poignant scene, the midwife, who is a midwife of death as well as new life, is sitting with the grown daughter of an elderly couple. Her mother is dying. Her father is struggling to let her go. Finally, he sits at her bedside, and speaks to her:

"If I never said that I was grateful to you, I say it now," the character said with a crack in his voice. "If I never said that I was proud of the home that you kept, I say it now."

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.

SCRIPTURE

To visually highlight that this scripture is a letter, you might want to print the scripture reading and seal it in an envelope. The Reader will take time to open it and then read from the Letter.

VIDEO SUGGESTION

If you are able to show a video clip, here is the scene from Call the Midwife:

<https://www.express.co.uk/showbiz/tv-radio/907928/Call-The-Midwife-season-7-heartbreaking-death-Arnold-Gelin-Ruth-Gelin-Nurse-Crane-BBC#t=57s>

"If I didn't tell you that you were beautiful when your face was all lined, when you didn't have a new blouse from one summer to the next, I say it now.

"And if I didn't tell you that I loved you, I say it now."

This is a legacy of faith. It is a living letter, a testament of the power of love between this Jewish couple. It is the grown daughter's inheritance, a page of the spiritual memoir that becomes hers as she hears the words.

Spiritual memoir is the treasure that is passed from one generation to the next. It is the stories, the values, the memories that help us live fully into the life that is ours.

Each generation kindles the flame anew and makes it our own. We, in turn, pass on the spark to the next generation.

What might Timothy write of the gift he received from his mother, Eunice and his grandmother, Lois?

Let's imagine Timothy's mother Eunice reading a letter that arrives from Timothy from Ephesus.

And older women, sitting on a comfortable chair, might take the script for this letter out of an envelope and read it out loud.

READER

Dear mom,

How are things at home in Lystra? I wish I could be home for my birthday. I know how much you love to have me near on these family celebrations. But I am far away, traveling these days with Paul and tonight it is my turn to preach. But first, a few words to you.

When I woke this morning the first thing I remembered was you telling me the story of the day I was born. Did a year ever pass that you didn't tell me this story, and I loved hearing it. As a small boy, I would roll up my tunic and bare my belly while you traced the size I was on the day I was born. I love this memory.

Did I ever tell you that when I was six years old, I heard you chant King David's prayer on my birthday? The words fell in my heart.

"For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.” (Psalm 139)

These words served me well whenever I felt different or insecure in my teenage years, and especially when I first travelled with Paul and Barnabus and felt so inadequate. I might be a bishop now, but still they are the words that come unbidden as I try to be a good leader and find ways to nourish the faith of the new church.

Thank you for that birthday song!

I still remember the birthday when my Grandma Lois woke me after you just got me to sleep and led me outside to look at the stars of the sky. She whispered the story about God promising Abraham and Sarah a family as many as the stars in the sky and said I was part of that great family. She pointed out a star and said that star was mine. Whenever I look at the stars in the sky, I know I belong.

God bless Grandma Lois. I know she’d like that! I remember how she always said, “God willing” every time we talked about the future. For years, I didn’t know what it meant. But what I remember most now, is how she trusted God was present in all she did, big or small, and even in the mistakes, she knew herself beloved.

Such gifts you both kindled in me.
(*pause*)

If I never said that I was proud of the home that you kept,
I say it now.

If I never said that I was grateful to you, I say it now.

And if I didn’t tell you that I loved you, I say it now.
Love, Timothy.

SONG

It Only Takes a Spark, *Voices United* #289)

QUIET REFLECTION

Look at the first question on the page you received. Take some time now to consider it in silent reflection.

- Who helped kindle faith in you and how is it helping you live your life more fully?

REPONSE

Sing or Read the 3rd verse of “Those Hearts that We Have Treasured”
Voices United #494

QUIET REFLECTION

You might want to have pens or pencils available.

QUIET REFLECTION

Now take time to consider in silence the second question on your page.

- What story or words do you want to pass on to someone younger in your life? (“*I say it now.*”)

RESPONSE

Sing or Read the 3rd verse of “Those Hearts that We Have Treasured”
Voices United #494

PRAYER

Praying Psalm 139

Voice 1: How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them!

