



ROAD TO HOPE



WHAT'S IN THIS KIT?

PRAYER CARDS

Please enjoy the artful prayer cards in your kit as the starting point for this journey each week. These cards will guide the journey with a focus word, a meditation, a prayer and an abstract image that may inspire your prayer and reflection times.

The series of cards has been designed to use alongside our prayer stations and the activity kit, but our hope is that they will serve you beyond this journey, whether tucked in your Bible or on a bookshelf. We are grateful to Louise McBride for contributing her artwork to this series.

PRAYER STATIONS

The prayer stations outlined in this guide may be set up once or left up throughout Lent to visit and revisit. We recommend setting them up one at a time, in order, as directed by this booklet. We will engage with the elements of the prayer stations during our Monday evening Zoom calls.

MONDAY EVENING ZOOM CALLS

We will gather virtually on Mondays, March 7–April 11, 6:30–6:50pm, to engage in the prayer stations in community. Connect into the call each week at themeetinghouse.com/prayer-stations

This booklet highlights any household items or elements from your kit that you'll need to engage.

Hope multiplies when we gather! Please join us as you are able.

REFLECTIONS

These activities that are meant to put our meditations and prayer into action, providing tangible and tactile ways to engage with our hope. Feel welcome to unpack the reflection elements throughout the week, on your own or as a household.

BEADS

Each theme word on our journey is represented by a coloured bead in your kit, though we won't string them together until Easter. In the meantime, you may want to reflect on the colour, material and texture of each bead, setting them on the pot's saucer as their meanings are revealed.

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY

We are so excited that you've joined us on this road of contemplation, preparation and celebration. We pray you are embracing not just the idea of hope, but the person of hope, Jesus Christ, as we set out on this journey of discovery together.

The word "hope" has become somewhat synonymous with the word "wish" in English, and this is problematic for us, as people of faith. When I think of a wish, I think of dandelion fluff carrying away the dreams of children under the hot summer sun. Such a thing cannot be tracked or measured, and it would be difficult to ever know what came of that fluff that carried away the crossed fingers and squinty pleas of our future astronauts, princesses, scientists and firefighters.

But hope is different. It is both a noun and a verb, living and active. Hope has a name, and as followers of Jesus, we know it to be his.

In a recent deep dive into the book of Hebrews, I found that hope is not only rightly named, but also so clearly defined that to miss it would be, well, hopeless. The author implores his readers to seize hope. What have you seized lately? What have you grabbed onto with all of your might, as if your very life depended on it? The truth is, your very life does depend on hope.

On the podcast *That Sounds Fun*, Annie F. Downs had a conversation with singer Lauren Daigle in which Daigle defined hope as an establishment. She recalled standing on the top of one mountain and looking across the landscape to another mountaintop and saying, "Let's go to that one instead." It appeared to be so close—and yet it was a multi-day journey away.

Hope only feels like a wish when it seems like an impossible climb—too far, too hard, too much. But it doesn't change the fact that the mountain is established. It is immovable. It is real, and it is right in front of you. Whether or not you can seize it is a matter of perspective.

Hope grows in the presence of belief. It tends to shrink the mountain when it is rightly named. And on the edge of the rocky terrain, somehow, a sprig of green sprouts with the promise of life. So, whether your hope is dim or it is the fire in your belly, the map for this journey has been written to give you what you need to grow in hope and walk you toward the one who is our living hope.

Hope has a name. His name is Jesus.
With you on the road,

Pastor Christie Penner Worden

LAMENT

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, March 7, to walk through this prayer station in community.

ITEMS NEEDED

- + Phone flashlight
(or any flashlight)
- + Lament handbook page 5

INSTRUCTIONS

Place the flashlight behind the squares with categories of lament, illuminating the area where the grief resides and you haven't mourned. Lament what was and what wasn't, the tension of the border that you have lived in this year. Linger in a space of giving it all over to God. It's not only okay to grieve in this season, it is good for you to do so, as it says in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

REFLECTION

Take the empty pot out of your kit and set it on its saucer, somewhere near light. Maybe it's a window sill or a table that gets a sliver of daylight. An empty pot can be many things: the promise of life, full of possibility, or just as it seems, empty and lifeless.

