

# A GUIDE FOR SMALL-GROUP GATHERINGS

**E**xcept for his appearance to Mary on Easter morning (Matthew 28:1-10), every appearance of the risen Christ occurs when the disciples are together: breaking bread in Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), gathering in the upper room (John 20:19-23), sharing breakfast on the beach (John 21:1-14), and witnessing the Ascension (Matthew 28:16-20). The post-Resurrection stories indicate that although we may have unique individual experiences with Christ, it's more likely that we will know his presence in the presence of other disciples in worship, fellowship, and small-group sharing.

Small groups allow persons to share what they have discovered in the scripture readings, written reflections, and personal prayer during the week. The group leader does not lecture or teach but facilitates conversation. Here is a sample outline for small groups.

## GATHERING

**GETTING ACQUAINTED:** In the first session, invite each person to share his or her name, one reason for participation in the group, and one memory of Easter. In following weeks, invite group members to share one new discovery they have made each week.

## OPENING PRAYER/HYMN

**OPENING PRAYER:** The leader can offer the opening prayer each week, or it may rotate among the group members. It can be

## EASTER EARTHQUAKE

spontaneous or could be a traditional prayer from a prayer resource such as the the Book of Common Prayer.

**HYMN OF THE WEEK:** Share a recording or YouTube video of the hymn. Invite people to share what caught their attention or inspired them in the hymn. Keep in mind that the hymn noted for each week is a suggestion only. The group may prefer another selection; remain open to those hymns that speak to participants. Persons may actually be invited to bring meaningful music or art that speaks to them to the session.

### FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

- ❖ What surprised or challenged you in this week's readings?
- ❖ Find a copy of any work of art mentioned in the week's study, and invite group members to share what they observe or how the painting makes them feel. As noted above, encourage participants to bring to the session other items that came to mind in association with the session.
- ❖ Use the additional suggestions included with each week's content.
- ❖ Speak aloud the next step each person will take to live into the week's learning.

*A Guide for Small-Group Gatherings*

PRAYER

- ❖ Share the way each member would like to be remembered in prayer.
- ❖ After a time of silence, go around the circle with each person offering a word of prayer or passing to the next person.
- ❖ Close by saying in unison the Mizpah blessing from Genesis 31:49: “The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other.”