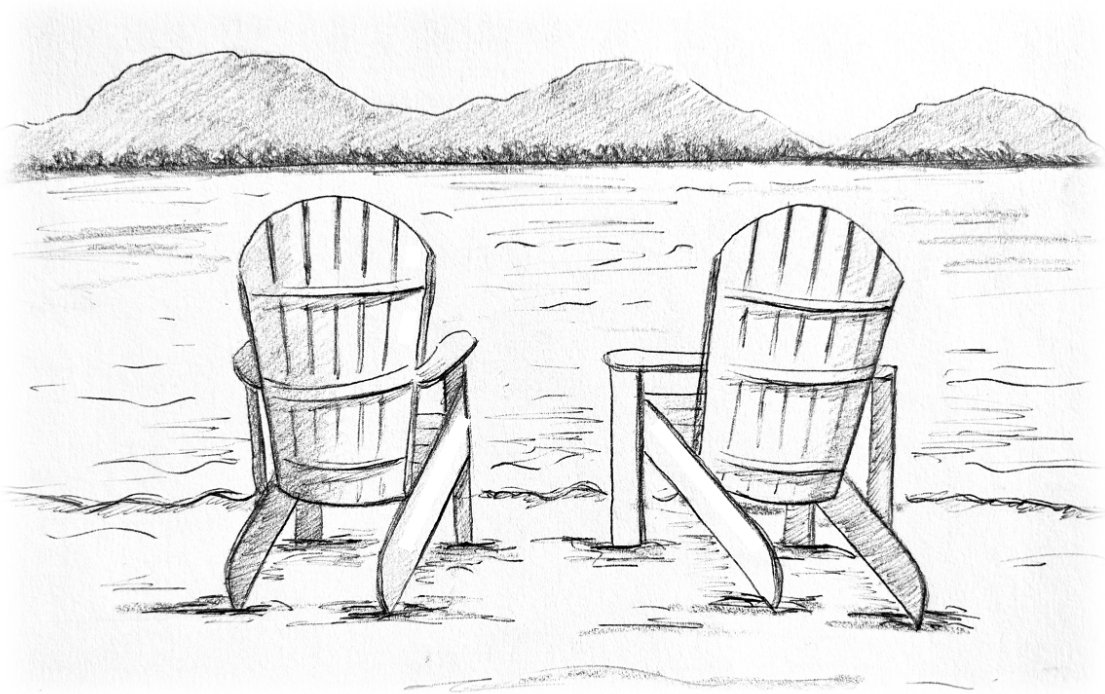




# *Personal Retreat Guide*

## *Summer 2024*



I am with you always...

- *Matthew 28:20*

***What has happened in your life  
over the last few months?***

Scroll through your calendar or photos. What people, events,  
work, and travel have been part of this season?

<p>April 2024</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>May 2024</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>
<p>June 2024</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>	<p>July 2024</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>

## How would you categorize these months?

Walter Brueggemann divides the psalms into three categories: orientation, disorientation and re-orientation, and we are constantly cycling through these three states of being.

- When we are **oriented**, things make sense to us, and we are at peace.
- When we are **disoriented**, we are confused, uncertain, overwhelmed or afraid.
- When we are becoming **reoriented**, we are beginning to settle again into God's ways, even when we don't fully understand them. We begin to trust him again.

What have the last few months felt like for your soul? How would you chart them?

Oriented				
Re-orienting				
Disoriented				
	April	May	June	July

## What feelings have you experienced?

Amazed	Eager	Irritated	Sad
Angry	Embarrassed	Jealous	Satisfied
Annoyed	Energetic	Joy	Scared
Anxious	Envious	Lonely	Self-conscious
Ashamed	Foolish	Lost	Shocked
Bitter	Frustrated	Loving	Silly
Bored	Furious	Miserable	Stupid
Comfortable	Grieving	Motivated	Suspicious
Confused	Happy	Nervous	Tense
Content	Hopeful	Overwhelmed	Terrified
Depressed	Hurt	Peaceful	Trapped
Determined	Inadequate	Proud	Uncomfortable
Disdain	Insecure	Relieved	Worried
Disgusted	Inspired	Resentful	Worthless

## Any patterns or takeaways as you reflect?

## ***Prayer Guide***

Take a moment to quiet yourself. Try a deep breath or a good stretch to help ease you into this time.

What noises can you hear? What voices are spinning around in your head: Things you should do today, people you need to care for, decisions you need to make, the opinions or desires of others that have taken root inside you. Jot them down as a way of freeing yourself.

You can pray, “Here Lord, all this is in my mind, and I give it over to you, now...”

