

Bread for the Journey

A daily devotional guide
for American hosts
and their Malawian guests



Malawi Partnership of Pittsburgh Presbytery
901 Allegheny Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
p. 412-323-1400 / f. 412-323-2256
www.malawipartnership.org



Prepared by: Rev. Dr. Robert Downs, Hon-
orably Retired PC(USA)
For: Malawi Partnership
Pittsburgh Presbytery
901 Allegheny Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15233
p. 412-323-1400 / f. 412-323-2256
www.malawipartnership.org

Introduction

It has been my privilege to have been involved in the partnership between the Synod of Blantyre and Pittsburgh Presbytery from its very inception in 1991, when as the Moderator of the Presbytery I traveled to Malawi and helped draft the original partnership covenant. Since that time seven members of our congregation have participated in the partnership and experienced the warm welcome of the Synod. Each of the visits by our sisters and brothers from Malawi has provided members of our congregation with the opportunity of making new friends and being mutually encouraged by time spent together.

A significant part of that encouragement has come as the hosting members of our congregation have spent time in God's Word and prayer with their guests. So when I was asked by the Partnership Committee to prepare a devotional which could be used during these visits I was pleased to do my best to put together something which would be a blessing to our guests from Malawi and the hosts with whom they would stay. In selecting themes for each day I have drawn on my own experiences as a guest in the homes of Christians in other cultures.

This booklet is divided into two sections for use during the two hosting periods. Different passages of Scriptures, sharing topics, and suggestions for prayer are used in the two sections, but the general themes are the same for both. The first four devotional themes are intended for use in the evening. The fifth is designed to be used on the morning of the last day of the hosting period. Sharing topics are of a personal nature, but can be answered in whatever ways participants feel most comfortable. The prayer time can be sentence prayers, or more "conversational" depending on the family. My prayer is that this booklet will be a tool for building and deepening the wonderful ties which bind us in Christ's love.

Bob Downs

Notes



Bread for the Journey
Host Family Two — Day 5

On Our Journey We Entertain Angels

Scripture Reading: Judges 6:7-22

In this story from God's Word by a young man by the name of Gideon is visited by an Angel from the Lord while he is anxiously collecting grain to hide from the Midianites who were oppressing the people of Israel. The Angel greets Gideon with the words, "The Lord is with you, you mighty warrior." Gideon could hardly believe his ears. It didn't seem to him that the Lord was with him, and he certainly didn't consider himself a mighty warrior. But as the story unfolds it turns out that both those things were true. Sometimes we don't see ourselves or our situations the way God sees them, and it takes someone from somewhere else, an "angel" to help us to see the truth.

A Time for Sharing

As your time together comes to an end, share something which your guest or host has helped you to see because he or she stands "outside" your situation and has been used by the Lord to give you a new or different perspective.

A Time for Prayer

In your time of prayer thank the Lord for the way in which your time together has enabled the Holy Spirit to speak to you and to teach you lessons you would no have learned if you had not been involved in the partnership visit. Ask God to help you be faithful in applying the lessons you have learned.

Bread for the Journey

Daily Devotional
Guide
for

Host Family One



Day 1

Bread for the Journey

Host Family One — Day 1

Faith is a Journey

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:1-9

The Christian faith is a journey, a walk through life with Jesus and His followers. Our Scripture lesson tells us of the beginning of that journey for the Apostle Paul. His was a dramatic conversion experience. For many of us that has not been the case. But for each of us there was a beginning point when we took the Lord's hand and stepped out in faith to walk with Him. You may not be able to recall exactly when or where or how your journey began, but take a moment to think about your earliest memories of your faith journey.

A Time of Sharing

Beginning with the person who has been walking with the Lord the longest, share with the other members of your family the story of how your journey began, or one of your earliest memories of walking with the Lord.

A Time of Prayer

Take a few moments to pray together, thanking God for the ways in which various members of your family have come to faith in Christ, and for the help and guidance you have received along the way.

