

Our Mission Journey to 'Jerusalem'

Luke 24:13-35

Ah, this amazing journey to Emmaus and back to Jerusalem! I love this adventure. It speaks so many things to me.

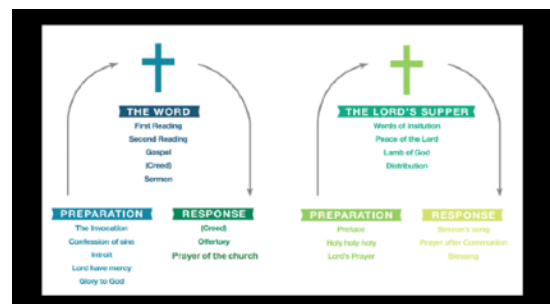
This has always been a powerful Word for me personally in my journey in life as a disciple. In my life journey where I've experienced disappointment, and where I have not recognised Jesus there already present with me. The amazing joy of the "Ah ha!" in having my eyes opened and my heart burning with a passion for the gospel, particularly as a student of theology. I've always seen this account speak powerfully to us as LCA, where two Synods (like the two disciples on the road) came together in 1966 and there was Jesus with them; with and for us today too. And this year, these verses featured at our service of Lament and Hope following the Synod.

In May, you'll be invited to dwell in and be immersed in these verses, when we will have a sermon series "Life on the road with Jesus", using Luke 24:13-35 as our primary text.

Today, though, I want to build on the specific aspect of Jesus himself opening our eyes and bringing hearts to faith which burn (not with heart burn but with gospel light); hearts of faith and feet of witness to go to share the gospel with those disciples back in our local Jerusalem. Today I want to encourage you through the words of some fellow disciples who are on the road with you.

The shape of our service today and of Lutheran services generally takes the same form as the Emmaus journey:

- First the Word and then the meal. Just like in Luke 24. Have you ever noticed that?
- And have you considered what follows next? In worship we close with God's blessing and his commission to go. We go with the news for the world, back to where God places us in our own Jerusalem! Like the two disciples in Luke 24:



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..."

Luke 24:30-34



The disciples go running back to Jerusalem, to their local place, to share the amazing good news of Easter joy. "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

And today, I want to encourage you, through some fellow disciples, in how you and I have opportunities to

learn and to go into Jerusalem with them.

First of all, I refer you to the delightful story of Heidi and John and others, who are making friends with our church neighbours through lawn-mowing and other gardening ministry. Would you like to join them?

Now I'd like the Chair of St Paul's Mission Coordinating Team Garry Tepper to join me to update us on what the team sees as mission priority opportunities for us a congregation.

Garry, can you remind us, please, who is on the Mission Coordinating Team, and what the team actually does?

Garry: It was encouraging that when, over the past year or so, our congregation was keen to respond to the call to be God's witness to the world — a call we heard from Jesus in Acts 1:8 to be a witness, with the power of the Holy Spirit, in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. And in so doing, a Mission Plan was developed and approved by the congregation to guide us in various activities, and to establish a Mission Co-ordinating Team whose role is to work with and equip the congregation, as together we share the gospel message of Jesus' love for all with those in our everyday lives and with those further afield.

The Team includes:

David Bergmann	Anca Stamatescu
Kenny Ng	Garry Tepper
Kawai Ng	Pastor Neville Otto
(Senior Pastor)	
Stanley Pidakala	

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Pastor Neville: Ok, thanks Garry. People can talk to you or me, or any member of the team, to learn more. What does the team see as priorities for us at St Paul's for the next year or so?

Garry: Drawn from the Mission Plan, the Team is prioritising five focus areas to work with the congregation:

5 Mission Focus areas

1. The partnership arrangements with GKPS Jalan Jenderal Sudirman congregation in North Sumatra, Indonesia and Bethlehem, Ntaria (Hermannsburg).
2. The cross cultural liaison with the Chinese Lutheran Church of Victoria.
3. Reaching into our immediate neighbourhood.
4. Building a welcome culture at St Paul's
5. Equipping congregational members to be involved in missional activities.

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- Equipping congregational members to be involved in

missional activities.

Importantly, in the short term we are concentrating on reaching our neighbours (our Jerusalem). While this includes the 8,500 people who live in Box Hill South, for whom our Church is centrally located, it also includes our neighbours where each of us lives, and our families, friends, social acquaintances, and work colleagues. We are planning an event to open up our Church, so that our neighbours can be invited and welcomed to come along and learn more about us, and of course for us to learn more about them.