I try to count them—they are more than the sand;

I come to the end—I am still with you.

O that you would kill the wicked, O God,

and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—

those who speak of you maliciously,

and lift themselves up against you!

Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with perfect hatred;

I count them my enemies.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;

test me and know my thoughts.

See if there is any hurtful way in me,

and lead me in the ancient way.

Voice 2: You know us through and through, and we can be honest with you about all that is in our hearts. Everything: When we have been noble, and when we have failed, the goodness we have done and the hurt we have caused. We are a real mix, but we are real, and we are loved. [*Allow space for silent prayer.*]

Voice 1: For it was you who formed my inward parts;

you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works;

that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you,

when I was being made in secret,

intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written

all the days that were formed for me,

when none of them as yet existed.

Scripture

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Voice 2:

Let us name in silence or out loud, the first name of those who have kindled the flame of faith within us and taught us we are known and beloved, cherished and faithful. *[Allow silence or space for naming.]*

Voice 1:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
 you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
 and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
 O Lord, you know it completely.
You hem me in, behind and before,
 and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
 it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Voice 2:

Let us in silence or out loud, give thanks for the signs of God's Presence in us, between us, and around us this past week. Surprise us, God, with what comes to our mind as we reflect. *[Allow space for silent prayers.]*

Voice 1: Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
 if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
 and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
 and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
 and the light around me become night,"
even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is as bright as the day,
 for darkness is as light to you.

Voice 2: Let us in silence or out loud, pray for places and situations in our world that need God's Presence and the energy of our prayer and actions. *[Allow silence/space for prayers. End with the Lord's Prayer.]*

OFFERING*Offering Song*

Spirit open my heart
To the joy and pain of living
As you love may I love

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*.

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

SONG

I Love to Hear the Stories (Scott Kearns, 2008)
(see below for the words.)

A BLESSING FOR LIVING FULLY

Take your page of spiritual memoir in hand ...
This is the story of your faith received
and readied to be passed on.
The story of faith is always being written ...
waiting to be spoken in every generation.
Go and share your story.
Go and live fully.

I Love to Hear the Stories (Tune 343 *Voice United*)

I love to hear the stories
Of those who rose above
Discouragement and sadness
To live their lives in love.
The needs of self and others
Received their loving care;
Their wisdom gained through trials
Was gift for them to share.

Refrain: We celebrate the stories
That shine with one sole glory
The sacred theme of the stories:
The mighty pow'r of love.

I love to hear the stories
Of those who chose to dare
To challenge some injustice,
To show in deeds their care.
To risk the slurs of others,
To move beyond their fear.
They heard a higher calling
And served a purpose clear.

Refrain

May we create new stories
Wherever there is need,
The hurting heart to gladden,



This worship service is the final 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 is developed and written by Shawn Redden, minister with Visions United Church and Janice MacLean, Host of the Prayer Bench.

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I LOVE TO HEAR THE STORIES

We are grateful to Scott Kearns, musician and composer at West Hill United Church, Ontario. His books are:
The Wonder of Life, 2005
& Songs for Anyone, 2017

The hungry heart to feed.
But if we lose the vision,
On lesser things attend,
May then the timeless story
Refresh our souls again.

Refrain

I Love To Hear the Stories

Written by Scot Kearns

Inspired by the original words of Katherine Hankey

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The Story *Tellers* Small Group Study



Learn more about this Small Group Study in the [Prayer Bench Shop](http://www.prayerbench.ca). Each of the four sessions include suggestions for a gathering, opening, check-in, easily downloadable audio recording presenting the theme, suggestions for storytelling using prompts such as old photos, family recipes, quilts, letters or diaries and other precious possessions, and a closing blessing. This Small Group Study is included in Leader and Congregation Subscriber packages or for \$29 in the Prayer Bench Shop.

Visit the [Spiritual Memoir webpage](http://www.prayerbench.ca) to listen to Spiritual Memoir audio recordings and read stories on the blog.

