

**DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**  
**May 12—July 21, 2019**  
**(Ten Weeks—Eight Meetings)**

**SMALL GROUP PACKET**  
**Into the Deep Water with Christ**

## HEALTHY SMALL GROUPS

(Please review the following regularly together as a group)

### GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR “DEEP WATER” SMALL GROUPS

- Try to keep your group size from two to six people. The larger the group, the more time it will take at each meeting for everyone to participate and share actively.
- Try to meet together once a week, on average.
- Meet in a place that is conducive to listening and speaking. Loud, crowded restaurants, for example, will probably not work too well.
- Everyone should bring a bible, a pen, and this packet to each of their small group meetings.
- This packet, focusing on Biblical Hospitality, has enough material to cover eight weeks’ worth of meetings. On July 21<sup>st</sup>, a new packet of materials will become available for the next part of our “deeper water” journey.
- **Buffer weeks:** Based on feedback from our last session on spiritual gifts, we are adding *two additional weeks* to this session, so that **you have ten weeks in order to cover eight weeks’ worth of materials**. Your group can use these extra two weeks to 1) catch up if your group has to miss a weekly meeting or two, or 2) If your discussions go long on some weeks, you can use the extra time to spread things out and/or backtrack as necessary.
- While it is not a requirement, we recommend that men partner with men, and women partner with women.
- You do not need to designate any particular person in your group to be a facilitator or leader. Just follow the materials together and agree on a time limit to your meetings.
- Allow extended silences to happen during your small group discussions. The bible is a challenging book and the Word can sometimes shake our thoughts up at first before bringing them around towards Christ. Silence allows time for the Spirit to give us speech.
- While you are discussing with your group, always jot down thoughts that the group shares.
- It is likely that you will encounter different Bible translations within your group. If the group feels this is an obstacle to understanding or discussion, discuss the possibility of procuring bibles of the same translation for everyone. The New Revised Standard Version, which St. John’s uses at worship, is an example of a well-balanced, readable and accurate translation. Call Pastor Seth (217.255.2118) or Pastor Patti (614.875.2314) if you need any help or guidance regarding Bible translations.
- Try your best to participate as a group (or as individuals) in the “Come Back to Shore” meeting on
- On July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019, we will start a new topic in our Deep Water journey: *Going Deeper in Our Baptismal Identity*. Every time we begin a new topic (about every two months), small groups and partnerships can reconfigure themselves as necessary. As you approach the end of each topic, please talk intentionally about how and whether your group will continue into the next topic together intact, or what changes you need to make based on

your personal schedules, etc. While we encourage everyone to plug in to as much of our deep water journey as possible through the next few years, we also understand that some of us will need to drop out and rejoin at various points in the journey.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE TO FOLLOW IN YOUR SMALL GROUP: CONFIDENTIALITY**

- Keeping things confidential is vital to establishing trust and open communication with your partner or small group. Be sure to acknowledge this rule clearly with each other at the beginning of your journey together, and regularly over the course of the following weeks. What is said in your small group should stay in your small group!

**REMEMBER: PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF ST. JOHN’S ARE WELCOME TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS JOURNEY!**

We encourage you to invite non-members to participate. Think of a friend with whom you’d like to take this journey, and invite them to jump in.

**IF YOU LOSE YOUR PACKET, OR NEED MORE PACKETS**

Hard copies are always available in the church office, in the display in the Link (breezeway) at church, or from one of the pastors. If you have a printer, you can request an electronic copy of the packet by email:

[SJersild@stjohnsgc.org](mailto:SJersild@stjohnsgc.org)

**IF YOUR SMALL GROUP IS STRUGGLING OR DISSOLVES**

Call Pastor Seth at 217.255.2118 if you need help or have special concerns. Remember that Pastor Seth and Pastor Patti will be meeting with two separate Deep Water small groups **every Sunday morning during the Sunday school hour**. If you are not part of a regular small group, just come to their Sunday meetings. They are open to all and you can plug into them at any time.

**SMALL GROUP INFORMATION**

(Names, phone, email etc.)

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**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #1 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: May 12-18, 2019**

1. Confirm as a group what your time limit is going to be. Over time, each group will develop a natural feel for what kind of pace they need to maintain in order to fit everyone's schedules.
2. Please review the material under the heading "Healthy Small Groups" together, above.
3. Emphasize together the extreme importance of keeping what you share in this group confidential. Also, make sure you have each others' phone numbers, emails addresses, and etc. for communication purposes.
4. Please, especially note our new practice of adding **buffer weeks** for each topic (from the "Healthy Small Groups" section, above). Remember, you will have ten weeks in which to cover eight weeks' worth of meetings.
5. Spend about 5 minutes having everyone share high points and low points from the last several days.
6. OPENING PRAYER
  - Designate someone to pray the prayer in italics, below. Always feel free to improvise as the Spirit moves you. You can use the written prayer loosely, as a model. Special intercessions can be added.

*Dear Lord, our great healer; we kneel before you. Since every good and perfect gift must come from you, we pray: Give skill to our hands, clear vision to our minds, kindness and meekness to our hearts. Give us singleness of purpose, strength to lift up part of the burden of our suffering fellow men and women, and a true realization of the privilege that is ours. Take from our hearts all guile and worldliness, that with the simple faith of a child, we may rely on you. Amen.*

7. Have someone in your group read this statement of our general goals for these eight weeks aloud:

We will be:

- going deeper in our understanding of biblical hospitality.

- helping each other become more confident welcoming strangers into our congregation.
- identifying ways we can help create a more welcoming and inviting atmosphere in our congregation by our behavior patterns, through worship, and through the general way we present ourselves.
- Most importantly: seeking to nurture a spirit of discipleship for Christ in each other which helps transform our attitude to one of joyful outreach, and a welcoming attitude.

8. Spend some time discussing the following with your partner(s). This is just a smattering of varied material meant to help get our minds rolling on the subject matter we will be discussing in the next few weeks.

- (a) Do you (or did you at any time) have a favorite place to bring your car for repairs? If so, why do you keep going back? Try to identify the **three** main factors that keep you loyal to your mechanic.
- (b) Thinking back over your history of church involvement, rate the following factors from 1 (not important) to 10 (very powerful) regarding the “pull” they have **actually** exerted on you, to keep you connected to God’s people and the Word. No need to have an extended discussion here. The main thing is to simply *hear* what others in your group say out of their own experience (each person, in turn, go down the list and assign a number for each item).
- Family tradition.
  - The faithfulness of the pastors’ sermons.
  - The general feeling of warmth in the congregation.
  - Honoring a sense of duty to observe the Sabbath.
  - The beauty and overall impression of the church building.
  - The congregation’s stance on social issues.
  - The quality of care the congregation pours out in times of crisis and trouble.
  - Children are welcome and provided for.
  - Denominational loyalty (Lutheranism).
  - The sense of meaning in the order of the church services.
  - Sunday school and bible studies for adults.
  - The congregation has a strong sense of global mission.
  - The friendships and relationships with others I have in the congregation.
  - Sunday school for the children.
  - Special youth activities.
  - The opportunities to engage in meaningful local service ministries.
  - The quality of the music during worship.
- (c) What does the word “hospitality” bring to mind for you? (Jot down any responses from your partner(s) that strike you).

- (d) What does the word “generous” bring to mind for you?
- (e) Why do you think food or eating so often comes to mind along with the word “hospitality”?
- (f) Who do you find it easiest to be hospitable to? (e.g. family, friends, co-workers, strangers, etc.) Why?
- (g) Share a memorable meal you have had (either with a handful of folk or in a larger group). What made it so good?

9. Please have someone read **Luke 9: 10-17** aloud (or break the reading into sections and take the “tag team” approach).

10. After reading the passage, please have someone read the following aloud: *This miracle clearly left an indelible mark in the memory of the early church. All four gospel writers included it in their accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry. The multiplication of food would probably have brought to mind the provision of manna in the desert. John, in particular, develops the “manna” connection in his telling of the story (John 6). The incident is often referred to as the “feeding of the 5000,” but if we read Luke’s account closely, we see that is just the number of men present. When women and children were taken into account, it would have been many more than 5000.*

11. Discuss the following with your partners:

- What particular details strike you the most from Jesus’ feeding of the multitude?
- Why do you think Jesus put it back on the disciples, by saying, (in verse 13) “*You feed them*”?
- Why do you think the miracle worker “over-catered” (verse 17) and what might this suggest about God’s nature?
- Can you recall a time when God provided for you in a surprising or generous way? Share it with the group. What effect did this experience have on you?

12. In turn, without going into too much depth about each situation, share one or two specific issues that you would like your partner(s) to pray about for you this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, *and be sure to pray for them!* Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.

13. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be “doubling up” on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.

14. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer. Include a prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit to guide your group and fill you with confidence and determination as you get started on this journey together.

## **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (2<sup>nd</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Find a place where you can concentrate. Say the following prayer aloud; always feel free to add extra petitions and thanks.

*Gracious Heavenly Father, give me grace to set a good example for everyone around me, to be fair and gracious towards others, and to be true to the commitments I make. When I stumble, help me to know your forgiveness, and when I wrong others, give me courage to set things right. I pray that when people witness my words and deeds, they will know that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ. I pray in his name. Amen.*

2. *Listening to Your Partner(s)*

Remember that practicing good listening skills with your partner(s) will have a big impact in how deep you can go in discipling each other as we go *into the deep water* with Christ.

Please review the following list of good and bad listening habits, and place check marks by the statements (both good and bad) that you feel are true of you when it comes to listening. If you were involved in our last “expedition,” this material will be familiar to you. But it’s important and helpful to continue evaluating where we are with our listening habits.

- I don’t give others time to speak, because I tend to go “on a roll” and end up monopolizing the conversation.
- I give people my undivided attention when I’m listening.
- I interrupt people when I talk.
- I ask questions after listening to someone, rather than immediately providing answers.
- I tend to look away from people when I’m talking with them (I lose eye contact)
- I make repeated and sympathetic eye contact with people when they are speaking to me.
- I tend to fidget with pencils, papers and etc. while in conversation.
- I think I use facial expressions well in order to communicate that I’m listening.
- I don’t smile during conversations, making people somewhat afraid to talk to me.
- I smile often, inviting people to talk further.
- I go off the subject often, with my questions and comments.
- I ask questions which invite people to further explain themselves and put things in their own words.

- I tend to throw cold water on others' suggestions, so they quit making suggestions after a while.
- I often affirm what others are saying and am good at encouraging them to let go and open up.
- I tend to communicate that I am rushed for time, making comments about how busy my day is.
- People know that they have my full attention almost all the time.

3. Based on the items you checked above, try to set some concrete, positive goals for yourself for the next few weeks, regarding good listening skills. Write them down, below. It might help to finish the following sentence:

“In order to grow in my listening skills with my partner(s), in the next few weeks I’m going to try to.....”

4. *Please read the following:*

Three of the four most defining eating experiences in the Bible are *communal meals*—the Passover, the Last Supper, and the still-to-come Feast of the Lamb (heaven). Interestingly, when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3, they don’t really eat it together. The gospel writers lift up several instances in which Jesus connected with people in a special way over a group meal.

All cultures intuitively recognize that food and *community* should go hand-in-hand. “The Meal” is a universal phenomenon. Eating together has a prized place in every ethnic and cultural group. Think Italian, Mexican, Jewish, Turkish, Moroccan, Thai or Japanese. Each of these ethnicities have developed distinctive foods and tastes, and also important rituals revolving around the preparation, presentation and consumption of food.

As one theologian puts it: “Eating expresses our common humanity. Food is what brings us together and holds us there. There is barely a relational aspect of life that is not formalized, ritualized, celebrated or facilitated by the acts of eating and drinking. The truth is, food is the great leveler; it is our common need and is made to share.”

This explains why both Jesus and Paul were very tough on people who used the meal table as a means of excluding people or establishing status and control over others. Simon the Pharisee tried that game on Jesus when he hosted him for a meal, intentionally snubbing Jesus by not following the usual etiquette (*please read Luke 7:36-50*). Jesus graciously but firmly contrasted Simon’s behavior with that of the woman of bad character who lavished care on him. Paul too, had little time for the status games that some of the members of the church in Corinth were playing (*please read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34*). For him, they betrayed the meaning of the Eucharist.

God’s intention is for eating together to be a time of deep community and sharing, when relationships are enriched and strengthened.

5. Reflecting on the above paragraphs, what is it about eating together that makes it the “great leveler?” Why does a shared meal often have a special power to connect diverse people closely and quickly?

6. Christian worship, from the earliest times, has culminated in the meal of Holy Communion. Communion is the last thing that takes place in our worship, because beyond it, nothing further needs to be said! Why do you think God chooses to use a meal as the most intimate way to connect with us on a regular basis?

7. In your own words, what is happening in the sacrament between you and God?

8. In your own words, what is happening between you and the *other people* who are sharing the sacrament of Holy Communion with you at worship?

9. How do you think the meal of Holy Communion affects (or should affect) our views of our fellow worshipers and church members in terms of the following:

- popular measurements of social status
- forgiveness of past hurts
- attitudes towards strangers who are coming to the altar with us

10. Please slowly and carefully read **Luke 10:38-42**.

11. *Respond to the passage.*

Here’s a well-known gospel story about hospitality. Jesus is affirming Mary’s desire to *learn* from him. Both Martha and Mary were seeking to be, in their own way, hospitable to Jesus. Martha was working to prepare a really special meal for Jesus and his disciples. This was a way of honoring him. She was following a positive social expectation. And yet her sister, Mary, was not following expectations and helping where she “should,” leaving Martha stressed out.

Mary was being attentive to their guest in another way. Her hunger to follow and learn from Jesus was an appropriate way of making room for the Master. Indeed, Jesus affirms that Mary has “chosen what is better, and it will not be taken from her.”

- What do you think Jesus means when he says Mary has chosen “better,” and that what she is gaining through listening to Jesus “will not be taken from her?” (And why, by implication, can what Martha is doing be “taken from her,” even though it is clearly honorable and good work.)

- In your own words, how can our “busy-ness” as individuals become an obstacle to our relationship with God and other people?
- In terms of a congregation’s Christian hospitality, what are some *social* factors that might sometimes lead our “busy-ness” (or perhaps our “business as usual”) to become an obstacle to welcoming new people and strangers?
- Who do you identify with most? Martha or Mary? Why?
- Think about an experience where you have been offered hospitality in the form of room and board, from someone you didn’t know well. What do you think contributed most to you feeling welcome and relaxed? Or alternatively, what contributed to you feeling in the way and on edge?
- It is impossible to overstate the significance of paying attention, listening to people’s stories, and taking time to talk with them. What are some concrete ways you could see yourself going deeper at church (perhaps this would mean altering our normal routines in some respects) in order to give more time and attention to connecting to others at church?

12. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns from your first group meeting. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other closing prayers, please ask God to bless your small group and the congregation of St. John’s as we follow Jesus’ call to go into the deep water with Christ and become more confident, effective “fishers of people.”

**Into the Deep Water with Christ**  
**DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #2 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: May 19-25, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer, (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer):

*Lord, you have called us to serve you. Grant that we may walk in your presence: your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds, your strength in our wills; until, at the end of our journey, we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your embrace. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

3. Spend about 5 minutes talking about your responses to item #3 in the homework. Why is *listening* such an important aspect of showing hospitality towards others? Which listening skill(s) do you plan to work on, in particular, with your partner(s) during the coming weeks? Write down what your partner(s) say they will be focusing on.
  
4. Spend about 25 minutes discussing your responses to homework items 4-9, in which you made connections between the sacred meal of Holy Communion and hospitality towards others. Jot down anything that strikes you from your conversation with your partner(s).
  
5. Spend about 25 minutes discussing your responses to the bullet points under homework item 11, centering on Mary and Martha. Write down your partners' general observations, below.
  
6. In turn, without going into too much depth about each situation, share one or two specific issues that you would like your partner(s) to pray about for you this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, *and be sure to pray for them!* Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.
  
7. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be "doubling up" on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.
  
8. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer. Include a prayer for the power of the Holy Spirit to guide your group and fill you with confidence and determination as you continue this journey together.

### **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (3<sup>rd</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Find a place where you can concentrate. Say the following prayer aloud; always feel free to add extra petitions and thanks.

*Heavenly Father, make me an instrument of your will. Forgive me of my sins and rid me of every fear that keeps me from serving you. Take away my selfishness, my tendency to dwell on past hurts and slights, my anger and frustrations. Help me to let go of the past and to move on to what you would have me do this day, to glorify you and serve the people around me. Give me joy in my work and give me confidence in your love for me. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

2. Please read the following:

In the southeast of France is an isolated village called Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. Nestled in the mountains, the people of this small farming community risked everything they had to show bold hospitality to people in need during World War II.

When the Nazis rolled into Paris in 1940, France was home to some 350,000 Jews. Over the next few years over 25% of them died in concentration camps. Many French Jews, sensing the danger in time, fled or looked for help.

While many courageous individuals made efforts to help conceal French Jews, the village of Le Chambon was a rare case in which an *entire community* opened its homes. They saved over five thousand Jewish children and adults, putting their own safety at risk.

It began with a few desperate Jewish families looking for refuge. But as word got out, the trickle of refugees became a flood. The community of Le Chambon took them into their homes, hid them from the authorities, and guided many to safety in neutral Switzerland.