What do you see?

What does setting the pot in light say to you?

Can anything grow if you simply leave an empty pot in a puddle of light?

Your pot is a vessel—nothing more, nothing less. You are a vessel—nothing more, certainly nothing less. Take some time this week to dream about how you might fill your vessel. What do you need? What needs to go?

What might you need to lament or release in order to make room for hope?

HOPE IS...

Hope is faith that there is more than what I can see today.

Your black bead symbolizes this.

**PLANS
THAT DIDN'T
HAPPEN**

**THE THINGS
THAT
WERE**

**THE THINGS
THAT
WERE NOT**

**THINGS
THAT
TOOK LIFE**

**WAYS YOU
COULDN'T
SEE GOD**

**WAYS YOU
COULDN'T
BE WHOLE**

MEDITATE

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, March 14, to walk through this prayer station in community.

ITEMS NEEDED

- + Seed paper / Seeds
- + Pen or pencil

INSTRUCTIONS

Meditating on Scripture—God's promises, the words of Jesus, the breath of the Spirit—plants seeds deep within us. The thing about seeds is that the promise of what they can be is wrapped up in what they already are. The seed itself holds all the potential to grow into something dynamic, living and active.

The scriptures are much the same, but they will need our care and attention in order to send down roots in our soul.

What promises in scripture do you return to for hope? When we allow hope to take root, God promises that his word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

Write down a verse or scripture reference on the seed paper provided. (On page 13, you'll find verses that may inspire you.)

Read the verse of your choosing back to God as a declaration of your hope; recite it as a prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to give it roots within you.

REFLECTION

Place the inscribed seed paper in the empty pot in anticipation of what God will do as you meditate on his promises.

What does your seed paper need to actually begin to grow?

What do you need in order for God's promise to break open within you?

Can it do anything, be anything, as it is?

Sometimes we know what we need but do not have the resources, courage or tools to begin. Other times, we have them, but we are being invited to wait on the Lord.

How's your waiting muscle? Do you feel held back or filled with anticipation? What can you surrender to Jesus in the waiting?

HOPE IS...

Hope is worth waiting for.

Your green bead symbolizes this.

FORGIVE

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, March 21, to walk through this prayer station in community.

ITEMS NEEDED

+ Rope and bag of soil

INSTRUCTIONS

Untie the rope from the bag of soil in your kit.

Pull on both ends. Feel the tension in your body as you pull. Keep pulling with one hand, but release the other. What do you notice? What happened in your body? What releases?

Forgiveness can feel a lot like dropping the rope. Whether the rope is a tug of war or is a tether tying you down, when we receive forgiveness, the tension breaks. When we offer it, we are kingdom agents who break the tension someone else may be carrying. Forgiveness releases fertile ground, loosens dry, cracked soil, and makes way for hope. And where hope is freed, love is experienced.

What does it mean to you, and for you, to intentionally drop the ropes that keep you in battle?

If you were to intentionally tie that rope to something to guide you home instead, what would it be?

How can you make this an intentional choice each day?

REFLECTION

Set the rope beside the bag of soil. The rope has that fertile ground tied up. The soil is, in fact, useless until the rope is untied. The soil holds all the hope of what may be planted in it. The rope keeps that hope bound.

Tie the rope around your pot as a reminder each day to grab hold of that which brings you back into God's presence. It is there that you are forgiven and there that you grow. God's presence and forgiveness are the beginning of possibility.

HOPE IS...

Hope is love in action.
Your yellow bead symbolizes this.

AGREE

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, March 28, to walk through this prayer station in community.

ITEMS NEEDED

+ Bag of stones

INSTRUCTIONS

Empty your bag of stones and feel them in your hands.

For Israel, stones were often used to memorialize something God had done—these were called *ebenezers*. Throughout scripture, stones are used to dam up rivers, to slay giants and commemorate moments. With each stone in scripture, there is evidence that someone made room for God to be God, and he showed up.

