

JOURNEY WITH JESUS

*"Jesus himself came up and walked
along with them."*

— Luke 24:45

Introduction to the 40-Day Prayer Guide

Synod 2025 begins in 40 days. As delegates and staff prepare for the meetings that will begin on June 13, together through prayer we can come before God on behalf of our denomination.

This 40-day prayer guide for Synod 2025 is based on themes in Jesus' meetings with his followers on the Road to Emmaus and in Jerusalem, as found in Luke 24:13-49. This is the passage that the 10 Gather events used in 2024-2025 to discover the incredible work that God is doing in and through CRC congregations all across North America.

You are invited to join in this journey through the themes of the passage:

- Walking together
- We had hoped
- Slow to believe
- Recognizing Jesus
- Were not our hearts burning within us?
- Returning to Jerusalem
- Clothed with power
- Journey with Jesus

As we pray through these themes, I pray that you may experience the presence of God through the prayers written by CRC missionaries, pastors, staff, and various members young and old—in many languages and with English translations—reflecting the beautiful diversity of the CRC.

The authors of these prayers hope that you find in them a gracious, generous, loving, and longing perspective, and that together we may be reminded that the Lord is always walking with us on our journey.

—Jon Hoekema

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 2025 - DAY 1

Walking Together

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 24:13-49

Prayer

*By Jon Hoekema, CRC prayer shepherd and pastor of Horizon Community Church,
Downers Grove, Illinois*

Lord God,
We praise you that you are the God who walks with us on our journey.

We thank you that in our life
your promises
that you will never leave us or forsake us,
and that nothing can separate us from your love,
are always true,
whether in good times or in bad,
whether we feel your presence or not,
whether we follow you or rebel against you.


Thank you that your presence with us on our journey is based on who you are
and on the promises you have made—
and not on
our faithfulness,
our obedience,
our effort,
our understanding,
or anything that we think we can offer.

As we take this journey with you over the next 40 days, may we sense your presence.
May our eyes be open to the fact that you are walking with us.
May we see more clearly, as you open our eyes through your Word and prayer,
the work that you are doing in and through us.

Through the power of your Spirit, help us to see you with us in our lives and in the church
so that you will receive the glory forever and ever.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- As you look back on your journey, where have you seen Jesus walking with you?
- In your journey today, where are you praying that you will see Jesus walking with you?



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MONDAY, MAY 5, 2025 - DAY 2

Walking Together

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 24:13-49

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them. . . .

—Luke 24:15

Prayer

By Rev. Dr. Elaine May, project director for Gather, an initiative designed to engage the CRCNA in spiritual discernment. Elaine works for Thrive as the Equip Team leader and congregational renewal consultant.

Triune God,

You are wise and all-knowing. Your thoughts are far beyond human understanding. Your wisdom and knowledge are rich and deep, yet unsearchable (Romans 11:33).

We praise you because nothing is too difficult for you. No problem is too challenging; nor is any situation too complicated. For you hold the depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains in your hands—hands that formed both the sea and the dry land (Psalm 95:4-5).

And yet we expect to understand and make sense of what you are doing in the world; and when our expectations are not met, we are easily discouraged. Forgive us, O God, for our lack of faith and our inability to trust you with the things that matter most to us. Forgive us for failing to believe that your vision and your plans are for our good and for the redemption of your creation.

God, we humbly ask for your forgiveness. Help us to turn toward you in our doubts and discouragement, for in you “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). Come near to us, just as you came near to the two on the road to Emmaus. In your mercy confront our human limitations and our foolishness.

As we approach a time of decision making for the church, we submit ourselves to you—to your wisdom and your redemptive mission in the world. Speak to us, O Lord, and lead us by your Holy Spirit to be a people who both demonstrate and proclaim the good news of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What challenge are you facing that is hard to make sense of?
- What area of your life do you need to invite Jesus into today?



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TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025 - DAY 3

We Had Hoped

Introduction

The two on the road returning to Emmaus were downcast, discouraged, and maybe even shattered as they wrestled with their growing realization that what they hoped for, the Messiah, was crucified and buried.

Over the course of the life of a church, dreams, hopes, and expectations emerge about the future for the church, for its ministry, and for the impact in the community. Some of those hopes and expectations are not met. We had hoped . . .

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 24:21

. . . But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

Prayer

By Rev. Nate Van Denend, the pastor of First Christian Reformed Church of Chatham, Ont., the convening church of synod. He is excited to announce the 100-year anniversary of First CRC in 2026.

Forgiving Father, we can be a people who feel the ache of unfulfilled hopes. Discouragements and setbacks and unfulfilled hopes take their toll on our faith. Some of us even stop hoping altogether. Here are some of the things we had hoped for . . . (list a few of your unfulfilled hopes and dreams).