And yet, the people of Le Chambon did not regard themselves as extraordinary. Henri and Emma Heritter were typical of many. “We never asked for explanations. When people came, if we could be of help, we did.” Another villager, Georgette Barraud said, “It happened so naturally. We can’t understand the fuss. They’d often arrive at night. We’d manage somehow. We gave up our bed when nothing else was left. I helped simply because they needed to be helped. The Bible says to feed the hungry, to visit the sick. It’s a normal thing to do.”

The rescue mission was “led” by Andre and Magda Trocme—the pastors of the Huguenot Protestant church in the village. After the French Vichy government signed the armistice with Germany, Andre preached a sermon which inspired the people to action. He proclaimed that, “The duty of Christians is to resist the violence that has been brought to bear on their conscience, through the weapons of the Spirit. We will do so without fear, but also without pride and without hate.”

But the terms “led” or “organized” don’t really describe what happened. There was nothing planned about the villagers’ decision to rescue the Jewish families. Magda Trocme explained, “Each person, each day, did what seemed necessary. People often ask, ‘What was your organization?’ If we’d had one, we would have failed. You can’t scribble down what is to be done each day. As challenges arose, each person acted on their own. We didn’t know about everything. And people didn’t know what we were doing.”

They were simply acting out of their character and values. It seemed “the right thing to do.” Many villagers were descendants of the Huguenots—a heavily persecuted Protestant sect who for centuries had been hounded across Europe. They understood what it was like to be

outcasts, persecuted and hunted. This was part of their story. Indeed, every year they held special worship services to commemorate their Huguenot ancestors. The regular retelling of their story, combined with their immersion in the Christian gospels, no doubt helped to grow and shape the community's embodiment of the virtues of mercy, compassion, hospitality, and nonviolence so evident in their resistance efforts.

With the Trocmes leading by example, the residents of Le Chambon embraced a risky rescue mission with little thought as to whether it was the wisest thing to do. These character traits had become part of them. As a result, the "decision" to offer hospitality was largely instinctive and automatic.

3. Write down your responses to the questions below, based on what you just read about Le Chambon.

- Even though each person acted very much on an individual basis, it is clear there was a communal web of relationships in place in Le Chambon that undergirded the villagers' remarkable behavior. In the space below, identify some of the underlying factors that you think made them uniquely equipped to show bold hospitality in the face of very real forces of hatred and destruction.
  
- With the story of Le Chambon in mind, think about some of the factors that contribute to a lack of hospitality, suspicion, and fragmentation in our civilization today. Which of these factors do you see at work in our culture today? Write down your thoughts below.
  
- What are some things that we share and do at St. John's right now that strengthen us to go into deeper water in our hospitality towards strangers and visitors, against the trend of the surrounding culture towards fragmentation and fear? Can any kind of "training and support" that we and our families are getting here be compared with what the villagers of Le Chambon grew up with, as descendants of the Huguenots?
  
- Specifically, focus in on the fact that the villagers of Le Chambon identified themselves as descendants of refugees who had a history as "outcasts." How does our faith in Jesus naturally lend itself to a sense that we are "outsiders" in this world, even though we throw ourselves into this life and live, work, and raise our families here? Along with this, how does our faith in Jesus naturally help us identify with outsiders?

4. Please read **Luke 10:25-37**

5. The lawyer's question, "who is my neighbor?" (v.29) prompts Jesus to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. How does the parable turn the lawyer's understanding of "who is my neighbor" around to a completely new starting point?

6. Jews and Samaritans were very hostile towards each other in Jesus' day. How do you think Jesus' Jewish listeners might have responded to this parable? Why do you think he purposely used an enemy of his audience (his own people) as an example of Godly hospitality? How might you relate this to the story of the villagers of Le Chambon regarding the difference between "outsiders and insiders?"

7. In what particular ways does the Samaritan in the parable show generous hospitality? Briefly summarize each different thing he does for the wounded man.

8. How can getting caught up in asking "who is my neighbor" as individuals become a major obstacle to showing Godly hospitality towards people? Why can this attitude so often lead to showing no hospitality at all?

9. Jesus shifts the question from "who is my neighbor" to "am I a good neighbor?" How does this both humble us and also open up all sorts of possibilities when it comes to living generously towards our neighbors?

10. In what different ways (e.g. in the areas of outreach, stewardship, fellowship etc.) can a Christian congregation cripple itself by constantly asking the lawyer's question: "who is my neighbor?"

11. In the space below, write down a few examples of people's superficial appearances and behavior traits that might make you uncomfortable, dismissive, angry, or fearful. It might help to imagine yourself in a crowded public place—perhaps at Walmart or the DMV. Try to figure out why these appearances and/or behavior patterns quickly close you off to people. We acknowledge that some of our prejudices are there for a reason (experience has taught us to be cautious of certain appearances and behaviors). However, it is good to identify some of the factors and assumptions we make about people that quickly shut us down when it comes making connections as representatives of Jesus.

12. Now that you've imagined the appearances and behaviors that "shut you down," try this exercise: See those same people from Jesus' eyes. What fears, problems, challenges, struggles, slaveries, addictions, despair, feelings of meaninglessness, etc. does Jesus see in the people who "shut us down" because we perceive them as threats in some way? Below, write down what you see from Jesus' eyes as you go over what you wrote for #11, above.

13. By the end of this "hospitality expedition" (mid July), our main "going deeper" challenge is to have everyone in our small groups invite at least one person to come to a church activity (e.g. worship, bible study, ministry group, service project, etc.), *who is not a member of St. John's*. We will be talking about ways we can support each other in this *deeper water* challenge. For now, start thinking of several different people who might be candidates to receive your invitation. Write down their names in the space below.

14. Another challenge: Identify someone that you will take out to lunch sometime in the next month. Challenge yourself to ask someone you have never done anything like this with before, and plan to pay for their meal. For example, invite an acquaintance from work rather than a close friend. It will be natural for us to feel some reluctance to do this. Consider overcoming our reluctance as *training in going deeper* in our hospitality! Take time to think of this, and write down the name of several candidates you might ask, below.

15. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other closing prayers, please ask God to bless your small group and the congregation of St. John's as we follow Jesus' call to go into the deep water with Christ and become more confident, effective "fishers of people."

**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #3 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: May 26—June 1, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer, (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer):

*Come Holy Spirit, make God's Word known to us. Make us desire the truth in all that we do and always bring us home to the source of all truth, our Savior Jesus Christ. Open our hearts and minds to your guidance today as we discuss the sacred scriptures and share this time together. Give us joy in our fellowship, and set us free from our fears, that we may welcome others into the peace of your presence with the graciousness with which you have welcomed us into eternal life with you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

3. Together with your partner(s), review the story of Le Chambon (Item #2 from the homework).
4. Share your responses to the bullet-points under item #3 of your homework, concerning the story of Le Chambon. In the space below, write down any thoughts from your discussion that strike you.
  
5. Have someone read **Luke 10:25-37** aloud, or read it as a tag-team.
6. With your partner(s), discuss your responses to items 5-12 from the homework. Use the space below to record any insights that stand out from your discussion.
  
7. Talk with your partner(s) about the challenge to invite a non-member to a church activity by the end of this "expedition" (mid July—see item #13 from the homework). Share with your partner(s): For you personally, does this seem like it will be a tough challenge, or an easy one? Why? Have you identified some potential candidates you might ask? Write down the names of the candidates your partner(s) have identified as people they will invite.
  
8. Talk with your partner about the challenge to take someone to lunch/dinner within the next month. Have you identified who this will be yet? Write down the name of your partners' candidate(s). Will this be difficult for you, or easy, and why? Share with each other how you see yourself making the invitation.
  
9. In turn, share one or two concerns that you would like your partner(s) to pray about this week, for you. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, *and be sure to pray for them!* Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.

10. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be “doubling up” on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.

11. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer.

