



ROAD TRIP!

A spiritual journey through Scripture and our National Parks



WORSHIP NOTES PASSPORT JOURNAL

Summer 2021 at St. John's United Methodist Church

This **Passport** belongs to

“Come forth into
the light of things,
let nature be your
teacher.”

- William Wordsworth

ROAD TRIP!

A spiritual journey through Scripture and our National Parks

June 27 - August 1, 2021

Join us on a virtual road trip this summer as we “visit” some of our National Parks and explore the various and sometimes unexpected faith lessons we can glean along the way. Each week, we will shine a spotlight on God’s creation by highlighting one of our nation’s wondrous National Parks.

This booklet is intended to be part journal and part passport, with prayers and reflections sprinkled throughout. We encourage you to take notes during worship and get your booklet stamped each week during the series on the corresponding National Park page. There will be a Stamp Station in the Narthex. Those worshipping online can email Pastor Lane (pastorlane@stjohnsbr.org) for details on how to receive stamps.

At the end of the summer, those with the most stamps for services attended will have their name put in a drawing for one of the books that inspired this series. (Separate drawings will be held for Adults/Youth and Children, with age appropriate books.)

May you have a joyful and fulfilling journey through scripture and the National Parks with us this summer.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Creator God,

At the beginning of time your Spirit moved over the waters.

So now, send your Spirit to stir our hearts and inspire us to receive the re-creating power of your Word.

Grant us wisdom and courage as we seek to learn from you.

We pray through Christ, your incarnate Word. Amen.

ROAD TRIP!

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

Wyoming, Montana and Idaho

June 27, 2021

Genesis 2:4-15 | God's Faithfulness

Stamp Here

“THE SUMMER DAY”

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean -

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down -

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

By Mary Oliver

“The grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried all at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls.”

- John Muir (known as “Father of the National Parks”),
Naturalist and Conservationist

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”

- Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

ROAD TRIP!

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

North Carolina and Tennessee

July 4, 2021

Psalm 104 | Diversity

Stamp Here

MORNING DEVOTION

Scripture dwells in my heart
as the slanting rays of the morning sun
glow the greens of the trees outside my window.
I smile to hear the song of the chickadee from Carolina
and welcome the chatter of crows busy with morning chores.

Later in the park scripture effervesces again in my heart
while the dragonfly of blue wing and the butterfly who wants to
look like a tiger bask in the honeysuckle-scented morning sun.

Tadpole and turtle and beetle revel in the clear water
watched by swaying cattails and blue iris.
Drowsy doe raises her head in silent greeting.
The word of God before my eyes.

By Betty Schroeder

“No synonym for God is so perfect as Beauty. Whether as seen carving the lines of the mountains with glaciers, or gathering matter into stars, or planning the movements of water, or gardening – still all is Beauty!”

- John Muir

ROAD TRIP!

GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Wyoming

July 11, 2021

Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12 and John 6:15

Closeness to God

Stamp Here

A PRAYER INSPIRED BY PSALM 121

Who, but you, O GOD,
could create the mountains?
Sometimes the majesty of them alone
lifts my spirits.

Yet, through the years, though, I have learned
that mountains have peaks and valleys.
Whenever I ignore that truth,
seemingly level places become
so rugged and steep
I cannot surmount them alone.

Through the years, also, O God,
I have learned that it is precisely
in the ruggedness and steepness
that I encounter Truth.
There are others along the way
who often help.
To my astonishment I sometimes help them.

Little by little, O Lord, I am learning
that it is my struggle with the mountain
that brings me to trust.
Help me to see these high places and low valleys
as symbols of hard-fought battles
and life-saving victories,
from this time and forevermore.

Amen.

By Rev. John Winn, *For All Seasons*

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

- Maya Angelou

ROAD TRIP!

SEQUOIA NATIONAL PARK

California

July 18, 2021

Matthew 7:24-27 | Foundation

Stamp Here

PSALM 139 PRAYER

A psalm for wherever the journey leads

O Lord of Light, You shine the searchlight of Your love into my life;
You illumine my life with Your brightness;
You know everything there is to know about where I go,
what I do,
and who I am.

Sometimes I walk a well-trod path
and sometimes I venture out where there is no trail to follow.

Wherever I am, You find me
in order to guide my steps.

Though my journey may seem frightening to me,
it is not unknown to You

Even when I don't know my way,
I am not lost to You.

You are in front of me and You are behind me,
surrounding me with love wherever I go.

Your strength and peace are constant companions,
as if You laid a hand on my shoulders Yourself,
as if You were closer to me than my next breath,

I can't go anywhere to be away from You.

I can't shake Your encompassing Spirit.

Whether I go to the heights or the depth,
to the east or to the west,
You are still present to me.

I may soar with the eagles or be in the deepest agony,
and even then Your hands hold me fearlessly;
You embrace me in determined love.

Amen.

By Jerry Webber, Sometimes an Unknown Path

“Every moment and every event of every person’s life on earth plants something in his soul”

- Thomas Merton

“We must protect the forests for our children, grandchildren and children yet to be born. We must protect the forests for those who can’t speak for themselves such as the birds, animals, fish and trees.”