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***“God gives us all that we need for a life of dependence.”***

Ted Wueste, *Trusting God in the Wilderness*

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We work hard throughout our lives to be independent, self-sufficient people, and this is a good thing! It often reflects maturity and wisdom, problem-solving skills. And yet, in the life of faith, we are called to be *dependent* upon God, always.

The psalmist writes, “The Lord is my shepherd, **I lack nothing**. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.” - Psalm 23:1-2

**What have you been given?** What are your current “quiet waters” or “green pastures?” What has been refreshing to your soul? Thank God for these things...

The psalmist, if it was King David, was quite wealthy with an impressive, leadership title. No one would have called him **poor or needy**... and yet, as he cries out to the Lord, that is exactly how he describes himself, dependent upon God: **“But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay”** (Ps. 70:5).

**Where are you needy (wanting)?** Where do you feel poor (afflicted, humbled)? Offer these places to God.

Lord, I need. . . .

I don't have enough . . . .

I don't know how to . . . .

What do you sense from him as you pray these things?

**Where are you feeling confident and in control?** This isn't necessarily a bad thing – just good to be aware of lest we begin trusting in ourselves...

Lord, these areas are going really well . . . .

Please keep me from seeking to control them or them control me, from becoming overly responsible for them... Keep me trusting in you, even here.

**Where are you learning to depend upon the Lord?** Where would you like to experience him as your refuge, your fortress (Ps. 91:2), as the one who defends you (Ps. 119:154)?

## ***Engaging with Scripture: Jesus as Friend***

I grew up singing the gospel hymn, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” and as good as it sounded, Jesus just didn’t feel like a friend. I admired him, respected him, tried to obey him, but I was a little afraid of him, and he seemed kind of far away most of the time.

Over the years, I’ve experienced many different friendships with people of all ages. Some really good ones, some hurtful ones, some long-lasting, and some brief but meaningful. Friends are important in our desire to know and be known. Shared experience and understanding often draw friends together.

Sometimes there are barriers to friendship. Perhaps you, like me, have had a teacher or coach or mentor-type in your life, someone you really admired and wanted to be around, learn from. And maybe, after a certain season, that person has removed his or her “title” and offered you **friendship**. With the barrier removed, the relationship changed.

In John 15, Jesus spends some of his last hours on earth with his disciples. He’s preparing them, teaching them, reminding them of what is true. Their beloved teacher, who they’d walked with for these past three years, day in and day out, their Rabbi, tells them **how much he loves them**, and then he calls them his **friends**.

Imagine being in the upper room with Jesus, gathered around the table, sharing a final meal, taking it all in, trying to make sense of all the teacher is saying about love, about abiding, and then being given the gift of friendship.

If you have your Bible, read all of **John 15:9-17** to better understand the context. Then hone in on the verse below:

**<sup>15</sup> I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. . . .**

What title do you most often give to give to Jesus? How do you usually think of him relationally? (King, Messiah, Savior, teacher, guide, counselor, Son of God...)

What sorts of things does a master share with his servants? A boss with her employees? A coach with his players?

What is the difference between being a friend and being an employee or servant?

What do you value in your friends? How have they supported you? How have they shared in life's joys and sorrows with you? When have they let you down or disappointed you?

Jesus knows us far beyond our ability to explain ourselves to him (Ps. 139:1). He understands every weakness of ours, because he's been there too (Heb. 4:15). He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness (Ps. 86:15).

Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? And yet it's sometimes really hard when we can't see him, touch him, audibly hear him. I know, for me, too. He told us it was good for him to go away (John 16:7) so that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, would come and be *with* us in a way even greater than Jesus' human presence.

Can you imagine Jesus calling you his friend? What is his tone of voice? What does he look like and where is he looking? What stirs within you?

Receiving the friendship of Jesus does not diminish his holiness, and yet, it does open the door for a far greater, more intimate relationship, one that is not bound by time or location, age or experience.

What is it / would it be like to depend on him as a friend?

What is it / would it be like to be his friend?

If you have ever struggled with loneliness, what would it be like to receive Jesus as your friend in that place? Closer than a spouse or best friend...

Thinking to the days ahead, can you imagine the Lord being **with you** in the events, conversations, struggles and joys to come? Experiencing those things with you, and guiding you in them, debriefing afterwards... holding the outcomes for you?

*If you are in need of good friends, ask him for them. If you have good friends, thank him for them! Thank the friends themselves! And ask the Lord to help you keep entering into deeper friendship with him – for it is like none other. He offers it with overflowing love, compassion and faithfulness.*

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🎵 Check out: Brothers McClurg "I'll Be With You Always" on YouTube. 🎵

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I'm so glad you were able to pull away for a while and be with the Lord, our friend. Please reach out at any point for prayer or spiritual direction if either would be of help to you.

Journeying with you, Beth (beth@restorationarlington.org)