We pray for the discouraged members of the CRC and for all whose faces are downcast. Meet us on the road, Lord Jesus, as you met Cleopas and his companion. Listen to our laments and show us a glimpse of the bigger vision you

have for Christian Reformed churches, the CRCNA, and your universal church throughout the world.

Remind us again that even though Cleopas and his companion thought their hopes were dashed, their wildest hopes and imaginings had been fulfilled. But they did not know it yet. May this encourage us to be a people of hope again. We ask that you would grant wisdom, discernment, and hope to the delegates to Synod 2025.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What “unfulfilled hopes” cause your heart to ache? (Take some time to journal or talk with God about them.)
- Think of someone you know who feels discouraged or has lost hope. How might God be calling you to bring hope and encouragement?

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025 - DAY 4

We Had Hoped

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 13

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts

and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, Lord my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,

and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"

and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;

my heart rejoices in your salvation.

I will sing the Lord's praise,

for he has been good to me.

Prayer

By Colin P. Watson, Sr., executive director emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. He currently serves on the ministry leadership team of Madison Avenue CRC in Paterson, N.J. In May 2024 he earned the first doctor of ministry (D.Min.) degree awarded by Calvin Theological Seminary. Watson and his wife, Freida, have been married since 1979 and have three adult children.

Lord, thank you that you are always present, regardless of circumstances and our location along the path on which you have placed us. Like the Emmaus-road disciples, our faces are often downcast by what we see around us and by events

over which we have no control. We confess that, like Cleopas, we underestimate your power, the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, to deliver us from personal pain.

Thank you for your sacrifice and love. Lord, as you showed up on the road to disciples who felt abandoned by your journey to the cross—who asked, “How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?”—thank you for showing up for us now.

Thank you that even when we feel forgotten and marginalized, you are ever present—open our eyes to see this reality. Thank you for proclaiming your good news to us—the poor, the prisoners, and the oppressed—and for giving sight to the blind, that we may see your glory and bask in your love (Luke 4).

Help us to internalize your call in word and deed and strengthen us to do the good works that you have prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). May we live and work in accord with your will and receive your glory so that the world will know you were sent by the Father (John 17:21) as they see us all becoming one (v. 22).

Open our eyes to see your presence in the lives of others. May the poor be blessed (Matthew 5), the distressed comforted, the hungry fed, and the persecuted enfolded into your kingdom, even here on earth. Thank you for placing this kingdom in us—in our midst (Luke 17:21)—by the power of your Holy Spirit!

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where do you long for God to show up now?
- Where do you sense God's presence in the lives of others whom you can serve?

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THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2024 - DAY 5

We Had Hoped

Suggested Bible Reading: Isaiah 55:6-9

Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake their ways
and the unrighteous their thoughts.

Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,"
declares the Lord.

"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Prayer

By Angela Elliott, commissioned pastor of faith formation at Nelson Avenue Community Church in Burnaby, B.C., where she has served in this role for the past six years and has been a member for 40 years.

Almighty and Sovereign God,

We give you all our praise and worship, even as we humbly bow before you. You reign supreme over all creation, including your church, for you are Lord over the church.

You established the church, your bride, and you reign over the church. We acknowledge that so often we come to you with our thoughts, plans, and ideas of what to do. Sometimes we are so anxious and fearful that trusting you becomes difficult.

As we pray for Synod 2025, we pray that we may be able to surrender to you our plans, thoughts, and ways. May our trust in you grow stronger as we recognize that you are the Lord, whose thoughts are not the thoughts we have, and whose way forward might not be the way we would choose to go. Help us to be still in order to hear your voice and learn your ways.

Almighty God, we trust that the future of the CRCNA is in your hands. May we also trust that although your thoughts and ways are beyond our understanding, your love for us never changes and is always with us.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does the truth that the church belongs to God give you assurance?
- Where do you need to trust that God is still at work, even though you may not see it?

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FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2025 - DAY 6

We Had Hoped

Yá'át'ééh! (Greetings)! My name is Evelyn Bennally, and I am the pastor of Sanostee Christian Reformed Church. I am of the Navajo, or Diné, tribe from the southwest area of the United States and reside in Shiprock, N.Mex., which is about 40 miles from the Four Corners (where New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona meet). My clans are Tá'chíí'níi (Red Running into the Water), Kinyaa'áanii (Towering House), Ásh'WWhí (Salt), and Naakai Diné'é (Mexican).

Suggested Bible Reading:

(Navajo) Matthew Naaltsoos ahił tahdígił ła'tsaadah áádoosaad ałkeh' dahnaazhja'iigi, d'WW dóó áshdla'ji'.