- Chief Qwatsias (also known as Edward Moody),
Nuxalk Nation (Canada)

ROAD TRIP!

ZION NATIONAL PARK

Utah

July 25, 2021

Deuteronomy 8:1-18 and Psalm 48:1-3 | Paradise & Provision

Stamp Here

TOURISTS OR PILGRIMS?

I believe there is a hidden pilgrim in every tourist. I constantly juggle these two seekers in my life. On some days the tourist wins out. But there are many times when the pilgrim in me feels at home. Maybe I have to settle for being a tourist pilgrim.

To be a pilgrim means

to be on the move, slowly

To notice your luggage becoming lighter

to be seeking for treasures that do not rust

To be comfortable with your heart's questions

to be moving toward the *holy ground of home*

with empty hands and bare feet.

And yet, you cannot reach that home

until you've loved the *pilgrim* in you

One must be comfortable

with pilgrimhood

before one's feet can touch the homeland.

Do you want to go home?

There's a road that runs

straight through your heart.

Walk on it.

By Macrina Wiederkehr, *Seasons of the Heart*

“Pilgrims often journey to the ends of the earth in search of Holy Ground, only to find that they have never walked on anything else.”

- Scott Russell Sanders

“Never lose an opportunity to see anything beautiful, for beauty is God’s handwriting.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

ROAD TRIP!

GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK

Alaska

August 1, 2021

Revelation 21:1-5 | New Creation

Stamp Here

EPIPHANY PRAYER

O God,
once you said,
"Let there be light,"
and there was, and still there is.
I turn to you in thanksgiving and praise.
In every leaf
there is the wonder of creation.
In every sunrise
there is the gift of a new day.
With every breath
I experience the miracle of living.

Slow me down soon enough
And quiet me long enough
that my awareness of you may flow
into rivers of gratitude.

Open my ears
to those who caution me
about endangering life on this planet;
to those who tell me
war is an inadequate answer.

Open my eyes
to see opportunities for positive change.
and to know carelessness is a poor companion.

Open my life
to live caringly, so that my children and my children's children
may live on a balanced and bountiful earth.

And in every sunset, O God,
may I see a sunrise that brings me the gift of a new day,
in the name of the One who is the light of the world.

Amen.

By Rev. John Winn, *For All Seasons*

“We have become great because of the lavish use of our resources.... But the time has come in inquire seriously what will happen when our forests are gone, when the coal, the iron, the oil, and the gas are exhausted, when the soils have been still further impoverished and washed into the streams, polluting the rivers, denuding the fields and obstructing navigation.”

- President Theodore Roosevelt, May 13, 1908

“We have the world to live in on the condition that we will take good care of it. And to take good care of it, we have to know it. And to know it and to be willing to take care of it, we have to love it. To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.”

- Wendell Berry

THE LABYRINTH: A PRAYER WALK

Praying with a labyrinth is an ancient prayer practice that mirrors the winding and circuitous journey of faith. It is found in many religious traditions, in various forms around the world and throughout history. The labyrinth is not a maze. A maze is designed to lose your way. A labyrinth is designed to find your way. There are no tricks to it and no dead ends. The path winds throughout and takes us to the center and leads us out on the same path.

In the Middle Ages, Christians were expected to travel to the Holy Land at least once during their lives. As travel became more dangerous during the Crusades, certain cathedrals throughout Europe were designated as “pilgrim cathedrals.” Christians would travel to those cathedrals, where they would walk a labyrinth laid in the cathedral’s stone floor.

Just as travel is limited right now due to the pandemic or other life circumstances, consider taking a prayer walk on a labyrinth as a way to make a journey inward with God.

Did you know that one of our BREC parks has a beautiful paved labyrinth available for public use? The labyrinth in City Park is available for use from 7 a.m. until dark. Located directly behind the golf pro shop. You may enjoy a time of quiet prayer and reflection while walking the labyrinth at City Park.

WALKING THE LABYRINTH

As you move from the outside entry point and make your way along the path, you might ask God a question and listen for an answer. Or you might focus on a breath prayer as you move steadily from beginning to end.

Sometimes it is helpful to think of your walk as a threefold path. The path to the Center, where you release your cares and concerns. The time of prayer and meditation in the Center, where you may stay as long as you like. Receive there what God is offering to you. Then the path that leads you from the Center back to where you started, renewed and empowered to follow God’s lead.

HOW TO PRACTICE BREATH PRAYERS

Breath Prayer is an ancient form of prayer and it is easily adaptable. Simply choose one or two lines to meditate on and inhale and then exhale through them.

The most common form of breath prayer is known as The Jesus Prayer. So with that as an example, you would do this:

Inhale. Fill your whole self with breath.
Feel air in your lungs. And then say:
Lord Jesus Christ, son of God,

Exhale slowly and fully.
Have mercy on me, a sinner.

(Consider switching the word "sinner" for "your beloved child" and notice how your body and soul responds to the change.)

OTHER BREATH PRAYER OPTIONS:

From Romans 8:38-39

Inhale: Nothing can separate me,
Exhale: from the love of God.

