

Walk/go

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the 11 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.

The companions' encounter with Jesus on the road resulted in their sudden stopping, listening anew to familiar scriptures and their eyes being opened in table fellowship through the breaking of bread. But it doesn't stop there. Stopping, looking and listening led to a change of plans and a move to action. Instead of staying, they get up and returned to Jerusalem to tell their friends what had happened. Jesus is alive and has been made known to them in the breaking of bread.

Being a disciple involves allowing one's journey to be interrupted, ready to respond carefully to the words God may be speaking, looking at one's life and community in new ways. Being a disciple is about discerning where the Holy Spirit may be leading and focusing our energy on, seeing the signs of God at work. This requires paying attention to your community with curiosity and openness to what the Spirit is revealing. It asks of us that we are willing to be present and to listen to the stories of those we share life with. Discipleship is not about fixing all the problems of the Church; it is walking alongside the Spirit on the move!

We may find that the Holy Spirit initiates all sorts of opportunities in our lives – not just through the Church but particularly in the everyday: in the queue at the post office, in the canteen at work or school, in the changing room at the gym, in the pub, on the bus, in the care home...

When we are willing to open ourselves up, like the companions on the road to Emmaus, we too may come to experience God at work in unexpected people and places.

How is the Spirit nudging you to join God's work in the world and, in the process, deepen your faith as a follower of Jesus?

A disciple walks

During her sabbatical, the Revd Lesley Charlton, Minister of Kingston United Reformed Church, wanted to interact with as many different communities as possible, reflecting on what she found. This was something she felt that a train, bus or car journey could never achieve. Here, she shares her experiences of walking from southwest London to Beith, Scotland.

'Every morning, I woke to the sound of my alarm for an early start to get a much natural light as possible. After breakfast, I would put my boots on, pack up and set off.



‘No big decisions, just lots of little questions. Are my phones charged? Do I have a tissue? Is my water bottle full? Do I have snacks? Am I walking in the right direction? How much further do I have to go until the next stop? Especially for the last five miles each day, which nearly killed me.’ Every day I walked around 20 miles, which many people can do. But it is a challenge to face another 20 miles the next day, and the next, and the next, until you have walked the distance you have set yourself. Most people could do my job as a Minister of Word and Sacraments for a day. Listening, planning, praying, reading, visiting, preaching. But it is doing it the next day, and the next, and the next that makes it difficult. In my case, 35 years in ministry and 440 miles to my parents’ house in Ayrshire.

‘Like my journey to Scotland, much of Walking the Way of Jesus is small, dull steps in the right direction. It is about setting your intention and continuing your journey, no matter how tiring or challenging.

‘There was never a time when I was not going to do this. There was no way I was going to quit or stop. There were times when I was exhausted. There were times when I was moving very slowly and was vulnerable to making bad decisions, but the joy was in the countryside, the exploring, the freedom of each day and the achievement of doing the walk.’

Something to ponder

Have you ever had a reason to change direction? Have you experienced an unexpected change of plans, or occasions where you felt prompted to revisit some place? What has God shown you through the various journeys of your life? How might your findings help and inspire others?

A prayer

Friend who walks our way,
before the day is over
change the focus of our seeing
and help us to be aware of your presence.

Friend who walks our way,
before the day is over
capture our hearts and minds
and help us to hear you in the voices of unexpected people.

Friend who walks our way,
before the day is over
show us the path to follow
and help us to support those who have lost their way.

Friend who walks our way,
before the day is over
fill us with your love
and may your reflection be seen in us
as we break bread together.

(Excerpted from material by Francis Brienen,
URC Prayer Handbook 1995)

Suggested response

With friends, organise a walk around your community. As you walk, be prepared to stop, look and listen, asking where God is at work in the people and areas you explore.