Pastor Neville: And we'll hear more about this event a little later. I understand that Pastor Nathan Hedt is going to run a gospel fluency workshop here on Saturday May 13. Can you tell us something more about this please, Garry?

Garry: We understand that, for most people, it is daunting to share our faith and invite people, even our families, along to our Church; and that we all need encouragement and a few ways and means in our toolbox to help us along this road. To this end, last October Pastor Nathan Hedt ran a workshop attended by 11 congregation members on how to share the gospel. It received very positive reviews; and therefore we are holding a repeat performance on Saturday morning May 13 and we would encourage everyone to attend.

Pastor Neville: Ok, thanks Garry. Well, let's learn a little more about this workshop, and some other opportunities for us to be witnesses in 'Jerusalem' like the Emmaus road disciples. I'd like to invite Trina and David to come and join me. They attended the first Gospel Fluency workshop here at St Paul's late last year, and David is another member of the St Paul's Mission Coordinating Team.

Thanks, David and Trina, for joining me today. May I ask one of you, please, to share what happens at the gospel fluency workshop?

Trina: The Gospel Fluency workshop provided some real practical skills for talking about faith with the people we come across in our daily lives. Talking about our faith is part of the workshop but, just as important, is the skill of listening. We learnt about generous listening, and how daily prayer also plays a big part in how we share our faith and who we might cross paths with, giving us opportunities for faith sharing.

Pastor Neville: so what did you learn?

Trina: I learned that in our lives we have network of significant relationships. Each of us has a different network. We don't need to go anywhere special to find the people with whom we can share our faith. They are in our lives already. I found it good to be aware of this, and to pray that I see the opportunities that God places before me.

David: I was reminded that the Holy Spirit is always at work, sometimes through us, and in many other ways; and that this may be a long journey for those to whom we witness, and we should be open to God using us in any way he needs. And also, that we need to be real and vulnerable.

Pastor Neville: And what did you find was helpful for you?

Trina: I found it helpful to be given practical examples and tools that I can use to explain the gospel. I felt that this workshop wasn't just a talking session for the day, it was equipping us and sending us out into the world that we already live in.

David: Yes, I agree with Trina: some of the steps to work through and conversation topics will hopefully be really helpful.

Pastor Neville: And finally, David, could you please share with us some of the opportunities for us to witness as we welcome people to St Paul's?

David: As we heard from Garry, one of our key Mission Team priorities for this year is about a welcoming culture at St Paul's. As people come to experience God in our worship place, it is important that they feel safe, secure, welcome, and loved from the moment they walk through the door (maybe even before...). Some people are really gifted at making people welcome, and some

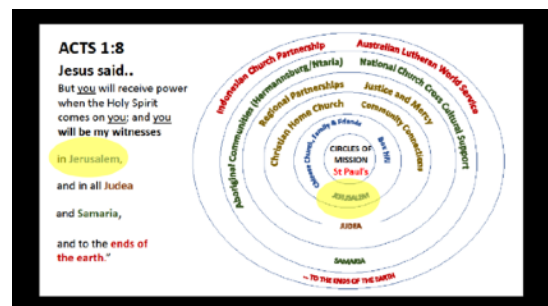


people have other gifts, but we all have a part to play (even a small one) in making everyone feel welcome always — creating a welcome culture.

As part of that welcoming and safe place, we are working on the concept of an Open Day at St Paul's. We'd like to invite our local community, our friends, and our families to come visit our Church building at a time that isn't Sunday worship. We want to invite them to find out what we do in this space, to ask questions, and feel welcome in this space. We are thinking of tour groups, discussion topics, all day morning tea in the hall, and all day BBQ at the front. And this all supported by a welcoming and embracing people, so that when the Holy Spirit can either begin or continue (even in a small way) to work in their hearts.

Pastor Neville: Encouraging and exciting! Don't you think? Thanks both of you. Please thank Trina, David, and Garry for sharing with us today. And please encourage them, and ask them more about what they've shared today.

The Emmaus road story speaks to us in so many ways on our journey through life. The crucified and risen Lord Jesus comes to you and to us as disciples journeying together. He teaches us. He will host us this day at the table, and he will equip you and me, and us as congregation, to go as his witnesses in Jerusalem where we are, and beyond even to the ends of the earth. Are you ready fellow, Easter disciples? Jerusalem awaits. God calls. Jesus equips. Let's go. Amen.



Video of the service including the above address: <https://www.youtu.be/w-ajjNuWMUA>