

An act of spiritual communion and agape (love feast) through the story of the Emmaus road

Explanation

Dear friends, the gospel set for this week is the Emmaus Road story. We will journey through the story together at different points in this service. You may like to have access to the following items, if possible:

1. A bowl of water with some salt in
2. Some parsley, or any edible herb or plant
3. Something simple to eat and drink

Song – StF 30

1 Jesus, stand among us
at the meeting of our lives,
be our sweet agreement
at the meeting of our eyes.
O Jesus, we love you,
so we gather here,
join our hearts in unity
and take away our fear.

3 Jesus, stand among us
at the breaking of the bread ;
join us as one body
as we worship you, our Head.
O Jesus, we love you,
so we gather here,
join our hearts in unity
and take away our fear.

Graham Kendrick (b.1950)
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2 So to you we're gathering out
of each and ev'ry land,
Christ the love between us
at the joining of our hands.
O Jesus, we love you,
so we gather here,
join our hearts in unity
and take away our fear.

Reading – Luke 24:13-16

¹³⁻¹⁶ That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

Reflecting – 'The hiddenness of God'

You may like to reflect on the following questions by yourself. You may want to share your thinking with someone else via phone or email. If you're watching the video of this service online you may want to share your thoughts as a comment but please remember that comments can be seen by anyone.

1. Where is God in some of the things the world is experiencing at the moment?
2. Why does God sometimes work in this way?

Reading – Luke 24:17-18

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, “Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard what’s happened during the last few days?”

Reflecting – ‘Downcast’

You may like to think about some of things that have caused or are causing you pain, things that you would like to give to God. As you do, you may like to dip some parsley, or any edible herb or plant, into a bowl of salt water and then it the herb. The salt water represents tears and repentance. The herb represents new life and growth.

Jesus says, ‘Come to me, all you are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ Amen.

Song – Cast Away

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| <p>1 Cast away on an island
of lonely despair
With no-one to love
and no-one to care
You still have a friend
who can rescue your soul
To comfort and help you,
to make you whole
Cast away those stones
that are weighing you down
If you don't let them go
you will surely drown
The time is right now
for you to turn to the Lord
Your hope and salvation
will come from his word
<i>So lighten up your soul
The Lord is by your side
He has the power to save us all
Our saviour and our guide</i></p> | <p>2 Cast away from the shore
into wild unknown seas
The Lord will show you
a place where there's peace
While sailing beyond
the horizon alone
You're lead by the power
that comes from the throne
Cast away those chains
that keep holding you back
You want to break free
but the strength you still lack
Go forward with faith
in the One up above
Your courage and strength
will be found in God's love
So...</p> |
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Wyn & Ella Pritchard
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Reading – Luke 24:19-24

¹⁹⁻²⁴ He said, “What has happened?”

They said, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene. He was a man of God, a prophet, dynamic in work and word, blessed by both God and all the people. Then our high priests and leaders betrayed him, got him sentenced to death, and crucified him. And we had our hopes up that he was the One, the One about to deliver Israel. And it is now the third day since it happened. But now some of our women have completely confused us. Early this morning they were at the tomb and couldn’t find his body. They came back with the story that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Some of our friends went off to the tomb to check and found it empty just as the women said, but they didn’t see Jesus.”

Reflecting – ‘Sharing our stories’

The two followers of Jesus tell the stranger everything that has been going on recently for them. Their hopes and their fears. What’s life like for you at the moment?

You may like to reflect by yourself. You may want to share your thinking with someone else via phone or email. If you’re watching the video of this service online you may want to share your

thoughts as a comment but please remember that comments can be seen by anyone so be responsible for only sharing your own story and what you are happy for people to know.

Reading – Luke 24:25-27

²⁵⁻²⁷ Then he said to them, “So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can’t you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don’t you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?” Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

Reflecting – Hearing God’s story

What is your experience of God’s story at work within your own story?

