

Leader Guide

69th Synod
October 18 & 19, 2024
Anglican Diocese of Edmonton



HEARTS
BURNING
WITHIN
US

Luke
24:32

Bible Study
69th Synod
of the Diocese of Edmonton

Leader's Guide for Pre-Synod Bible Study

Greetings! Thank you for leading this Bible Study in preparation for our Diocesan Synod in October. Our Synod is far more than a business meeting. We are disciples of Jesus Christ gathering together for prayer and mutual discernment about where God is calling us to act in the world. This Bible Study is meant to be a time of prayer and preparation for the Synod using the story of the Emmaus Road as a focus. In this guide, you will find all of the resources you need to lead the Bible Study. The Bible Study is written to allow the Synod Delegates to prepare for Synod, but anyone can attend the Bible Study and participate.

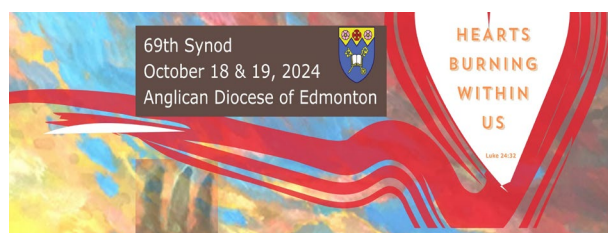
As the leader, you have the flexibility to lead this study in the way that is best for your community. As a structure we suggest that you gather with your people in prayer and then use the Introduction and Purpose paragraph to introduce the Bible Study. You can either read it as is or separate it into talking points. The Bible Study is arranged to read the story two different times. The first time will be in the style of Lectio Divina encouraging people to hear the story, deeply looking for a word or phrase that speaks to them. The second time will be as a focus for more in depth conversation around the themes of the upcoming Synod. Consider using different translations for the two readings. We have attached the NRSV (a word-for-word translation) and the First Nations Version (a paraphrase) as an appendix for your convenience.

Our suggestion is that you give a brief overview of the place of this passage in the Gospel of Luke before the first reading, and then between the readings to give a fuller exegetical understanding of the text. You will find the material you need for this under the Background Notes section of the Leader's Guide. After the second reading, use the Discussion Questions as a tool to facilitate conversation about the passage and parallels to our situation today. The participants will have the Discussion Questions in front of them, but only the Leader will have the Key Themes for Synod. This is to help highlight places in the text where there is resonance between the passage and our life in the Diocese today.

Please remind people of the common rules for small group sharing:

- Please let people finish speaking. Do not interrupt.
- Give everyone a chance to speak.
- Personal details that are shared need to be kept confidential.
- This is not a debate. Share your thoughts and allow others to share theirs.

Thank you again for leading this conversation. Please end in prayer for our October gathering.



Hearts Burning Within Us - a Pre-Synod Bible Study

Text: Luke 24:13-35

Structure:

- I. Introduction and Purpose
- II. Reading and Meditating with the Text
- III. Background Notes
- IV. Highlighting Key Themes for Synod
- V. Discussion Questions
- VI. Synod Prayer

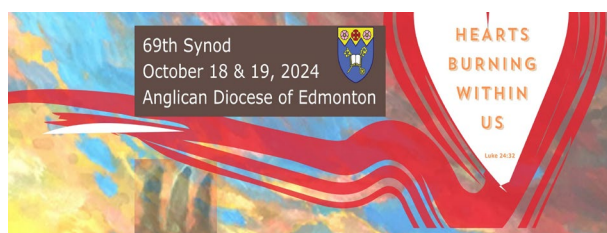
Introduction and Purpose:

The consistent teaching of the scriptures is that whenever followers of Jesus gather to take council for the sake of the mission and ministry of the Church and the life and health of the world, it is a sacred and grace-filled task. As such, convening for Synod is not just fulfilling the requirements of an obligatory church governance meeting, but rather it is an act of the church at prayer. It is, therefore, not something we step into fully without having undertaken some time for spiritual preparation. This group study and discussion resource seeks to help set the tone for the business of Synod by encouraging prior reflection and conversation around a set of spiritual principles that will shape the way we discern and decide together about next steps in articulating and implementing a diocesan strategic plan.