For these monuments—*ebenezers*—to exist, the people had to agree with God in advance of the thing he was about to do. The very stones that would hold back the Jordan River would later stand to tell the story for generations of a promise fulfilled. Israel made room for God; God made a way for Israel.

What do the stones in your hands represent for you? Are they evidence of what God will do, because you are choosing hope? Are they monuments of faith that declare amen? Name them. Submit it to the Lord. Whatever he is up to, agree with him. Make room for him and he will fill it.

REFLECTION

Place the stones in your pot.

It would be foolish to plant seeds right in these stones. But without them, even the best of soils may not allow your seeds to flourish. Stones make room for roots to go down deep. They serve to keep a plant healthy, making space for air and water which it needs and allowing excess water to drain.

The important thing is that you must start with stones. You cannot add them after the dirt or the seeds. Setting them around your pot isn't useful, and leaving them out means you may need to tend to issues later.

When you decide to make room for your roots to go down deep, you begin with where you want the roots to go. You make room for them to grow. If you make room for them, they will fill it.

If you make room for Jesus, he will fill it. If you agree with Jesus in advance of the thing you are asking him to do, what do you notice about how you order the rest of your prayer?

HOPE IS...

Hope starts with amen.

Your speckled bead symbolizes this.

REFLECT

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, April 4, to walk through this prayer station in community.

ITEMS NEEDED

- + Mirror (from kit)
- + Bible

INSTRUCTIONS

Place your mirror in front of you. Read Psalm 139 over yourself.

What do you see in the image staring back at you? What do you think God sees? Are you able to give thanks to God for the amazing creation that you are?

Meditate on God's abundant love for you. As you consider your own reflection, sink deeply into the meaning of, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

REFLECTION

Reflective surfaces, like the little mirror in your kit, increase light in a space. Light is a critical ingredient for seed germination, even when that seed is tucked away in darkness. Try placing the mirror in the pot or beside it, facing a light source. Allow the light to bounce back into the pot. What do you notice?

Your reflection works the same way. You are to reflect light to the world around you as you scatter seeds of hope. It's difficult to reflect light when you don't rightly see yourself, and you may, in fact, reflect something else altogether.

As you catch your reflection in that little mirror this week, allow it to remind you who you are and whose you are. Allow it to reveal to you the light within you because of the Light of the World. Jesus' light is reflected through you because he lives in you.

HOPE IS...

Hope is the Light of the World.
Your silver bead symbolizes this.

PRAISE

PRAYER STATION

Join us on Zoom on Monday, April 11, to walk through this prayer station in community.

INSTRUCTIONS

Praise is fertile ground for hope.

Take a moment to name God's faithfulness over the last number of months. How has he been kind? Generous? Present? Loving? Declare back to Jesus what he's done for you as a praise, and as your hope for things yet unseen! When we express our hopes and praises to God, they become prayers.

Praise him for the great things he has done! Praise him for the great things he is doing!

Allow your declarations of praise to be the beginning of hope for what is to come.

REFLECTION

Dig your hand into the bag of soil. With your eyes closed, feel the mixture in your hand, running your fingers through it. Imagine the work of that soil as fertile ground for seeds. Imagine the seed bursting forth and sending out fine, delicate roots. Allow the hope of new life to settle on the corners of your mouth.

Take that handful of earth and place it in your prepared pot. Repeat until the soil sits just below the lip of the pot. Praise God for new possibilities. Praise God for new life.

Remember those hopes you wrote on seed paper? It's time. Take it in your hands. Read it just with your eyes. Now read it with your voice, a quiet declaration.

Read it one more time, as an anthem of praise. Praise God for his promises! They are true. They are for you.

Slip the seed paper just beneath the surface of the dirt, knowing that it has everything it needs to sprout.

Water the soil just enough to soak the paper, and get excited! The anticipation and wonder of new life is worthy of your curiosity and delight. Your hope has everything it needs to burst open. You have done the work. You have prepared the ground. You can trust what happens next.

HOPE IS...

Hope is the reason we praise.
Your purple bead symbolizes this.