Áko Jesus hach'W' haadzii'go áhodíiniid, Nihilááh nídóhkááh, áádóó dadoohts'a'ígíí índa daah'ínígíí bee John bił dahodoołnih, 5. doo da'oo'ínígíí da'oo'W ándaalne', áádóó nida'níhodígíí nikaakai ándaalne', łóód ats'íis yiyáanii naatdzidii bee baqah dah nidahaz'ánígíí hadaalt'é ándaalne', áádóó bijédaakałígíí da'diits'a' ándaalne' áádóó daneeznánígíí náahidiiljeeh, índa badahojoobá'ígíí hane' yá'át'éehii bee bił dahane', dabidohní.

Matthew 11:4-5

Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor."

Sodizin (Prayer)

Shitaa' yá'áshdi honilóónii, shi Bóholniihii, Synod éi dibé náhálingoo ba'áhwholyah. Naat'ááanii bódah wholniihgo ałah nádleh.

Dibé ya'áhályáanii jooba'ii nilí.

Diné yaa'ana'jaahii t'áá ałtso ba'aholya díjji.

Náhasdzaan k'eigo iinánigii yikahgo éí dóódaa.
 Adáh ahóoní bitsááhji' inísin.
 Dóó yá'tá'ééhii bitsááhji' yisdah níniit.
 Naat'áaanii yaa anáhkahigii bá sódizin.
 Dibé yaa'áhályáanii ayóó ada' ayóó'ada'yoo'nii' doo.
 Bóholniihii, na'atchini yaa anáhkahigii bikaa' ananilwo'goo yá'át'ééhgoo niha dahoaah dooléet.
 Nida'aho yáado, aadóo tago aho doo niit.
 Éí dodahgó dátsí, éí doodá dóóish?
 Há'at'iish niha yá'át'ééh, éí bée da ahiniitá'dó?
 Áadóo, sódizin bahooghandi yaa anáhkahigii, áadóo aláajj'siniligii dóó naat'áaanii daniliniigii, adóo oodláhní yaa anáhkahigii éí basodizin.
 Dibé ya'ahalyaanii nahalin goo baa ahwolya.
 Dibé ya'ahalyaanii niliníi, tsijhtó niha nináh.
 Bahági atei náhasdzaan bii'holonígii, dóó nihijéi bii' holóonigii baa ch'eh diikai.
 Yisda' iniitii, nada'whii'nih nihei niyahigi.
 Nihi báh hagian at'ei bike' ní'inilah nidiit deezna'igii bee.
 Tsin Áłnaos'zid bahji' da'sinitsáh.
 Áadóo hiná nisinidlii', aniné bik'eh dinidlii'.
 Báhágii at'éi adóo chx'iidii bik'eh dinidlii'.
 Atah hoodi'niih, nałnii, bináa'adaadinii, diné dahniné, t'óó ahayoíi hóló náhasdzaan biyi'.
 Bóholniihii, nihi kaa' anilyeed.
 Baa da'nighi'ni'ii' náa daahsidi'táh.
 Baa shíni'igii, binaas'dz'id'igii, doo shii'yee' dandáazígii nich'i' hwishtah.
 Áhéhé'ée' nihit honilóo shi bóhólniihii.
 Shínáa' bee dighal, doo ish iidáh nitée'.
 Shí dziilgo anashiindlah, akó dah diiyah, nałnii bik'eh disinidlii',
 bíjéehdahkałyéęenda'diis'
 tsáa'.
 Da'neez'naahnii hiná nidas'dlii', dóó Díyin Bizaad bee bit whiil nee' baa dahójoobá'igii.
 Áyóó at'éégo nihá jįniláhigii bee beedelniitdó, néi yisdahdinilcheet, ninée ayóó'o'ooní bee nihidziil.
 Áhéhéé Jesus nihi yisda'iniitiii, hahiiliitgo anihinísin.
 Dibé yaa'áhályáanii, niha'awhol'yá, yisdah anihiniinill.
 Nihaa' ninaadiidałigii biba' anit'eh.
 It' chohooh'į'ee'eh dziil, dóó it' hódéesyeel bee niha'ahwol yáh, Bóholniihii.
 Nízhi' bee sodadiilzin, nihi Bóholniihii Jesus Christ bizhi' bee t'ah akohtee' do,
 Amen.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

Lord, I thank you that you are the shepherd of synod. You are the good shepherd. You have shepherded the lives of synod delegates. Please shepherd the whole family of synod today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. Lead them not into temptation; deliver them from evil. We pray for the delegates from synod: May they love you as their shepherd. Lord, please shepherd them in the decisions that are before them about our future. Do they make that move, that change, or not? How will the changes affect us and keep us all unified in our ways? I also pray for our shepherds in our churches, our leaders and our council members. Please shepherd them as they shepherd us.

