



## **NEW RITUAL**

### **Eating together again**

Based on Luke 24:13-35

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#### **Ritual theme**

This ritual is designed for the occasion when family or friends meet for a meal after having been apart due to COVID-19 precautions and restrictions. This ritual allows participants to lean into the renewed hope brought about by the chance to eat together again, while also recognizing lingering anxiety and/or fear. The ritual eating of bread comes at the beginning of the meal: the central moment of transformation in Luke 24:13-25 is when Jesus breaks bread with his disciples, and Cleopas and the unnamed disciple recognize that their travelling companion is the risen Christ. This ritual marks a moment of transformation, hope, and new beginnings after a long and difficult journey.

There are similarities between this eating ritual and the practice of communion. Yet this ritual gathers us as family and friends rather than as church members. The breaking of bread is not a sign of Christ's body, as in the story of the Last Supper, but rather a sign of transformation from fear to hope, as in the story of Walk to Emmaus. One major difference between this ritual and communion: there is no cup.

#### **Preparation**

In the days leading up to the meal and ritual, the host communicates with his/her guests about the ritual, letting them know they will be able to participate as they wish. Participants can prepare for the gathering in two ways:

1. by reflecting on the fears or disappointments they carry from the past year and what hopes are emerging as they prepare to gather with loved ones.
2. by reading and reflection on Luke 24:13-35, especially on the disciples' own transition from fear/disappointment into hope.

#### **Program**

*Participants gather around a table for a meal. Bread is set in the middle of the table. If concerns about COVID-19 transmission linger, the bread should be precut into cubes. Otherwise, participants may tear a piece off the loaf when it is time to break the bread. This ritual will take place before the meal begins.*

#### **Prayer (host)**

Companioning God,  
today we mark a new stage of our journey.  
After a year of uncertainty and change  
when it has been difficult to always recognize your presence,  
we celebrate this reunion with loved ones.  
We offer gratitude for this food and this fellowship.  
Bless our time together  
that it might be filled with the hope and joy that come with new beginnings.  
Amen.

*(continued on next page)*

**Welcome (host)**

Friends, today is a day of celebration: we gather once again after many long months of being apart. Yet even within this new beginning, the fears and anxieties of the past year linger.

So as you are comfortable, take or break a piece of bread, and name a fear or anxiety from the past year. It may be directly or indirectly related to the COVID-19 pandemic, or another concern altogether.

As you eat the bread you have chosen, I will say,

“Let the hope of new beginnings be made known to you in the breaking of this bread.”

Then everyone who is not eating will repeat those words (*demonstrate*).

There is enough time for each of us to participate as many times as we wish. If you wish to pass, or are finished sharing, you may signal this to the group by placing your hands palms up on the table as a gesture of receiving the hope that comes from Jesus.

*When all participants are seated with their hands upturned, the host ends the ritual with a closing prayer.*

**Prayer (host)**

Companioning God,  
in the eating of this bread  
you have nourished us with hope.  
May this hope surge through our bodies,  
empowering us to live as Easter people,  
daily commemorating the risen Christ.  
Amen.

*The meal is shared.*

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