## **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (4<sup>th</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Find a place where you can concentrate, with few distractions. Say the following prayer; add any petitions or thanks as you wish:

*I praise you, God, for the grace you have shown me: for the gift of life itself, for my family, my friendships, and all the things that I too often take for granted. Most of all, I thank you for sending your Son Jesus into this world and into my life, that I may know you and worship you as my Heavenly Father. Set me free from all the false gods that I am tempted to worship because they offer me easy shortcuts around the cross of Jesus, and lift me up by the Holy Spirit to serve you alone with joy and confidence. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

2. Please read the following excerpt from the book, Widening the Welcome of Your Church, by Fred Bernhard and Steve Clapp:

*Most of us like to think of our congregations as warm and welcoming. Yet the reality is that our discomfort with strangers often carries over into the life of the church.*

*On three different occasions, Fred experienced significantly less than a warm welcome in visiting congregations on Sunday mornings. In one church, while seated in a pew with his wife, Fred heard someone whispering about them from four pews away: ‘Who’s that? What are they doing here?’ Fred went back to the two people who had been whispering and introduced himself. As he walked back to his own seat, he heard one of them say to the other: ‘And just who is Fred Bernhard?’ In another congregation, he was actually asked to move out of a seat which a member felt was permanently reserved! In the third congregation, he had the experience of not being spoken to by anyone. Fred Bernhard does not, in [my] opinion, appear threatening or intimidating—in fact, it would be very difficult not to like Fred.*

*During...years of consulting, Steve has visited a large number of congregations across North America. He has uniformly experienced enthusiastic welcomes from congregations when serving as a guest speaker or sharing a consultant’s report. When his role and identity are not clearly known, however, the response has sometimes been very different. He has frequently stood drinking coffee by himself during the “fellowship time” between worship and Sunday school, while congregation members gathered in cliques. In one large congregation, he was even asked to mop a restroom floor by a pastor who did not know he was a visitor instead of a member.*

*Being asked to get out of “someone else’s seat,” being ignored by everyone else present, and being asked to mop a floor are not the kinds of welcomes which make people want to return*

*to a congregation. To have such things happen is an abomination to the Christ we serve. We do not own the pews, and we do not own the Church. Christ gave his life for us and also for the stranger we encounter in the church or in the community.*

3. Have you ever had anything happen to you (or witnessed anything) at a church like the author described above? If so, describe the situation, below. Please do not use any names.

4. In your own words, describe the social dynamics at play when people “reserve pews” or ignore people they don’t know at church. What kind of personal needs are we fulfilling—or fears are we trying to escape—when our religion becomes a way of claiming personal territory rather than giving our lives over to God in gratitude towards him?

5. Write your response to the author’s statement: “To have such things happen is an abomination to the Christ we serve. We do not own the pews, and we do not own the Church. Christ gave his life for us and also for the stranger we encounter in the church or in the community.”

6. Please read the following, also from Widening the Welcome of Your Church. The excerpt helps us understand the crucial importance of hospitality in Biblical times.

“The Old and New Testaments both regard hospitality as an obligation. The biblical texts do not question the worthiness of the needy stranger but instead *examine the faithfulness of the one from whom hospitality is needed*.

In contemporary North America, those of us with sufficient financial resources find travel an exciting and not overly difficult process. A person living in Ohio can board an airplane in a snowstorm on a winter morning and be in the warmth of California or Florida before noon. Comfortable automobiles, buses, and trains provide other transportation options. GPS is built into our phones and the internet provides immediate, comprehensive information on just about any public space into which we might venture.

Restaurants proliferate at an astounding rate, and so many of them are chains that one knows what to expect in a new city before walking through the door. Hotels and motels provide reasonably comfortable accommodations, and [cellular phones] make it easy to stay in touch with familiar people. Those who want more variety and who treasure the unique can abandon the big chains and select bed-and-breakfasts and one-of-a-kind restaurants, but the searching process is at our fingertips.

The traveler in the Ancient Near East faced radically different circumstances. No one traveled unless absolutely necessary. There was no Bedouin Disneyland, and the concept of travel for pleasure or education would have seemed absurd. With the exception of a few cities,

public places of accommodation were not available. In this environment, the practice of hospitality truly made the difference between life and death for the sojourner. People throughout the Mediterranean world regarded the provision of food, lodging, and protection as a virtue and sacred duty. The following were common components of the act of hospitality:

- **Bowing.** In receiving a desert guest, the host would often bend at the knees and gradually lower his or her body until touching the ground. This act revealed the host's desire to render the highest possible honor to the stranger-guest.
- **Feet-washing.** People wore sandals, and a day on the desert meant dirty, hot, and often sore feet. Washing the feet was an act of kindness which conveyed honor to the guest.
- **Preparing and serving food.** The host might devote considerable time and expense to preparing food for the guest. The generous Bedouins were known to deny themselves for the sake of the guest. The host's family ate later from what remained. The thoughtful guest always left a portion of food on the dish.
- **Needs of animals.** The host also provided the needed food and lodging for the camels of the guest.
- **All guests were seen as potential friends.** Obviously the stranger can represent a friend or an enemy, but the starting assumption in the Ancient Near East was that the stranger was a potential friend. Names were not exchanged until after the meal was eaten, if at all. An exchange of names and background information was not considered a requirement for hospitality.

The stranger could also expect protection from the host. If a stranger was being pursued by an enemy, the fleeing person only had to touch the peg of the host's tent to be safe. The pursuer would be forced to peer helplessly from the outside of the tent while the guest was entertained. That protection generally extended for thirty-six hours, the period thought to be sustained by a meal or the time needed for salt to leave the stomach. That length of time permitted a head-start for the fugitive. Psalm 23 takes on new meaning when one thinks about the tradition of hospitality in relationship to these words:

*You prepare a table before me  
In the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup overflows."*

7. Please read **Genesis 18:1-15**. When you are finished reading, identify the specific verses in this passage where each of the five basic components of hospitality listed above (bowing, feet washing, etc.) is on display between Abraham and the mysterious visitors. List the corresponding verses below.

8. In sharing the calf and the butter, Abraham and Sarah gave far more than custom required. They chose to treat the three men as honored guests, and they did so without expecting anything in return. In verses 9-15, one of them tells Sarah that she will have a son. It is important to remember that God had promised a son to the couple *already, in the preceding chapter*. So the

promise of a son was not given to them on the basis of their actions here. They were simply being hospitable because that was “who they were.” Think about this, and then respond to the following questions:

- What would Abraham and Sarah have missed if they had not welcomed the guests?
- Based on other events in scripture, do you think God would have retracted his promise of a son if Abraham and Sarah had turned away their guests that day?
- In your own words, what is the episode telling us about the relationship between God’s actions in history and our everyday willingness to empty ourselves (like Abraham and Sarah did for their guests) and embrace (or reject) *mystery*?
- Where does this passage lead us to look for God in our worldly experience, and in what ways can this be a great challenge to us?

9. When visitors come to St. John’s, how can we show them biblical hospitality the way Abraham and Sarah did to the three strangers? Obviously our external circumstances have changed somewhat from biblical times. Below, try to “translate” the ancient near-eastern marks of hospitality into our current context. For example:

- What are different ways we can “bow” to people when we meet them?
- What are different ways we can “wash people’s feet” in today’s church context?
- In what (many) different ways can preparing and serving food factor into our church hospitality?
- How can we (figuratively) tend to the needs of our visitors’ “animals” (show care for the means of their worldly livelihood and help them with their worldly concerns)?
- As a congregation, how can we foster and nurture the biblical attitude of seeing strangers as potential friends (putting generous hospitality before judging the “worthiness” of the recipient)?

10. Having had time to think about it, in the space below, write the name of a person *who is not a member of St. John's*, whom you plan to invite to a church activity sometime before mid July (e.g. worship, bible study, small group activity, fellowship event, etc.). This will be our big challenge for this eight week period. After you write their name, 1) write some notes on how you plan to approach them, 2) identify the activity to which you will invite them, and 3) give yourself a deadline. Pray about this and be prepared to talk about your plans with your small group partners. Encourage your partner(s) in this challenge!

11. In the spirit of going deeper: everyone is encouraged to take someone you don't know really well out to a meal within the next few weeks (or better yet, if possible, invite them to your home for a meal). For example, this could be a neighbor and/or their family, or a co-worker you don't know too well. If you take them out, plan to pay for their meal. Identify them in the space below and make a note of a time/place that would work for this.

12. In the spirit of going deeper, make a commitment to introduce yourself to someone at church whom you do not know this week!

13. Look back at your partners' prayer concerns from your last meeting. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other closing prayers, please ask God to bless your small group and the congregation of St. John's as we follow Jesus' call to go into the deep water with Christ and become more confident, effective "fishers of people."

**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #4 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: June 2-8, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer).

*Loving Father, lift our eyes to seek you first today and always. Forgive us for getting bogged down in the cares and worries of this world. Renew us through the power of the Holy Spirit to live confidently as your sons and daughters. Give us strength to build up your Church on earth, to witness to Christ, and to serve the people around us with humility and joy. We pray this in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

3. Together, review and discuss the material and your responses to items 3-5 of your homework. Write down any thoughts and insights that strike you from your discussion with your partner(s), below.

4. Look at the material under item 6 in your homework together, dealing with hospitality in the ancient near east. Share anything that struck you as interesting and helpful from this material.
  