Day 4

Bread for the Journey

Host Family Two — Day 4

On Our Journey We Need Encouragement

Scripture Reading: Acts 27:13-26; 33-38

The Apostle Paul went on many journeys as a missionary for the Lord Jesus Christ. But the last journey recorded in the Book of Acts is one which took him to Rome as a prisoner. Before the ship on which Paul traveled could reach its destination it was caught in a terrible storm and it looked like everyone on board would be lost at sea. But the Lord reassured Paul that all would be saved, and by word and deed the Apostle Paul brought encouragement and hope to those who traveled with him on the ship.

A Time for Sharing

Take a few minutes to think about a time in your life as a Christian when you needed to be encouraged, and a sister or brother in Christ helped you. Share what that brother or sister did and how the Lord used it to encourage you.

A Time for Prayer

Use this time of prayer to pray for each other that you will have opportunities to bring a word of encouragement to someone who needs one, and that you will recognize that person's need and be given just the right things to say and do to help meet that need to Jesus' name.

Day 3

Bread for the Journey

Host Family Two — Day 3

We Journey as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:3-8

The image of the Church as a body, and specifically as the Body of Christ, is one which the Apostle Paul uses, not only in Romans 12, but also in First Corinthians 12 and in Ephesians 4. His emphasis is on the fact that the body is made up of many different parts, each part having its own unique abilities and functions, but all working together to accomplish what the Head (Jesus) desires. When our physical bodies are healthy and well, all the parts work together for the good of all the other parts. The same thing is true in the Church as the Body of Christ.

A Time for Sharing

Share with the other members of your family how your personal life in the Body of Christ has been enriched by the spiritual gifts of various members of your congregation. Give an example of the way your congregations has been able to carry out God's will because a member has been writing to use his or her gift.

A Time for Prayer

Pray for the congregations of Malawi and in Pittsburgh which you represent. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable the members of those congregations not only to recognize the gifts they have been given, but also to use those gifts to make their congregations stronger and more able to do God's will.

Day 2

Bread for the Journey

Host Family One — Day 2

We Journey as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Genesis 12:1-5

Our Scripture reading for today tells us of the beginnings of the faith journey for Abraham and Sarah and Lot. They are all members of the same family, traveling together in a new land in obedience to the call of God. Our journey of faith is never a solitary one. We have been called into the family of God, the Church of Jesus Christ, and we do not travel alone. We make our journey with the other members of our spiritual family as we walk together with the Lord.

A Time for Sharing

Take a few moments and think about words you would use to describe what it means for you to be a member of God's family, and to have sisters and brothers who share the journey of faith with you. Pick one or two of those words to share with the other members of your family.

A Time of Prayer

Our sisters and brothers from Malawi are very far from the members of their families and their families of faith. Take a few moments to pray for the needs and well-being of each other's family members. Pray also for your congregations as expressions of the family of God.

Day 3

Bread for the Journey

Host Family One — Day 3

We Journey as the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 12:12-31

In this passage from God's Word the Apostle Paul reminds us that the Church is the Body of Christ here on earth. When we belong to Jesus each of us is a part of that Body, and we belong together with the members of that Body so that we can accomplish the Lord's will. In order for that to happen each of us must use the spiritual gift or gifts we have been given to build up the Body and fit it for serving Christ in the world. Take a moment to think about the gift which the Holy Spirit has given you as a part of Christ's Body. (If you can't think of one, ask other members of your family to tell you what they think your gift is.)

A Time for Sharing

Share with the other members of your family what you discern to be the gift the Holy Spirit has given you to use in the Body of Christ, and share some of the ways you have been able to use your gift in the past, or hope to be able to use your gift in the days ahead.

A Time of Prayer

Spend a few minutes taking turns thanking God for the gifts that all of you have been given, and then pray for each other that the Lord will help you to recognize and take advantage of the opportunities which will come to you to use your gifts to build up and strengthen the Body of Christ, here in Pittsburgh or in Malawi.