O Great Shepherd, we pray, come quickly. Lord, we are tired of sin in the world, sin in our own hearts, the effects of sin all around us. Jesus, we praise you for coming, for paying the price for our sin, for dying on a cross, for rising from the dead, for conquering the grave, for defeating sin and Satan. There's so much tension and hurt in the fallen world. There's pain, injustice, sickness, disease, disability, death, and dying.

I ask you, O Lord, to help us—and we lay our grief upon you. I surrender my worries, my fears, my burdens to you, Lord. We lay them at your feet, knowing you are with us. You have helped the blind to see, healed the lame to walk, cleansed the lepers, brought the deaf to hear, raised the dead to life, and preached the good news to the poor. Help us to remember all of your great ways and to find refuge in you, to find strength in your love. Thank you, Jesus, for your promise of rest. Thank you, O great Shepherd, that we can recapture our faith in you to save us and to look forward to your return. In all this we find hope, strength, and peace once again.

In your precious name, Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where has God been faithful in your life, and who needs to hear about it?
- What are you asking God for that seems impossible, or unimaginable?

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SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2025 - DAY 7

We Had Hoped

Suggested Bible Reading:

(Dutch) 2 Corintiërs 12:8-9

Drie keer heb ik de Here gesmeekt dit lijden te laten ophouden. Maar de Here antwoordde telkens weer: 'Mijn genade is genoeg voor u. Want kracht ontplooit zich ten volle in zwakheid.' Daarom durf ik mij toch op mijn zwakheden te beroemen, omdat dan de kracht van Christus in mij gezien kan worden.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Gebed (Prayer)

Door Syd Hielema, die als regionaal predikant voor Classis Hamilton en woont in Ancaster, Ont.

Lieve Heer,

Is uw genade werkelijk genoeg? Wordt Uw kracht werkelijk volmaakt in zwakheid?

Ik ben omringd door wervelwinden van macht, chaotische, bedreigende, angstaanjagende tactieken/strategieën die zich verhullen in Uw naam. Ze bruisen van zelfvertrouwen en arrogantie. Ze laten me zwak en alleen achter, beschaamd door een wankel geloof.

Bevindt u zich werkelijk in mijn zwakheid? Durf ik de aanwezigheid van uw kracht in mijn zwakheid te vertrouwen?

Reinig mijn zwakheid, lieve Heer, verbrand de zelfmedelijdende illusie van Elia-eenzaamheid, van Peter-schaamte, van Gideon-angst. Ontdoe mijn zwakheid van deze valse beschermingen/ondersteuning(en)/toeverlaten, zodat U het in plaats daarvan met Uw kracht kan vullen. Geef mij Ruth-vertrouwen en Hannah-overgave en Esther-moed; zegen mij met Anna-doorzettingsvermogen en Simeon-visie.

Wat U valse macht noemt, lijkt elke strijd te winnen, en Uw soort macht lijkt daar niets om te geven. Is dat echt waar?

Open mijn ogen om te zien dat de Leeuw van Juda het Lam is dat werd geslacht en nu bij de troon staat, waardig om de zegels op de boekrol te openen. Open mijn hart om gevuld te worden met algenoegzame/volkomen toereikende genade, vol met Lam-kracht die bloeit/floreert/opbloeit/ in zwakheid.

Amen

Prayer

By Syd Hielema, who serves as regional pastor for Classis Hamilton and lives in Ancaster, Ont.

Dear Lord,

Is your grace truly enough? Is your power truly made perfect in weakness?

I am surrounded by whirlwinds of power—chaotic, threatening, fearful ploys that cloak themselves in your name. They brim with confidence and arrogance. They leave me feeling weak, alone, ashamed with faltering faith.

Are you truly within my weakness? Do I dare to trust the presence of your power in my weakness?

Cleanse my weakness, dear Lord. Burn away its self-pitying illusion of Elijah-aloneness, of Peter-shame, of Gideon-fear. Empty my weakness of these false supports so that your power can fill it instead. Grant me Ruth-trust and Hannah-surrender and Esther-courage; bless me with Anna-perseverance and Simeon-vision

What you call false power seems to win all the battles, and your kind of power doesn't seem to care. Is that really true?

Open my eyes to see that the Lion of Judah is the Lamb who was slain and is now standing by the throne, worthy to open the seals on the scroll (Revelation 5).

Open my heart to be filled with all-sufficient grace, filled with Lamb-power that flourishes in weakness.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What external powers and/or personal vulnerabilities are making you feel weak during this season?
- What words from Scripture, or visible objects, can you surround yourself with today to remind you that Christ's grace, presence, and power are all the strength you need?