5. Have someone read **Genesis 18:1-15** aloud (or read it as a tag team). Discuss the passage together, using the bullet points under item #8 in your homework as a guide. Share the responses you wrote to each bullet point. As time permits, feel free to go further afield with your discussion of this passage. Write any insights that strike you from your discussion, below.
  
6. Spend time sharing your responses to the bullet points under item #9 in your homework, where you “translated” the ancient near-eastern practices to our current context.
  
7. With your partner(s), talk about item #10 from the homework. The challenge is to invite a person who is not a member of St. John’s to a church activity sometime before mid July. Talk about who you will invite, and how you see the invitation happening. Discuss your confidence level in meeting this challenge. Encourage each other, and make notes below from what your partner(s) share with you.
  
8. Talk with your partner(s) about the challenge to invite someone you don’t know too well to a meal, either at a restaurant or at your home. Can you share concrete plans at this point with your partner?
  
9. Have you introduced yourself to a person at church whom you do not know? If so, talk about the experience briefly.
  
10. In turn, share one or two concerns that you would like your partner(s) to pray about this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, and be sure to pray for them! Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.

11. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be “doubling up” on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.

12. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer.

## **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (5<sup>th</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Say the following prayer; add any petitions or thanks as you wish:

*Almighty God, I thank you for the beauty and majesty of your creation. Thank you for all the mysteries that you have given me to explore and enjoy in this world. Give me wisdom to seek you in all things, and to know your ways. Help me to listen and learn with humility from the people around me. Most of all, I thank you for your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made and in whom you have given me forgiveness and eternal life in your loving presence. In his precious name I pray. Amen.*

2. This week we will start to focus on actual ways we can and do practice hospitality at St. John’s Lutheran Church. The first thing to do, when it comes to being a welcoming congregation, is to *always be aware of the needs and expectations of strangers and visitors coming to church*. The purpose of the following bullet points is to help us think about our personal practices and habits when it comes to our normal interactions with others in our congregation.

a. When visiting a church, most people (including long-time members) don’t want to be completely ignored. People expect those who are sitting near them to share brief introductions and/or friendly acknowledgements before or after the service or Sunday school class. Think about *your* normal interactions with people at church at a typical worship service or class, and write down how you would characterize your current habits of interaction. For example, would people find you welcoming? A blank wall?

b. On the other hand, when visiting a church, almost no one wants to be overwhelmed. Two-thirds of those who visit congregations for the first time do NOT want to be introduced in worship to the whole congregation. They prefer meeting people on a one-to-one basis. Introduce the new person to a few other people—not to every single person whose attention you can get. Have you ever introduced a visitor at church to another member? To a pastor? Describe the situation(s).

c. People especially do not want to feel ignored during a designated fellowship time. If they go to a gathering spot for coffee and donuts, they assume that some people will visit with them. They will feel rejected if church members are all in tight groups with people they

already know. Be alert during such times for people who are standing alone. At what times or events (e.g. Sunday school, before worship services, after worship, special events like the Christmas program, Veterans lunch, etc.) do you, personally, see easy opportunities to reach out to people at St. John's? Can you think of ways we can create more opportunities to mingle with people we don't know?

d. Visitors generally appreciate name tags for themselves and for the members of the church. That makes it easier to remember names and avoids awkwardness over names not being heard correctly the first time shared. Remember that you as a member only have the name of one new person to learn; the visitor has dozens to learn right away, and perhaps hundreds, eventually, to learn if he or she joins the church. Name tags can also make it easier for you to introduce the new person to others in the church, whose names may not be as familiar to you! Below, write down some ways you think typical congregations could overcome a natural resistance to wearing name tags.

e. People don't want to feel as though they are being required to pass a litmus test. Most will feel resentful of conversations which make it appear that someone is attempting to do research on family background and church activity. Getting involved in conversations too quickly about family trees (e.g. "are you related to the Dublin Road Tornquists?"), the ethnicity of a person's name (e.g. "I've never met a Greek Lutheran before") or past church associations (e.g. "Baptist? What are you doing here?") can put people off. Remember that in the Ancient Near East, the name of the guest was not even asked until after a meal had been shared. Below, share any experiences you might have had or witnessed where you felt you were being "sized up" by a person at church. What kinds of things can we focus on which lead us away from a self-protective or clannish attitude.

f. Some people are anxious about how others will respond to certain aspects of their background. A person may be divorced, a single parent who has never married, unemployed, an alcoholic, or an ex-convict. These are not pieces of information they are eager to share. We do not want in an initial conversation to push someone to fill in the gaps in his or her history. When we see an adult with a child, we should not immediately move to a question like: "Where is your husband?" or "Where is your wife?" It's better to let the other person share family information as he or she wishes. Have you ever felt, or seen another person, singled out at church because of something in your/their background? Below, write down some long-standing assumptions we might hold about "church people" which *might not apply* to a good portion of people who visit congregations today. How might we train ourselves to not impose those assumptions on people when meeting visitors or newcomers at church?

g. People want to feel that others are interested in them and pleased to have them present. They respond very well to genuine expressions of delight at their presence. There are many good topics of conversation to pursue with people you've just met in church. In the space below, write down some things you've found easy to talk about with people that make them feel comfortable at church and willing to share more with you.

3. Please read **Luke 19:1-10**.

4. Zacchaeus, as a Jewish tax collector employed (ultimately) by the Roman occupiers, was most likely hated by his Jewish neighbors and shunned by the religious authorities. Especially since he is a *chief* tax collector (a particularly successful and powerful one), they would dismiss him as nothing but a **taker**. Significantly, Luke remembers him as a *small* man; there must be some kind of symbolism going on there.

Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus brings him up against his own limitations, so he climbs a tree. By taking so much trouble to see Jesus, Zacchaeus shows that he wants to be something more (bigger) than he currently is.

Interestingly, Jesus calls Zacchaeus **down** from the tree...bringing him back down to size from a position of height and aloofness above the crowd. But, at the same time, Jesus tells Zacchaeus that he (Jesus) will become his guest that day, which means Jesus is putting Zacchaeus in a position of power **over** him! Now Jesus will be the needy person, at the mercy of Zacchaeus and his generosity!

Note that when the other people sneer at Jesus (put him down) for "being the guest of a sinner," it is Zacchaeus who **stands up** and responds with extreme penitence and generosity—promising to give half of his wealth to the poor and to give back anything he has taken from people wrongly, four times over. One could say that Zacchaeus has become the "biggest" person in the story, because Jesus has become his guest. With all this in mind, please respond to the following:

- When people visit a new church, what do you think are some things they are looking for?
- What does their willingness to make themselves vulnerable to us, as newcomers and visitors, tell us about where they are "coming from" in life? How are they taking a much bigger risk, in many ways, in visiting a new congregation, than anyone in our congregation could ever be taking in reaching out to them?
- How does showing true hospitality involve really putting *ourselves* at the mercy of other people?

- In Zacchaeus' case, the opportunity to show hospitality to Jesus opened up a huge store of generosity in him that had obviously been stuffed for a long time. What might this suggest, when it comes to a correspondence between our spiritual health and our willingness to be generous hosts? Describe how Jesus has a way of helping us stand up and be confident, generous people through humbling himself for us?
- Describe the "tree" you personally tend to climb, in order to set yourself apart (and perhaps above) the crowd of people around you. What "perch" do you often find yourself relying on to get a good view of things and to feel like you are master of your environment? Is it an activity? Is it a kind of philosophical viewpoint to which you return? While this "perch" provides you with shelter and a long view of things, it might also keep you isolated from others if you stay in it too long. In your own words, describe your personal "tree."
- Have you ever had an experience where God called you down from a "tree" (see the above) in which you were perched, in order to serve him? Describe it.

5. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other prayers, ask for God's continued guidance and blessing on your small group and on our congregation as we continue into deeper water with Christ. May the Holy Spirit fill us with life and power so that we can become more confident and effective "fishers of people."

**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #5 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: June 9-15, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer).

*Loving God, empty us of all pretense and self-justification. Empty us of all fear and selfishness, that we will be vessels overflowing with the Holy Spirit. Help us to pour ourselves out in love towards the people around us, in imitation of your self-giving love in Christ. In the*

*precious time we have together here, help us to grow in your holy Word and to build each other up in your grace and love. May all we do bring glory to your holy name. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.*

3. Devote about 40 minutes to discussing the extensive material under #2 in your homework (items a-g), and your responses to it. It is worthwhile to review each of these paragraphs and talk about them together. Write down any insights that strike you, below, from your discussion with your partner(s).

4. Read **Luke 19:1-10** out loud together.

5. Review and discuss the commentary and your responses to the bullet-points under item #4 in your homework, concerning the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. Write down anything that stands out in your discussion with your partner(s), below.

6. Discuss together: how are things going at this point for you, when it comes to the challenge of inviting a non-member to a church activity? Again, support and encourage each other to take up this challenge. Talk about what might be holding you back, if anything. You might want to pray about it together.

