

"Leaving Home"

Week 1 Script for Leaders

WE GATHER

Prelude

As people gather, music could be played live or recorded that comes from different parts of the world. Consider inviting a musician from your community who plays a musical instrument from another part of the world, whether they are part of your church or not. This is a perfect time for a slide show made from photos of your congregation members' travels (see this idea in the Visual and Media Arts document in your downloads).

Welcome and Announcements

Entering the Journey: Threshold Moment

[theme music begins to underscore the leader's words]

Leader: Friends, we are about to embark on a journey in the next four weeks. It is a journey *about* journeying, about traveling as a spiritual act. Whether you travel far away or simply begin to see our 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" and "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 we choose to immerse ourselves in soul-widening adventures.

[soloist/ensemble/choir sing]
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.

[repeat; congregation is invited to sing]
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.

[accompaniment continues under]

Leader: Today we will hear the scripture from Exodus when the Hebrew people left Egypt on a very long journey. Leaving Egypt was not a pleasure excursion for them. 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 is keeping us from expanding our spiritual capacity. Our question for today is this: "What must we do to embark into the unknown?"

[congregation sings again]
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.

[music ends]

Opening Prayer

[spoken by one voice or in unison]
Sojourning God,
your Spirit exists everywhere, on every path,
inviting us to move with curiosity and compassion toward each other.
Give us courage to leave the familiar,
to venture out beyond our walls,
taking leave so that we will see with wider vision,

know with deeper appreciation,
exist with expanded perception.
Nudge and guide us, we pray.
Amen.

Opening Hymn/Song

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"
AAHH 138, Chalice 622, GTG 65, ELW 618, NCH 18, UMH 127, VT 606, VU 651, W&R 501
or
"Ends of the Earth"

Confession and Assurance

Place a bowl of water, or your baptismal font if it is portable, in a prominent place for this series. Pour water from a pitcher into it or dip your hands and scoop some water a few times so it is seen.

Leader: The water of this blue planet connects us all, no matter where we live on earth. Water is life. All beings need life-giving water. We know this water to also be a sign of our faith. It is the water that the Israelites crossed in order to move toward freedom. It is the water that we encounter in our baptism that moves us forward into discipleship with Christ. Let us pray:

Merciful God,
we confess that we have not loved you with our whole hearts
and have not loved our neighbors as ourselves,
through what we have done and left undone.
Forgive us when we turn away.
Guide us as we seek to turn around toward greater love.
Lead us to travel in your ways.
Amen.

Know this:
At the moment of despair and unknowing,
Jesus appeared to the disciples on the road.
He is our constant companion
and invites us always to break open our lives and share,
traveling together toward the Kin-dom of Love.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Glory to God. Amen!

Peace

The peace of the risen Christ is with you!
And also with you!

Consider inviting people to use a different greeting each week, learning various ways to honor and respect each other's presence: https://www.afar.com/magazine/beyond-the-handshake-how-people-greet-each-other-around-the-world

WE PROCLAIM

Children's Time of Unpacking

"Bring Forth the Kingdom of God"
FWS/STF 2190, NCH 181, VT 297
Buy accompaniment and parts HERE

As children come forward, the music for "Bring Forth the Kingdom of God" (feel free to change to "Kin-dom of God") is played and sung. When they arrive, the leader has a backpack filled with different kinds of salt from around the world. HERE are some examples to inspire you.

You are salt for the earth, O people:
Salt for the Kingdom of God!
Share the flavor of life, O people:
Life in the Kingdom of God!

Bring forth the Kingdom of mercy,
Bring forth the Kingdom of peace;
Bring forth the Kingdom of justice,
Bring forth the City of God!

See Children's Time of Unpacking document for the rest of the script for this section. Musicians, you'll sing this verse and chorus in the middle and again at the end of the children's time.

First Reading

Psalm 121 (NRSV)
[or use another lectionary reading of the week if you follow the RCL]

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Music for the Journey

"On My Way"
Listen and purchase HERE
or
"Life is a Journey"
Listen and purchase HERE
or
"Blessing of St. Clare" (for band)
Get music HERE

Second Reading

Exodus 13: 17-21 (NRSV)

When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was nearer; for God thought, "If the people face war, they may change their minds and return to Egypt." So God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of the land of Egypt prepared for battle. And Moses took with him the bones of Joseph who had required a solemn oath of the Israelites, saying, "God will surely take notice of you, and then you must carry my bones with you from here." They set out from Succoth, and camped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. 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.