From 1 John

Inhale: There is no fear
Exhale: in your Love.

From Psalm 23

Inhale: I will not be afraid
Exhale: for You are with me.

From Matthew 11:28-30

Inhale: Humble and gentle One,
Exhale: you are rest for my soul.

And simply repeat this practice. Start with several good breaths in and out, with the words that are most meaningful or steadying to your soul.

FINGER LABYRINTH

While traditional labyrinths exist mostly in gardens and churches, a finger labyrinth offers a portable version of the experience.

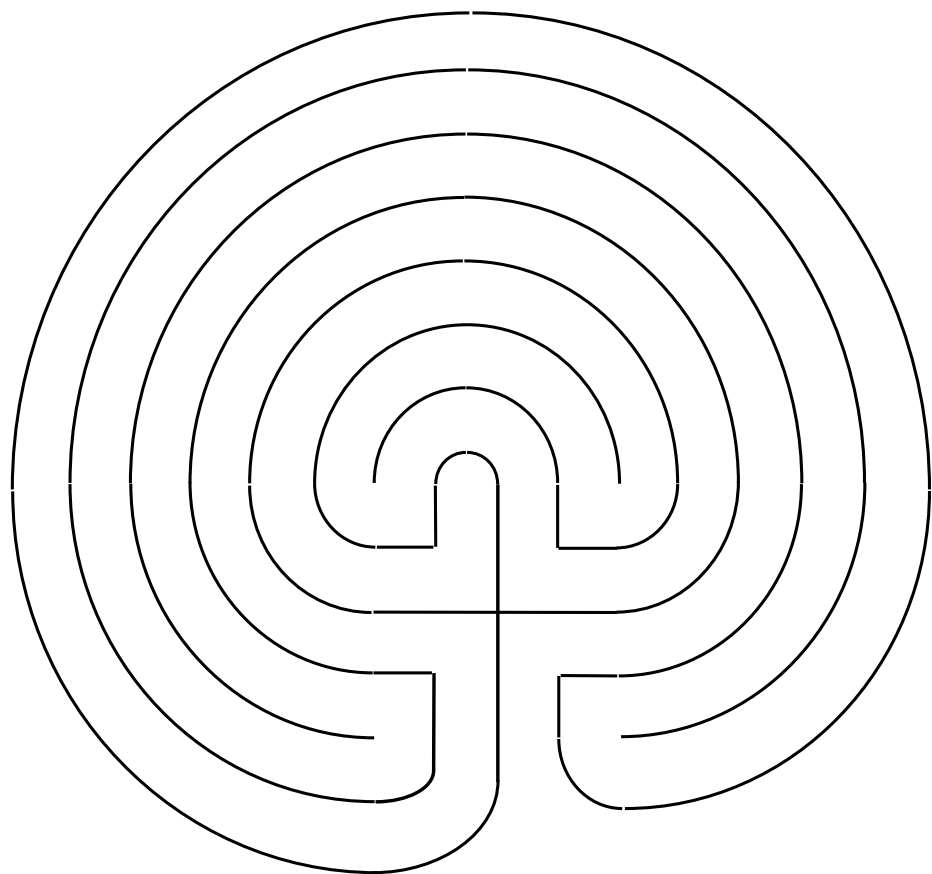
As you trace the path (from the outside opening at the bottom to the center, move at whatever pace feels right for you) you may opt to:

- Quiet your mind
- Pray for yourself or someone else
- Keep a question in mind and feel the question using your emotions

At the center, pause and take several slow deep breaths (keeping your finger inside the center or place your hands comfortably on your lap). Here, many believe you are the closest to the center of your spirit and greater insight is available.

When ready to leave the center or you feel satisfied (like after eating a good meal), retrace the path back out to the entrance (which now becomes the exit point).

Upon leaving the labyrinth, be grateful and thankful for the opportunity to bring divine strength and insight back with you into your daily life.



CREATION PSALMS

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your
hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

- Psalm 8:3-8 (NRSV)

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the Lord.

- Psalm 96:11-13a (NRSV)

For the beauty of the earth,
For the beauty of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to thee we raise
This our hymn of grateful praise.

- Foliott Sandford Pierpoint

My country's skies are bluer than the ocean
And sunlight beams on clover leaf and pine;
But other lands have sunlight, too, and clover
And skies are everywhere as blue as mine.
O hear my song, thou God of all the nations
A song of peace for their land and for mine.

- "Finlandia," Lyrics by Veikko Antero Koskenniemi

BENEDICTION

You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

- Isaiah 55:12 (NIV)

“What a country
chooses to save
is what a country
chooses to say
about itself.”

- Mollie Beattie, Director of the U.S.
Fish and Wildlife Services



ST. JOHN'S

United Methodist Church

Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.

St. John's United Methodist Church

230 Renee Drive | Baton Rouge, LA 70810

office@stjohnsbr.org | 225-766-4594

Join us for Sunday worship at 8:30 or 11 a.m. in the Sanctuary
Livestream on Facebook Live, YouTube, Vimeo & stjohnsbr.org/live