7. Discuss together: Have you invited/taken a person you don't know very well out for a meal? If so, share your experience. If not, please keep encouraging each other to do this.

8. Have you introduced yourself to someone at church whom you don't know, yet? If so, write down their name(s), below.

9. In turn, share one or two concerns that you would like your partner(s) to pray about this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, and be sure to pray for them! Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.

12. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be "doubling up" on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.

13. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer.

## HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (6<sup>th</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING

1. Say the following prayer; add any petitions or thanks as you wish:

*Lord, when my heart is broken, you are near. When my spirit is crushed, you are my rescuer. Your Word is my hope. It revives me and comforts me. When my soul faints, you are the breath of life within me. You are my help, the One who sustains me. Lift me up from the death of my sin to live for you alone, and fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit, that I may show forth your love and grace in all that I do. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

2. This week, we continue to focus on actual ways we can and do practice hospitality at St. John's Lutheran Church. Please read and respond to the material, below.

- a. Parents are always delighted when people show interest in their children. When you meet a new family in church, direct part of your conversation to the child or teenager who is with the adult who is visiting. What are some topics of conversation that you have found helpful to make a connection with 1) young children, 2) teenagers when you meet them the first time? Please write them below.
  
- b. Pay special attention to the needs of people with physical disabilities. Generally, he or she will appreciate an offer of assistance when needed, such as guidance towards ramps and/or lifts for someone who is using a wheelchair, or assisting a person who is visually impaired. Beyond such clearly needed assistance, people with disabilities would of course prefer that conversation not center on the disability, but rather on establishing a caring, friendly personal connection. In the space below, write down your impression of our St. John's physical campus in terms of its ease of accessibility for people with disabilities. Where might improvements be made?
  
- c. People appreciate directions to the sanctuary, an appropriate Sunday school class, or a gathering place for refreshments. What is your impression of the signage and ease of navigation at St. John's for people who have never been in our building before?
  
- d. People almost universally appreciate an invitation to share a meal either that day or at a mutually agreeable date later in the week. Few things show hospitality in a more meaningful way than having someone as your guest for a meal. Even if a person declines an invitation, the fact that it was given is still appreciated. Churches which focus on hospitality have a lot of people hosting others for meals. Do you think you might be a person who could occasionally host visitors at your home on behalf of our congregation? If so, write down how you could see that happening, and what the concerns and limitations might be.

e. People appreciate being remembered with a phone call the week following their visit. It feels good to know that someone remembered you and took the time to call and reinforce how good it was to have you present. That can be an opportunity to extend an invitation to a meal, a Sunday school class, or perhaps a small group. Could you see yourself as someone who could make phone calls to visitors on designated weeks?

f. People appreciate returning the following week and finding that people to whom they were introduced remember them and are delighted to see them again. If you can, remember a time when it meant a lot that people remembered you when you returned to a group situation, and write about it below.

g. People who are insecure about church involvement or who feel uncomfortable in large crowds appreciate sensitivity to their desire to go slowly in getting acquainted with others. Below, write down some “signals” that you’ve seen people give off when they are uncomfortable with moving too fast in making connections. From your experience, how can you respond (or how have you responded) to “give people space” in a conversation while also letting them know you will be there for them when they are ready to engage more fully?

h. People appreciate literature about the church being shared with them. Brochures and newsletters can help answer questions at their leisure. Photo QR codes (those “block type” codes you can scan with your phone) in a church bulletin can take people directly to a church website or Facebook page. What is your impression of St. John’s communication web and in what general ways can it be improved?

i. Visitors appreciate greeters and ushers who not only show warmth and genuine interest but who also have been trained to anticipate needs and to answer questions effectively. Ushers can often help by making an introduction to another person in the congregation. Training for greeters and ushers is crucial. Imagine yourself visiting St. John’s for the first time. In the space below, write down all the ways that ushers and greeters can make you feel welcome and provided for before, during, and after the service.

j. Visitors appreciate announcements and the sharing of joys and concerns being done in a way which does not make them feel “out of the loop” or excluded. That means the speaker (if not the pastor) should never assume that everyone knows him or her, and should *always* work with the assumption that he/she is speaking to people who are there for the first time. It is important to provide sufficient context for announcements so that they will make sense to a visitor. Also in line with this, abbreviations or shorthand expressions for groups (e.g. saying

“NALC” rather than “North American Lutheran Church”) should always be avoided in general announcements. If a meeting or activity only involves a small number of people, probably no announcement should be made in worship. Can you remember a time when you were in a group and it seemed like they were speaking in a code you did not understand? Share a few memories/feelings from the experience, below.

3. Please read **Luke 14:12-24**, and then answer the following questions.

- Describe, in your own words, Jesus’ challenge in verses 12-14 of this passage. What fears or sins or insecurities is he forcing us to face in ourselves here, when he challenges us to invite people who “cannot repay us” to our activities?
- Looking at the parable of the great banquet (vv.15-24), describe the responses of those who were *initially* invited to the banquet. What kinds of things were they prioritizing, over the host’s dinner invitation?
- When those who were initially invited make excuses not to come to the banquet, what is the host’s response?
- In a nutshell, how would you describe the difference in the basic attitudes of 1) those who were initially invited, and 2) those who actually ended up being brought to the banquet (the poor, crippled, blind, lame, and the random people off the street)?
- How can an attitude of “I deserve to be here” or “I am already content with who I am and what I have” potentially get in the way of our relationship with God?
- How can this passage shed light on our own attitudes towards welcoming strangers and being hospitable as a congregation?

4. How are you doing in the challenge to invite a non-member to a church activity?
5. Have you invited a person you don't know very well to a meal?
6. Have you introduced yourself to a person you don't know at church?
7. This week's challenge: Verbally thank someone in our congregation for their ministry among us. Think about someone whom you've seen offering their time, energy and love in a special (maybe quiet) way for the people of St. John's. Write their name down below, and plan to thank them face-to-face this week!
8. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other prayers, ask for God's continued guidance and blessing on your small group and on our congregation as we continue into deeper water with Christ. May the Holy Spirit fill us with life and power so that we can become more confident and effective "fishers of people."

**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
DEEPER WATER IN OUR HOSPITALITY**

**WEEK #6 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: June 16-22, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer).

*Dear Father, we thank you for bringing us together here. You know each of us by name and have called us to walk with you. Help us to put our trust in you completely. As we surrender ourselves in adoration, we ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Come fill our lives with your love, fill our conversation with your grace and truth, fill this fellowship with your presence. May what we say and do here bring glory and praise to your name. We pray this through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

3. With your partner(s), review the extensive material regarding church hospitality under item #2 in the homework. Devote about 40 minutes to a conversation about this material and your responses to it. Write down any thoughts/insights that stand out from your discussion with your partner(s).

4. Someone read **Luke 14:12-24** aloud (or read it as a tag-team).
5. Discuss your responses to the bullet-points under item #3 in the homework, concerning the parable of the great feast and the excuses. Write down any insights that strike you from your conversation with your partner(s).
6. Touch base with each other regarding the challenge of inviting someone who is not a member of our church to a St. John's activity.
7. Touch base with each other about the challenge of inviting someone to a meal, whom you don't know very well.
8. Talk about introducing yourself to someone at church whom you don't know. Have you all done it yet?
9. Talk about the challenge of thanking someone verbally for their ministry at St. John's. Have you done it yet?
10. In turn, share one or two concerns that you would like your partner(s) to pray about this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, and be sure to pray for them! Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.
11. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be "doubling up" on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.
12. Close with prayer. Have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer.

## **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (7<sup>th</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Say the following prayer; add any petitions or thanks as you wish.

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

2. This week we will continue to focus on actual ways we can and do show hospitality towards visitors and guests at St. John's. Please read and respond to the material which follows.

3. **Hospitality to Younger Children.** We need to welcome children in the same spirit which Jesus did (Matthew 19:13-15). Write down your thoughts (keeping things constructive) regarding St. John's strengths and potential "growing edges" when it comes to the following areas of being child friendly:

- Nursery and childcare areas set aside for kids during worship should be spotlessly clean and attractive.

- For Sunday School and other children's group activities, there must be adequate numbers of leaders for all the children's classes. The younger the children, the greater the need for a small student-teacher ratio.

- Sunday School rooms must be clean and attractive.

- For worship: having at least one part of the service which is especially focused on children is important. This may be an anthem by the children's choir, a children's sermon, etc.

- How would you assess your own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to welcoming children as a church member at St. John's? Do you introduce yourself to children? Learn their names, etc.?

