

Emmaus Road

•Beauty•Story•Renewal•Journey•

- On the Emmaus Road everybody is *welcome* and *worthy*.
- We seek to find the *beauty* God has placed within each situation.
- We listen to each other's *story* with open ears and open eyes.
- As we do so, we find *renewal* in the sometimes-unrecognised presence of Jesus with us.
- We recognise that we are on a *journey*, not arrived at our destination. Jesus meets us in surprising and unexpected ways on the journey. We seek to share with others the good news that Jesus is alive and meets us on the road.

What is Emmaus Road?

It's a *community* of people who want to be involved in listening, in dialogue, in walking the journey and in telling others, "We have seen Jesus. We didn't even know it at times, but he was right there with us on the road."

Basic practices

Emmaus Road is a missional community. Each *community* is committed to four basic practices: the Meal, the Scripture, the Journey and the Mission.

- The Meal: Just like the two disciples, we gather around shared food, shared time, shared life, recognising that Jesus meets us in this kind of community.
- The Scripture: The two disciples said to one another, "Weren't our hearts burning within us as he talked with us and opened the Scriptures to us?" People on the Emmaus Road commit themselves to engaging with Scripture as God's word and the means through which we meet Jesus.
- The Journey: We recognise that we are on a *journey*, not arrived at our destination. This means no one is perfect; everyone is welcome; the journey is as important as the destination; there will always be surprises; and Jesus joins us *where we are* on the road. We invite others to join us too. We listen and dialogue; we share the journey; we encourage one another and show each other where Jesus is walking with them on the journey.

- The Mission: The two disciples hurry to share the good news that they have met Jesus—"they told them what had happened on the way." Each Emmaus Road community will *intentionally and actively* engage in mission—in being part of God's self-giving love to the world. The Mission will prayerfully engage the question, "What concrete thing will we do together, that we cannot do alone, that participates in God's self-giving love to the world (local and global)?"

Each *individual* on the Emmaus Road will be actively involved in the practice of *discipleship*—walking with Jesus—by being involved in a Life Transformation Group (LTG). An LTG is two or three people who meet once a week to *confess sin, read Scripture continuously and in context, and pray for the lost*. Through the LTG, each individual will engage with the practices of Scripture, Journey and Mission. The LTG will be the heartbeat of Emmaus Road during the week, between the times we gather as a community.

The theology

Emmaus Road is committed to the authority of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, and to continuity with the historic Christian church. Emmaus Road acknowledges and accepts the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds of Christianity as true statements of the Christian faith, and accepts the summary of the Christian faith (The Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, The Lord's prayer, Baptism, Holy Communion, confession and forgiveness) as found in Martin Luther's Small Catechism.

A story

In the middle of 2006 I went on a four-week mission trip to Northern Uganda, which has been devastated by vicious civil war for twenty years. I was surprised by the signs of God's working and his presence. An historic cessation of hostilities was signed between the government and the rebels on the day I flew into the country. Of course, I had nothing to do with that. But nothing happens by accident in God's design. I worked with members of a local church, then with members of a team which implemented a trauma rehabilitation program for victims of the civil war—internally displaced people (or IDPs—refugees within the borders of their own country).

I had to leave the trauma rehab team in order to fly back to Australia, several days before the other team members headed home. On my last night in the country I was invited for dinner at the house of the only ordained Lutheran pastor in Uganda. Also present that evening were a group of young men from another church in the USA who had come to do a three week practical mission trip in Eastern Uganda. They were also flying out the next day. One of them was wearing a t-shirt with these words printed on it:

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I was intrigued and said to him, "What a great shirt! What does it mean?" (I love the story of the journey on Emmaus Road in the New Testament, the gospel of Luke, chapter 24. Check it out if you want!)

He replied, "Emmaus Road is the name of our church. It's a missional community in the U.S." I was blown away by that. Before going to Uganda (no accidents, remember?) I'd been studying house churches and missional communities. It also happened that one of the guys on our trauma rehab team was involved in a missional community. His name was Steve. He lived 15 km from where I live, on the Sunshine Coast, and I'd had to come all the way to Northern Uganda to meet him! He had encouraged me to look into starting a missional community as an alternative expression of "being church", and I was really intrigued.

Anyway, that was all pretty cool. I was mildly excited. I went off to my hotel for the night, hoping to get a good night's rest before two days of international flights. But I woke up at 4am with a clear, vivid, unshakeable thought in my head: "God wants me to start an Emmaus Road in Australia. Right where I live!"

Doxycycline, the anti-malarial medicine I was on while on the trip to Uganda, is known to have one side effect of causing vivid dreams. But this was not the doxy, I was sure of it! I madly scribbled in my journal of how the two were walking and talking on the Emmaus Road, when they were met by Jesus—whom they didn't even recognise—and he came along with them on the journey, engaged in conversation with them, wanted to know all about their life and their troubles, unfolded God's plan to them from the Scriptures, and then came and ate with them. Jesus was there all the time—and they didn't even recognise it!

So the idea of Emmaus Road was of a place, a space, a journey, an opportunity to walk and talk and dialogue together—to be involved in conversation, and hopefully to help each other recognise and celebrate the presence of the living Jesus in our lives. This idea slowly simmered away on the backburner when I got home to the busyness of life in Australia. But recently, it's come back with overwhelming force. Now is the time. I have a dream. I believe it's God's dream and I want you to test that belief out with me.

Would you be willing to walk with me on the Emmaus Road? What things are you discussing as you walk along? Can we journey and story together?

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