Day 2

Bread for the Journey

Host Family Two — Day 2

We Journey as a Family

Scripture Reading: Luke 8:19-21

In this passage of Scripture the Lord Jesus tells us that those who hear the Word of God and do it are members of His family. In John's Gospel we learn that we enter the family of God when we are born anew by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in his Letter to the Galatians the Apostle Paul writes of our adoption as God's sons and daughters. Being a Christian means being part of a family and having many brothers and sisters in Christ. The Church Universal is the family of God, and each congregation is an expression of it.

A Time for Sharing

Spend time sharing together ways in which you have seen your congregation in Malawi live out its calling to be the family of God. If there has been a time in your life when you have experienced the Church as a family to you, and you feel comfortable talking about it, share your experiences with the others.

A Time for Prayer

Use your time of prayer as a time for each of you to thank God for someone who has been a sister or brother to you in Christ. Remember to pray for each other's family members, especially those from whom you may be separated by time and space.

Day 1

Bread for the Journey

Host Family Two — Day 1

Faith Is a Journey

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:1-10

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews holds up Abraham and Sarah as examples of what it means to live by faith. They were called by God to leave their home and family and to travel to a distant land, their destination known only to the Lord. They lived the rest of their lives as nomads and strangers in a land God had promised to give to their descendants, at a time when they had no children at all, and little hope that they ever would. But they looked beyond their present circumstances, trusting in the faithfulness of God to accomplish all that had been promised.

A Time for Sharing

Spend a few minutes sharing with each other an experience from your faith journey when walking with Jesus and trusting in Him has required you to take a risk (or to “move outside your comfort zone” as we sometimes say in this country) in order to do what you felt God wanted you to do.

A Time for Prayer

Use this time of prayer to say thank You to the Lord that we do not travel alone, that God is with us and knows the way that we are to take. Pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will help you to take whatever risks you need to take in order to be useful and faithful followers of Christ.

Day 4

Bread for the Journey

Host Family One — Day 4

On Our Journey We Need Encouragement

Scripture Reading: Acts 9:23-30

After the Apostle Paul became a follower of Jesus he met with a great deal of hostility and his life was in danger. He had to leave the city of Damascus. But when he went to the city of Jerusalem the believers there were very skeptical. A leader in the Church there, Barnabas by name (and his name means, “son of encouragement”) befriended Paul and encouraged the Church to accept Paul’s conversion as genuine. Later in the Book of Acts we read that Barnabas sent for Paul to come and join him in building up the Church in the city of Antioch. It was from there that the two of them set out on their first missionary journey.

A Time for Sharing

Take a few moments to think about times on your journey of faith when you have seen the members of your congregation carry out a ministry of encouragement to one another. Share with the members of your family those qualities which you think made those members effective encouragers for others.

A Time for Prayer

In Your prayer time thank God for a sister or brother who has been a source of encouragement to you, and pray for the partnership between the Synod of Blantyre and Pittsburgh Presbytery that it will be a source of mutual encouragement for the Church there and here.

Bread for the Journey

Host Family One — Day 5

On Our Journey We Entertain “Angels”

Scripture Reading: Genesis 18:1-5

In this story from God’s Word Abraham and Sarah are visited by three Strangers, who bring them a Word from the Lord. This is one of the primary tasks which angels have been given: they are messengers who are sent to the people of God to bring them a Word or message from the Lord. Sometimes that Word is a message of hope and promise, at other times it may be a Word of warning and judgment. There is a sense in which we are “angels” to each other as we allow the Lord to speak through us. The partnership provides a special opportunity for us to meet “angels” and to hear a Word from the Lord on their lips.

A Time for Sharing

As your time together comes to an end, share together some of the things you have learned from one another, especially any lessons you think God has been trying to teach you through this new relationship with a brother or sister in Christ you did not know before.

A Time for Prayer

In your prayer time thank the Lord for the message which has come to you as you have shared your lives together over the past few days. Pray for one another that you may all be open to share with others and to receive from others whatever messages the Holy Spirit has for you in the days which are ahead.

Bread for the Journey

Daily Devotional
Guide
for

Host Family Two