4. **Hospitality to Teenagers.** There's a side to teenagers today which is too often overlooked and under-publicized. For example: Teens are interested in spiritual matters. They like to do things for others. Hands-on service projects are very attractive to them, and they care about their parents and their friends deeply. The middle-school and early teenage years are a crucial period in the shaping of a youth's basic attitudes and beliefs about God and their self-identity. It is also

very important to remember: teenagers are not just the “church of tomorrow.” They bring a vibrant witness to Jesus to the church **today**. Below, write down your impressions of how effectively we welcome teenagers and show them hospitality at St. John’s.

How would you describe your own attitude towards teenagers in general? Towards teenagers at church?

Do you introduce yourself to teenagers at church? Learn their names, etc.?

**5. Hospitality towards Young Adults.** Virtually all congregations want more members, and most have a special desire to reach those in the young adult years (ages 18-35). Many older members, however, while wanting to reach new members, aren’t especially enthused about the changes which always come with the process.

Change is part of growth, especially when the church seeks young adults. Most churches have to go through change in order to attract and involve young adults; but even if more young adults are reached without significant change, their presence in the life of the church *will itself* cause change over time!

Below are some well-documented general trends among younger adults and their current attitudes towards church involvement. Please write your impressions of St. John’s strengths and growing edges—and your own personal strengths and growing edges—when it comes to welcoming younger adults who embody the following trends:

- They are attracted to churches which have an active online community(where constant communication is happening and connections are being made...not just where notifications of upcoming events are being posted.

- They dislike any hint of “top-down” bureaucracy in a church. They prefer activities to bubble up from the grassroots. This demands a flexible church structure that can give permission for individuals to do things quickly.

- They put a high priority on well-organized, safe activities/programs for their children.

- They are generally attracted to worship services which feature high quality live contemporary music.

-They generally like variety in worship services (e.g. a willingness to utilize drama, visuals, arts, personal testimony, and etc. to glorify God in worship).

-They tend to respect authority figures who *prove* themselves trustworthy; they do not automatically submit themselves to formal authority structures or quickly respect titles.

-They are quickly repelled by any attitudes (e.g. clannishness, old cliques, etc.) or formal decision-making structures which stand in the way of welcoming and integrating new people into a congregation quickly.

-They want to know that their age group is represented in the various leadership bodies of the congregation (e.g. council, ministry teams, etc.)

-They appreciate inter-generational activities, where people of all ages are mixing.

**6. How Welcoming are Our Church Facilities?** The church's physical facilities can be part of a congregation's welcome, or can be a barrier to participation by members and visitors. We can too easily grow comfortable with aspects of our physical facilities that really aren't welcoming. A congregation's physical presentation is always sending a message to visitors about the members' attitudes and priorities.

For each aspect of physical "visitor friendliness" listed below, please write down your perceptions of how St. John's is doing in terms of making our facilities welcoming to newcomers and visitors. Where are we strong, and where could we improve? In what ways can you personally contribute to the attractiveness of the congregation's physical facilities?

-A worship space that is too big or too small for the number of worshipers actually present can either create an atmosphere of disconnectedness and decline (too big) or uncomfortable closeness with distractions (too small). When small numbers of people meet in a large space, for example, directing them to move forward together towards the front of the space can go a long way towards creating a sense of community and connectedness.

-Physical worship spaces that are not child-friendly (e.g. "it would be a horrible thing to spill juice here") can create an uncomfortable environment for younger parents.

-Worship spaces that are dull, cold, ugly, dirty, etc., send a message of decline and death that does not square with Jesus' resurrection.

-Inflexible physical worship spaces that cannot be arranged to accommodate different types of activities (drama, musical groups, seasonal liturgical practices, etc.) can limit a congregation's sense of creativity when it comes to utilizing the full range of Lutheran worship practices, old and new.

-The sound system in a sanctuary (and other parts of the building) must be completely reliable, clear, and effective.

-Classrooms and meeting spaces should be aesthetically pleasing and spotlessly clean.

-Is the signage inside and outside our church building obvious and clear to visitors who are looking for the worship spaces, church offices, restrooms, classrooms and etc.?

-Do we have all the ramps, elevators, and/or other accommodations needed for persons with physical disabilities and other mobility or energy limitations to access all areas of our church building?

-Is the congregation's parking area adequate, and what impression does it make?

-Does the congregation have a common meeting space which makes it easy for visitors and newcomers to mix and mingle?

-Is the congregation hard for visitors to find?

-Do our church building and grounds stand out as especially attractive and inviting from the outside?

7. The items above, no doubt, will engage your small group in some good extended conversation next time you meet. For the bible-study portion of your next meeting, please be prepared to share your *brief* written responses to the following bible passages. In just a sentence or two, state in your own words what they tell us about hospitality towards strangers:

-1 Peter 4:7-11

-Hebrews 13:1-2

8. Have you invited someone to a church activity who is not a member?
9. Taken someone to a meal?
10. Introduced yourself to someone at church you didn't know?
11. Thanked someone verbally for their ministry at St. John's?
12. For a new *going deeper* challenge, over the next two weeks, please write thank-you cards to two different people in our congregation for their ministry and service to the people of St. John's. Think about this now, and write down the names of the two people whom you will thank with written cards.
13. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other prayers, ask for God's continued guidance and blessing on your small group and on our congregation as we continue into deeper water with Christ. May the Holy Spirit fill us with life and power so that we can become more confident and effective "fishers of people."

**Into the Deep Water with Christ  
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**WEEK #7 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: June 23-29, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer).

*Dear Lord and Father, thank you for your promise that where two or more are gathered in your name, you are there in the midst of them. We welcome you among us today and celebrate the gift of life that you have lavished upon each of us. We ask that you would open our ears so that we may hear your voice. Open our minds so that we may receive your eternal wisdom. Open our spirits so that we may know your leading and guidance. And open our hearts so that we may receive your wonderful love with gratitude and thanksgiving. We ask all this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.*

3. With your partner(s), review the extensive material regarding church hospitality under items 3-6 in the homework. Devote about 40 minutes to a conversation about this material and your responses to it. Below, write down any thoughts/insights that stand out from your discussion with your partner(s).
  
4. Briefly talk about about your responses to the two bible passages listed under item #7 in the homework. Write down any thoughts that stand out from your discussion.
  
5. Encourage each other to invite a non-member to a church activity (or if one or more of you have already done so, spend some time sharing your experiences with each other). There will be a section on next week's homework in which you will be encouraged to summarize your experience of inviting someone to church in writing.
  
6. Touch base on the challenge to take someone out for a meal.
  
7. Have you introduced yourself to someone at church whom you didn't know?
  
8. Thanked someone verbally for their ministry at St. John's?
  
9. Have you written cards to two different people thanking them for their ministry at St. John's?
  
10. In turn, share one or two concerns that you would like your partner(s) to pray about this week. Write down your partner(s) concerns, below, and be sure to pray for them! Use this opportunity to express your commitment to support and care for each other in this journey.

11. Together, briefly review the homework, below, that you will be doing before your next meeting. Confirm the time and place of your next meeting. Review whether you will be “doubling up” on homework at any point if you are not able to meet weekly, etc.

12. Close with prayer. Today, have one person volunteer to pray for the group. Try to include elements of your discussion from this meeting in your prayer.

### **HOMEWORK FOR YOUR NEXT (8<sup>th</sup>) SMALL GROUP MEETING**

1. Say the following prayer; add any petitions or thanks as you wish.

*Father, thank you for looking beyond my faults and for loving me unconditionally. Forgive me when I fail to love others in the same way. Give me eyes to see the needs of the difficult people in my life, and show me how to meet those needs in a way that pleases you. Help me not to lean on my own understanding but in everything acknowledge you so that you can direct my words, thoughts and actions. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

2. Please read **Matthew 25:31-46** and then respond to the following questions.

- Do the sheep or goats seem *conscious* that they were actually serving (or not serving) the Son of Man when, during their lives, they reached out to (or did not reach out to) the people around them who were hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, imprisoned, etc.?
- The passage makes it seem like the sheep and goats were just acting in accord with their natures. The sheep don't seem like they were *trying* to serve the Son of Man, and the goats likewise don't seem like they were purposely ignoring him. What do you think makes the two different “animals” in the parable act so differently towards the people who were in need around them?
- Goats—the actual animals—are known for their love of *climbing*. If the goats in Jesus' parable were not interested in serving strangers and people in need, where might you presume they were making their efforts in life?
- How do you think faith in Jesus can set goats free to become more sheep-like?

- How does a goat actually *become* a sheep, according to our faith in Christ?
- How does this parable challenge typical worldly priorities? How does it challenge us to see the world and the people around us in a different way?
- In what ways does this parable speak to our discussion of being a hospitable and welcoming congregation?

3. If you were to prioritize what we as a congregation at St. John's could do to become more welcoming and hospitable towards visitors (there's always room for improvement), what would be the top three things on your list that we can/should do?