TESTIFY

PRAYER STATION ITEMS

- + Craft stick
- + Pen or marker

INSTRUCTIONS

Declare your hope. What was it that you wrote on that seed paper? How have you been praying into that hope or promise? Did you start with amen? How has Jesus shaped that prayer, that hope, as you've prayed? If you were to share that hope with someone else, how would you express it?

Write something on the craft stick from your kit to remind yourself, and God, of what you planted and what you are hoping for.

Everywhere Jesus went, he held back the curtain on the kingdom. But on that dark Friday afternoon, the temple veil, that curtain, tore in two and fell, forever. And our hope has now entered the inner sanctuary behind the curtain on our behalf. When he touched earth, heaven touched earth. We know how the story unfolds. Sunday is coming. Why then do we lose hope? Take a step of faith and testify to this hope that we have as an anchor for the soul.

REFLECTION

Sometimes we testify to things that Jesus has already done. How might it stretch your faith to testify to the hope you have, as well, in the kingdom now and not yet?

Take the craft stick you wrote on and stick it in the soil of your plant pot. Let that stick minister to you as you watch your plant grow. Let hope minister to you.

HOPE IS...

Hope is my testimony.
The wooden bead symbolizes this.

This is an active declaration that, while we do bring our sins to the cross, the cross was also where our hope was hung. The cross is both/and. As we move through the Easter weekend, we're invited to continue to process our lamentations, confessions and forgiveness, and to look to the cross for hope. What if we imagine hanging our hopes on the cross, just as hope himself hung there?

HOPE

PRAYER STATION ITEMS

- + Prayer cards
- + Beads
- + String

INSTRUCTIONS

Arrange the prayer cards into one large image. Notice how the green line woven into each card connects to the next.

Take the string out of your bag of beads. Lay it down over the cards, tracing the path from one to the next with your finger.

What do you notice about how they connect, or how each card leads to the next? Go slowly and take the time to consider the experience of each of the words named: lament, meditate, forgive, agree, reflect, praise, testify, hope. Add the bead for each one to the string. Tie it off.

Isn't it beautiful? It's your story of hope, evidence of the road you have travelled. Who will you share it with? How will you use it to share hope with others?

Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you with hope as you thank him for the hope we have in Jesus. You are invited to not only live a spirit-filled life because of hope, but also to share the hope you have.

REFLECTION

Imagine those little seeds embedded in the paper you planted, buried in the darkness of the soil. With time, light and water, that tiny promise of life will become engorged and burst open, making way for root and stem to begin to grow. One will shoot up to grab the light, the other will reach low to drink up moisture.

There are so many variables determining whether or not your plant will grow. Growing something is more than the assembly of certain supplies. Your pot has everything it needs to bear evidence of the work you've done, but if you do nothing more, you are unlikely to watch it grow.

You will need to tend to that little plant. We say "plant" because we hope that's what it will be. You will see a touch of green emerge at some point, and it will encourage you to check the soil, turn the pot, drain the saucer. If that seedling doesn't appear as quickly as you'd prefer, you may begin to wonder if it will appear at all. Do not underestimate the growth you cannot witness! It matters just as much as the growth that you can measure with your eyes.

For three days, Jesus' friends mourned the lifelessness of a tomb that held their Jesus. For three days, there was work happening in the heavenlies that simply wasn't meant for their eyes. For three days, he was dead. Until he wasn't.

Hope requires our participation—our active belief in things not yet seen. Hope is the evidence of a faith that has been tended to by a loving gardener. Hope trusts that what is happening in the dark is light to the Holy Spirit. Hope bears witness to a kingdom now and not yet. If you walk away from it, it will surely die. Yet, hope lives. He is risen. He is risen indeed.

HOPE IS...

I am filled with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Your white bead symbolizes this.

SCRIPTURES FOR ENCOURAGEMENT

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Deuteronomy 31:6,8 | Jeremiah 29:11 |
| Joshua 1:8–9 | Matthew 11:28–30 |
| Esther 4:13–14 | John 15:7 |
| Psalm 46:1–3,10 | John 16:33 |
| Proverbs 3:5–6 | Romans 8:28 |
| Isaiah 40:31 | Philippians 4:7 |
| Isaiah 55:10–11 | James 1:2–3 |