Reading and Meditating with the Text:

Using some form of reading inspired by the practices known as Lectio Divina, Gospel Based Discipleship, and Dwelling in the Word, encourage groups to read the text out loud together in full two times. As they do, participants are directed to listen to and meditate on the reading with two main questions in mind:

- Reading 1 – What word, phrase, or idea stood out for you? (People are invited to share without anyone commenting on or responding to each other)
- Reading 2 – What is the Spirit of God saying to you about our family of churches through this text? (People are invited to share without anyone commenting on or responding to each other)

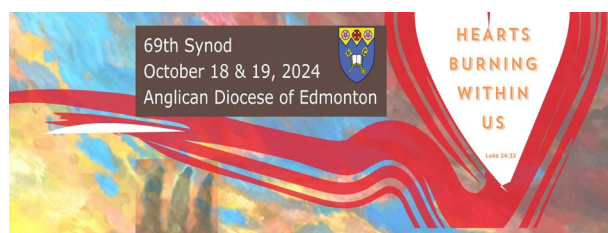


Background Notes:

- This account occurs only in the Gospel of Luke and is the longest post-resurrection narrative in the bible
- We are not told the names of both of the disciples, which leaves room for creative imagination
- They may well have been Cleopas and his wife Mary, the latter of whom stood at the foot of the cross with Mary and the Beloved Disciple and went to the tomb as a myrrh-bearer with Mary Magdalene. The Orthodox tradition believes that the unnamed disciples is Luke, the author of the Gospel.
- Scholars are divided as to where the town of Emmaus really was, and there exist multiple modern-day claimants to be the place
- The word Emmaus is believed to be a Greek derivation from the Hebrew word for "hot springs"
- The text says they were "prevented" from recognizing Jesus, but does not explain how/by what (By his different appearance? By their own expectations and perceptions? By something else? By God?)
- The word "hoped" is in a past tense, to convey that, at that moment, they no longer have this hope
- The phrase "stay with us" seems to intentionally evoke the "abide with me" language used various places in other Gospels
- The account of breaking the bread has substantial parallel vocabulary and grammar to the wording of the narrative of the Last Supper
- Some scholars have seen parallels between the Emmaus story and the beginning of Plato's Symposium, which also includes an argument while walking on a road and an encounter with a wise stranger who brings wisdom and clarity before disappearing from sight
- The story has been used through the centuries by many great Christian preachers and teachers as a metaphor for the life of discipleship and of the role of preaching, sacraments, community, and evangelization

Highlighting Key Themes for Synod:

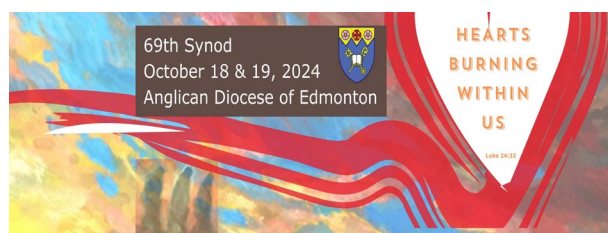
- We can become depressed and dismayed when we focus on our own challenges in isolation from the whole the story of God ("...we had hoped...")
- It is important for us as disciples to continue to travel together even when we feel uncertain and at odds about what is coming next ("two of them were going... talking and discussing with each other")
- Placing the Gospel at the center helps us reinterpret our smaller picture through the lens of a much bigger picture (... "beginning with Moses... all the prophets... and all the scriptures...")



- The church often encounters Christ most deeply not when it is stable and static but rather when it is in transition and on the move (“...on the road...”)
- Turning our attention to Jesus enables us to face challenges not with frustration and despair but with creativity and hope (...“that same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem...”)
- Being open to spiritual renewal and excitement about the work that God is doing is central to our lives as disciples (... “and were not our hearts burning within us...”)
- When we believe we have caught a glimpse of what God is doing, the best thing to do is to share it with others in community instead of holding on to it by ourselves (...“they found the eleven and their companions and they told what had happened on the road...”)

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to you to make Jesus and the Gospel the center of our story? What does doing this look like in practice? What should we do if it seems to take different forms for some than for others?
- Can you identify any potential parallels between how these disciples must have been feeling about their situation and how we are feeling about trying to be faithful disciples in the church today? How could this story perhaps help us to change the way we think and talk about our challenges and uncertainty?
- If you had to describe your parish and/or our diocesan family of churches in recent years, would you say we have been more comfortable in the Upper Room in Jerusalem or moving about on our own kind of Road to Emmaus? Which of these feels more comfortable to you personally? What would it look like to you to pursue the latter?
- Where are some of the seemingly unexpected places that you believe you are seeing Jesus most present and at work today? In what kinds of contexts and encounters does God cause your heart burn within you?
- Do you have people and places you can share these recognitions of Jesus with?