4. List four people in our congregation (including yourself, if you think so) who, in your opinion, have a powerful gift of making connections quickly with strangers and helping people feel welcome.

5. In the near future, we will be gathering a team at St. John's to continue our discussion of hospitality. We will be forming a more intentional plan to reach out to visitors and make deeper connections with members who are new to St. John's. Please seriously consider being part of this team and whether God is calling you to be part of the following types of activities:

- Bringing "welcome baskets" to people's homes on Sunday afternoons and introducing yourself to visitors.
- Evaluating the church building and pursuing ways to make our physical facilities more welcoming and inviting.
- Calling a visiting family and inviting them to a meal at your home or a restaurant.
- Serving as a mentor (or a "shepherd" family) to members who are new to St. John's.
- Helping with dinners/fellowship events for members who have been recently received into St. John's.
- Becoming a trained greeter at worship services.

Can you see yourself getting involved in this team? Can you see any of your partner(s) involved in it? In what capacity? Please be prepared to discuss this at your next meeting.

6. How would you say you have grown in your understanding and appreciation of the importance of biblical hospitality through our study of the different bible passages through these weeks? How, in your own words, is welcoming the stranger generously a reflection of God's character? How is it an act of faith...of going deeper on our part?

7. In what ways, if any, would you say your eyes have been opened to see our congregation, its people, and visitors in a new way through our discussion of hospitality in the past weeks?

8. How can you see yourself personally putting your insights about hospitality and welcome from your homework and small group discussions into practice at church in the coming months and years? Try to list three specific ways in the space below.

9. If you have been able to invite a non-member to a congregational activity (as encouraged) in the past eight weeks, please use the space below to go into some depth about the experience:

- How did the invitation actually happen, and what was the initial response?
  
- What was your invitee's response to the church activity?
  
- Do you feel your invitation opened a potential future door into the congregation for the person you invited?
  
- Regardless of the response this time, how do you think this particular invitation will influence **you** in the future when you invite people to church activities (things you would change or do differently, things you would do the same, etc.)?

- Regardless of the short-term results of your invitation(s), you should feel very good about inviting people to church activities. We only have control over whether we plant the seeds or not; we do not have much (if any) control over the outcome. What positive gift do you think God has given you through this specific act of “going deeper?”

10. Please think and pray about your next step in going deeper with Christ. The new focus, starting July 21, will be “Going Deeper into Our Baptismal Identity.” It’s going to be a wonderful, challenging, inspiring topic! At your next small group meeting, you will be discussing with your partner(s) whether you will continue as a group or reconfigure.

11. Please consider writing a blurb about your experience so far with *going deeper with Christ* for our church newsletter (the Eagle) and/or our website.

12. In the spirit of going deeper, have you:

- taken someone out for a meal, whom you don’t (didn’t) know very well?
- introduced yourself to someone at church whom you didn’t know?
- thanked someone verbally for their ministry at St. John’s?
- written cards to two different people at St. John’s thanking them for their ministry?

13. Think about the OUTCOME-BASED MINISTRY SKILLS coaching that Gary and Laurie Pecuch offer to **anyone in our congregation**—adult or youth—who wants to become more confident in their faith and ministry for Jesus. St. John’s is truly blessed to have church staff who have years of experience with this practical training. They want to share it with you.

As you think about the gifts that God has given you to *give away*, please consider what a powerful resource you have right here with our staff members, who can help you break through the typical fears we Lutherans often have when it comes to being “out there” with our faith and witness.

Below is an extensive list of faith/ministry skills that Gary and Laurie can help you with:

1. Understand the message of the Good News.
2. Know your purpose in life and pray through it daily.
3. Understand your God-given job description and how to process your day through the lens of faith in Christ.
4. Develop a meaningful prayer life and an everyday prayer sheet.
5. Learn a personal Bible study method.
6. Understand the Acts 1:8 service philosophy.
7. Understand the Christian View of Finances.
8. Develop a discipline of fasting (not necessarily food).
9. Intentional relationship building skills
10. Faith webbing: how to develop a “faith web” of relationships

11. Create an “I believe” statement.
12. Develop written personal standards to live by.
13. Develop a personal mission statement/direction.
14. Develop a personal ministry plan.
15. Develop an attitude of appreciation and understand its benefits.
16. Cultivate an ability to be visionary in your thinking.
17. How to spend time with people the way Jesus did.
18. Understand that concept of love languages and become aware of your primary love language.
19. Understand the basics of personality temperaments and identify your temperament.
20. Develop a biblical self-esteem.
21. Be able to introduce yourself.
22. Be trained to give faith-based talks
23. Give and receive compliments.
24. Find your million dollar mate
25. Develop Bible usage skills
26. Learn how to facilitate a Bible study.
27. Learn how to create and give a devotion.
28. Develop a prayer journal/notebook.
29. Learn how to read scripture out loud.
30. Learn how to open/close a meeting in prayer.
31. Learn how to say or lead a table grace.
32. Recognizing God sightings
33. Learn how to lead a service project.
34. Learn how to put together a social event.
35. How to put together a vesper/campfire
36. Learn how to verbalize your faith.
37. Learn delegation skills
38. Develop “Go” thinking
39. Learn a decision making method
40. Learn how to lead songs, create faith-based skits, lead games.

14. Looking at the above list of skills that Gary and Laurie are willing to help St. John’s members develop, place a check-mark next to all of those which you think might be of special benefit to you.

15. Look back at what you wrote down with your partner(s) regarding their prayer concerns. Make sure to pray for them now. Among your other prayers, ask for God’s continued guidance and blessing on your small group and on our congregation as we continue into deeper water with Christ. May the Holy Spirit fill us with life and power so that we can become more confident and effective “fishers of people.”

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**WEEK #8 SMALL GROUP MEETING**

**Target Week: June 30—July 6, 2019**

1. Spend about 5 minutes sharing highs and lows of the past few days.
2. Someone pray the following prayer (or use it loosely as a model for a spontaneous prayer).

*Almighty God, we are in awe of your magnificent power displayed through the universe, for through you all things were made and all things have their being. We come before you with grateful thanks and with hearts that long to adore you and worship only you. Lord, may we know the presence of the Holy Spirit here with us today. May we be open to your leading, and alert to your calling. Father, we invite the same power that was at work when Jesus was raised from the grave to be present with us here now. We thank you for the privilege of being able to meet together these past weeks to share your Word of truth and grace with each other. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

3. Please read **Matthew 25:31-46** together out loud. You might want to do it “tag team” style.
4. Discuss your responses to the bullet points under item #2 from the homework, in reference to the parable of the sheep and goats. Give yourself a good 25-30 minutes to share your thoughts. Write down any insights you gain from your discussion, below.
5. Share your responses to item #3 in the homework, in which you prioritized ways we at St. John’s can become more welcoming and hospitable towards visitors and strangers. Below, write down some of what your partner(s) share.
6. Share which names you wrote under item #4 in the homework (people in our congregation who you think have a special gift for showing hospitality and for making people feel loved and welcome). Below, write down some of the names which your partner(s) share with you.
7. Talk together about item #5 in the homework, regarding your possible participation in a hospitality team at church. If you think one of your partner(s) has gifts to share in this regard, take this opportunity to encourage them to be part of the group!

8. With your partner(s), go over items 6, 7, and 8 from the homework together, one at a time. Share your responses to these questions. Write down any insights you receive from your conversation with your partner(s), below.
  
9. If you have not already talked about your experience with inviting a non-member to come to a St. John's activity, take time now to discuss the experience using item #9 from the homework as a guide for your conversation.
  
10. Please talk about your responses to item #14 in the homework, regarding the OUTCOME BASED MINISTRY training that Gary and Laurie Pecuch are willing to share with any St. John's members. By which items on their list of topics did you place check marks? Please encourage each other to take advantage of this wonderful resource!
  
11. Talk together about your plans for the next chapter of *going deeper with Christ*. Will you be staying together as a group? Reconfiguring? Disbanding for the time being? Be sensitive to each other's needs and commitments. If you are continuing to the next topic and need to find a new group, please act now! Pastor Seth (217.255.2118) or Pastor Patti (614.875.2314) can help you as needed. You will probably have a good chance finding a new group or other people looking for a group at the upcoming "Go Out from Shore" meetings.
  
12. Could any of you (or all of you) write a blurb about your experience for the newsletter and/or website and/or Facebook regarding your journey so far?
  
13. For your final prayer, have everyone pray in turn. Thank God for your partner(s). Thank him for this opportunity we've been given to share or spiritual gifts with each other, and to build each other up in the love of Christ. Ask for God's blessings and guidance for our congregation as we continue together on this journey into the deep water with Christ.