Sermon

See Sermon Fodder document for prompts and a short video reflection that can be used before, in the midst, or after the sermon.

WE RESPOND

Reflecting on the Journey

Leader: Reflection time is a way for us to draw ever nearer to the Holy and to the deepest yearnings of our souls. In this way we endeavor to be more fully known–to God and to one another. It is a method of tracking our journeys of the heart. Journaling has long been a practice of travelers, indeed written entries have passed along the wonders and heartbreak encountered by travelers through the ages. In this series, we will spend a bit of quiet time with the travel journal pages provided in your worship guide. As you spend this time, remember that the word "journey" can relate to outward journeys that take us far from our physical home, but also journeys can be encounters with the new or unknown right around the corner. Or a journey can be a state of mind–an inward journey in which we find ourselves "far" from the things to which we have become accustomed. Let us start with a musical prayer and then we'll spend a few minutes journaling, either with pen to paper, or quietly in the recesses of our minds and hearts.

"Stepping In"
[sung by soloist, choir or ensemble; see downloads for music]

There is a prayer
like a wide river
it never ends
does not begin
around the world
it's always flowing
and I am stepping in,
we are stepping in.

[music fades out… or continue in a meditative style… if you are using media projections, consider playing a video loop of a spot in the forest, on the beach, etc. (be sure it is not too active… this is "background visual") See the Visual and Media Arts document for suggestions]

Example Travel Journal prompts in the Worship Guide:

Imagine yourself in the doorway of your home, about to take a step into a journey into the unknown. What are you feeling? Anticipation? Anxiety? Excitement?

Do you feel drawn to new things or dread facing the unknown?

What is your relationship to the rest of the world? Curious? Familiar? Lost? Frightened? Do you have childhood memories of attitudes about "local and global?" Were they positive? Did you get the opportunity to know more through travel? Were you exposed to education about other places?

[after some time journaling, the music comes back in]

Prayers of the People

[sung by soloist, choir or ensemble; see downloads for music]

There is a prayer
like a wide river
it never ends
does not begin
around the world
it's always flowing
and I am stepping in,
we are stepping in.

We are praying
for those in distant places
different languages and faces
every hour of the day,
and we are praying
with enemies and strangers
in gratitude, in danger
calling God's ten thousand names

There is a prayer
like a wide river
it never ends
does not begin
around the world
it's always flowing
and I am stepping in,
we are stepping in.

[music ends or continues to underscore, if desired]

[Continue the Prayers of the People in a familiar manner to your congregation. Consider inserting a prayer from the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle for the week. This website has amazing resources, helping us know how to pray for the situation in that part of the world and to reference the words of people from other parts of the world in our praying. This could become a regular part of your congregation's prayer life even after this series.]

[refrain reprise]
There is a prayer
like a wide river
it never ends
does not begin
around the world
it's always flowing
and I am stepping in,
we are stepping in.

Offering

In your introduction to the offering, consider highlighting how your offerings through the year contribute to ministries globally during this series. Or perhaps this Sunday, highlight ways that your church contributes to sustain those who left home under duress (refugees, domestic abuse), those who are unsettled still (immigrants or economically insecure) or those who are without a home, remembering the privilege that is it to have a home to "leave" and come home to.

Communion

Insert communion liturgy from downloads if this is a Sunday your community celebrates this sacrament.

WE VENTURE FORTH

Closing Hymn/Song

"In the Midst of New Dimensions"
Chalice 458, GTG 315, FWS/STF 2238, NCH 391
or
"Build My Life"

Benediction

See the Visual and Media Arts document for an idea related to "Postcard Prayers." Consider offering these to people to place somewhere visible in their homes for the week as inspiration to continue the practice of travel (even locally) as a spiritual act.

As you step out of this door, and any other door, this week,
may you be aware of your very movement as a spiritual act
of expanding your horizon,
traveling beyond your preconceptions,
and embracing the infinite delight of this earth and its beings.

And may the Creator continue your unfolding,
the Christ accompany your deeper knowing,
the Spirit enliven your growing,
until one day we all gather in the Kin-dom of Love.

Conclude with the theme song reprise

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.

Postlude