

Whether you travel far away or see your local surroundings as if for the first time, pilgrimage has long been a spiritual practice, and "journey" a deeply-felt metaphor for our spiritual lives. "Quest" comes from the Latin root meaning "ask, seek." This four week worship series will encourage us to open ourselves more fully to the curiosity and wonder, reflection and transformation that travelers–not merely tourists–experience when they choose to immerse themselves in soul-widening adventures.

Join Marcia McFee's Worship Design Studio in this worship series featuring resources from special guest Rick Steves

"The Quest" - original theme song lyrics:

Leaving home, we set our seeing,
on a quest for deeper meaning.
What we find can change us for the love of all
the creation and its beings.

Far from home, we know we're seeing,
everywhere is full of meaning;
diff'rent folx expand our world and awe of all
the creation and its beings.

Coming home, we set our seeing
to hold onto deeper meaning;
loving life and making home a place for all
the creation and its beings.

Week 1: “Leaving Home”

Scripture: The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. — Exodus 13: 17-21

Synopsis: Leaving Egypt was not a pleasure excursion for the Hebrew people. But the story of their pilgrimage in the desert in the Book of Exodus reminds us that traveling, moving, leaving home, is part of our Judeo-Christian tradition. Each of us finds ourselves sometime in life needing to leave the familiar in order to grow and to thrive. Beginning a journey involves leaving “home”–whether that is a physical place in order to explore another part of the world, or changing a mindset that keeps us from expanding our spiritual capacity. What must we do to embark into the unknown?

Week 2: “The Encounter”

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)… Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. — John 4: 7-40

Jesus often crossed paths with others not from his “tribe.” He did not shy away. Actually, he most often sought out these opportunities. He met people in their daily lives and locales, such as the Samaritan woman at the well and her community, and engaged with them at the point of their deepest yearning. When we seek out and open to new encounters, new people, new relationships, we allow ourselves a spiritual rendezvous with humanity. And in this act, we discover more spiritual depth within us than we previously imagined. How can we shift our perception, redefining “strangers” as “friends we have not yet met?”

Week 3: “The Reflection”

Scripture: I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. People will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. — Revelations 21: 22-26

Synopsis: When we begin to broaden our experience of lands and peoples in our travel, or in our own towns and cities, we may move through a personal crisis if the plurality of religious thought and practice has not come into close view in our lives before. And yet, if we continue to reflect and open, what feels so different may not be as far from us as we first imagined. The light we seek and life-sustaining river that runs through the "Kin-dom" of God is full of common themes across religions: peaceful coexistence, food and shelter, love and compassion for those suffering and oppressed. How can deeper reflection about our own hesitation to connect to the wider human family free us to explore more possibilities for a better world?

Week 4: "Returning Home"

Scripture: As my [Abba] has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my [Abba's] commandments and abide in their love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." — John 15: 1-17

Synopsis: As we bring our series on travel to a close, we contemplate what it means to return home. After stretching our spirits and our love to include more of the glorious creation and its peoples, we return to a home that will never be the same to us. We have returned with "guests"–memories of new friends and new perspectives. Perhaps we also return with new convictions to be more active and loving citizens of humanity right where we reside. Jesus says "abide in me" and follows that up with the commandment to love one another. The beauty of travel as a spiritual act is, as Rick Steves says, that our prized souvenirs are the "strands of different cultures we decide to knit into our own character."