Synod Prayer:

O God our Creator, you have always sent out your peoples in every age along unfamiliar paths as witnesses to your mercy and love. Each time you have shown us that it is in our faithful steps of journey into the unexpected where you will meet us afresh and anew. Draw near to us now, your church in synod, and walk closely with us as we prepare to travel this stretch of a shifting and uncertain road. Tell us yet again of your Good News for the strivings and longings of this time and place and cause our hearts to burn within us as we remember our call to become the story we tell. Through Christ, in the Spirit, for the life of the world. Amen.

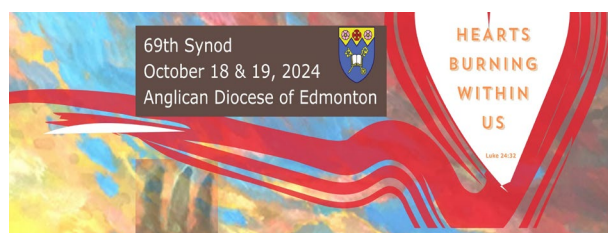
Appendix

NRSV Translation:

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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." ²⁵ Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them.

³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he



vanished from their sight. ³² 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?" ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

First Nations Version:

¹³On the same day, two of the followers of Creator Sets Free (Jesus) were walking to Village of Warm Springs (Emmaus), seven miles out from Village of Peace (Jerusalem). ¹⁴As they walked along, they were talking about all that had happened. ¹⁵Creator Sets Free (Jesus) came alongside them as they walked, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from seeing who he was.

¹⁷He said to them, "What are you talking about?"

They stopped walking and a look of sadness fell over their faces. ¹⁸One of the men, Honored by His Father (Cleopas), answered him, "How can you not know about the things that have happened in Village of Peace (Jerusalem)? You must be coming from far away."

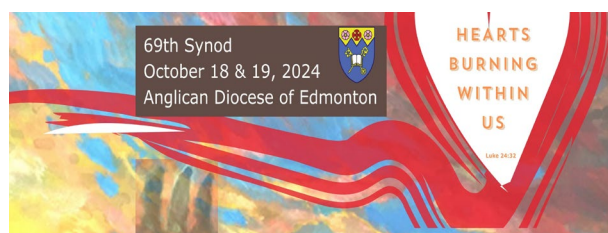
¹⁹"What things are you talking about?" he asked.

"About Creator Sets Free (Jesus) from Seed Planter Village (Nazareth). He was a prophet from the Great Spirit, with powerful medicine, who did many good things among all the people. ²⁰The head holy men and other leaders handed him over to the People of Iron (Romans) to be put to death on the cross. ²¹We had hoped that he would free the tribes of Wrestles with Creator (Israel) *from the People of Iron (Romans)*. It is now the third day since they killed him on the cross, ²²⁻²³but today some women told us an amazing story. Early this morning they went to his burial cave and found that his body was not there. They told us about visions of spirit-messengers who told them he was alive! ²⁴Some of our men went to see with their own eyes and found the empty cave, but they did not see Creator Sets Free (Jesus)."

²⁵"Why are your hearts so slow to believe the words of the prophets?" he said. ²⁶"It should be clear to you that the Chosen One would suffer first before he would be lifted up and honored above all."

²⁷So Creator Sets Free (Jesus) told them his story, beginning with Drawn from the Water (Moses) and all the prophets. He showed them how all the ancient Sacred Teachings were written about the Chosen One and pointed the way to him. *They still did not know it was Creator Sets Free (Jesus) talking to them.*

²⁸As they entered the village, he walked on as if to go farther. ²⁹They said to him, "Please, stay with us. It is late, and the sun will soon set."



So he went into the lodging house with them. ³⁰When they sat down to eat a meal together, Creator Sets Free (Jesus) took some bannock into his hands. He gave thanks and broke it, giving each of them a piece. ³¹Suddenly, their eyes were opened and they knew who he was, but he vanished right in front of them.

³²The men looked at each other in wide-eyed wonder and said, "It felt like our hearts were on fire when he was talking with us on the road, showing us the meaning of the Sacred Teachings!"

³³They got up without finishing their meal and walked back to Village of Peace (Jerusalem) as fast as they could, for the sun was setting. They found where the eleven had gathered together with the others.

³⁴They were saying, "Our Wisdomkeeper is alive! He has shown himself to One Who Hears (Simon)."

³⁵So the two men told them what happened on the road and how their eyes were opened when Creator Sets Free (Jesus) broke the bannock into pieces.