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Reading – Luke 24:28-31

²⁸⁻³¹ They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: “Stay and have supper with us. It’s nearly evening; the day is done.” So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

Song – StF 307

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| 1 On the day of resurrection
to Emmaus we return ;
while confused, amazed, and frightened,
Jesus comes to us, unknown. | 4 Then we near our destination.
Then we ask the stranger in,
and he yields unto our urging ;
Jesus stays with us, unknown. |
| 2 Then the stranger asks a question,
‘What is this which troubles you ? ’
Meets us in our pain and suffering ;
Jesus walks with us, unknown. | 5 Day of sorrow is forgotten
when the guest becomes the host.
Taking bread and blessing, breaking,
Jesus is himself made known. |
| 3 In our trouble, words come from him ;
burning fire within our hearts
tells to us the scripture’s meaning.
Jesus speaks to us, unknown. | 6 Opened eyes, renewed convictions,
journey back to scenes of pain ;
telling all that Christ is risen.
Jesus is through us made known. |

Michael Peterson
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Reflecting – Breaking bread together with the Lord

In these days of social distancing and self-isolation, many Methodists feel the lack of being able to share together at the Lord’s Table. Holy Communion is the central act of Christian worship and as Methodists we understand it, along with many other Christians, to be a means of grace, through which we encounter the love and power of God. John Wesley taught about several means of grace including prayer as well as reading, hearing and meditating on the Scriptures.

Our Roman Catholic friends as well as other Christians have a tradition of “Spiritual Communion” as a means of grace for those times when they are not able physically to receive this sacrament. In the unprecedented circumstances in which we find ourselves today, it may be that this is a tradition in which Methodists too may experience God’s grace.

Spiritual Communion is a practice where we entrust ourselves to God in prayer, pledging ourselves to God once more as disciples and praying that God might give us spiritually the same grace we share when we physically receive Holy Communion. In his sermon on the means of grace, John Wesley taught that God can give us grace with or without physical means: God can work through anything or indeed nothing. Wesley argued that we should make the fullest use of the means of grace we can, but in times when that is not possible, his acknowledgement that God is more than able to work in other ways is a comfort to us.

The Love Feast, or Agape, is a Christian fellowship meal recalling the meals Jesus shared with disciples during his ministry. The service expresses the koinonia or sharing, belonging and fellowship enjoyed within the body of Christ.

You may like to take your food and drink now. You may like to do so while you speak to a friend on the phone. If you’re watching the video of this service online you may want to share in conversation with others through comments but remember that comments can be seen by anyone so please be responsible for only sharing your own story and what you are happy for people to know.

You may particularly like to share times when you have recognised the presence of Jesus.

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father...

Reading – Luke 24:32-35

³² Back and forth they talked. “Didn’t we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?”

³³⁻³⁴ They didn’t waste a minute. They were up and on their way back to Jerusalem. They found the Eleven and their friends gathered together, talking away: “It’s really happened! The Master has been raised up—Simon saw him!”

³⁵ Then the two went over everything that happened on the road and how they recognized him when he broke the bread.

Reflecting – ‘Hearts ablaze’

1. How has this time together with Jesus changed you?
2. What might you take away from this experience?
3. What action might you take as a result?

Song – StF 39 The Spirit Lives to Set Us Free

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| 1 | The Spirit lives to set us free,
walk, walk in the light ;
he binds us all in unity,
walk, walk in the light.
<i>Walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light,
walk in the light of the Lord.</i> | 4 | We know his death was not the end,
walk, walk in the light ;
he gave his Spirit to be our friend,
walk, walk in the light.
<i>Walk...</i> |
|---|--|---|---|

2 Jesus promised life to all,
walk, walk in the light ;
the dead were wakened by his call,
walk, walk in the light.
Walk...

3 He died in pain on Calvary,
walk, walk in the light ;
to save the lost like you and me,
walk, walk in the light.
Walk...

5 By Jesus' love our wounds are healed,
walk, walk in the light ;
the Father's kindness is revealed,
walk, walk in the light.
Walk...

6 The Spirit lives in you and me,
walk, walk in the light ;
his light will shine for all to see,
walk, walk in the light.
Walk...

Damian Lundy (1944–1996)
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Blessing

May you go in peace to journey on with Christ,
for the blessing of God – Parent, Son and Holy Spirit,
is with you now and forever more. Amen.

Adapted from *Communion by numbers – Emmaus Road* by Jonny Baker