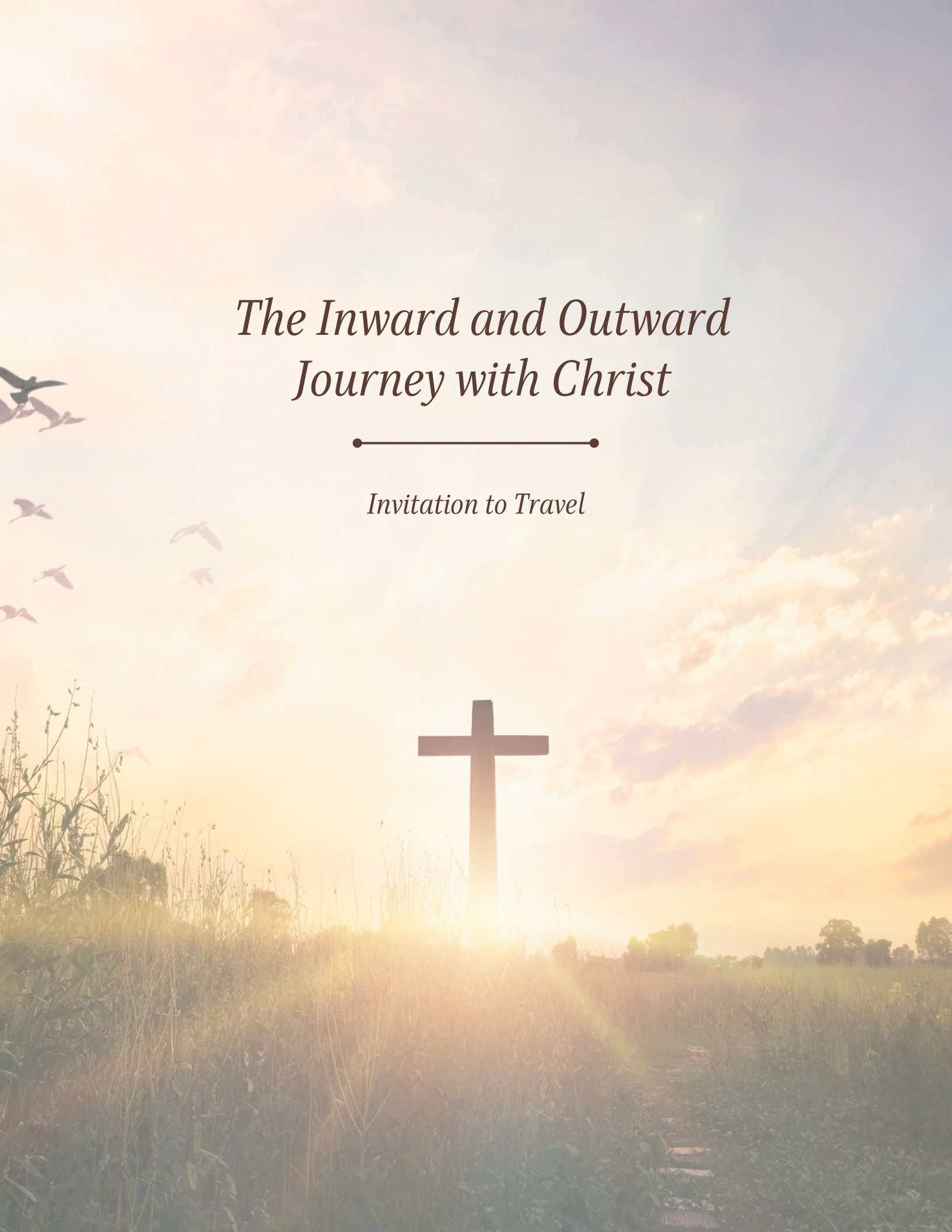
The Inward and Outward Journey with Christ

Invitation to Travel



The Inward and Outward Journey with Christ

Invitation to Travel

This is a travel guide for your journey forward in the coming days. It is about how your Inward journey leads to the Christ within at the center of your life, and the Outward journey meets Christ traveling with you all along life's road. It is about the realization that we never travel alone, but often do not recognize the Christ inhabiting our world as we walk.

You are invited to spend some of your coming days in prayer, thought, and action that enlightens you as you travel. Together with others in your church, family, or group, Water to Thrive invites you to consider how your inward journey toward Christ within moves you toward the outward journey of meeting Christ in the faces of people in the world.

We are not very old when we discover that life is a journey. Oh yes, we don't often know where we are going, how long the journey is, or much about the terrain or geography along the way. Left to our own devices and imagination, it could be anywhere or nowhere, sweet or horrific, lonely, or in the company of loved ones. And all of this changes from the fears of the small child to the joy of a fifth grader, to the awkward withdrawal of the pre-teen, to the audacity of the young adult, and the assurance of the more mature.

Somewhere along your journey, you may have met the unknown mystery called God, and even more particularly the God coming as Christ to dwell within and around us. Slowly this encounter may have led to clarifying your life as a journey with a purpose and a direction, that you are traveling in great company, and finding depths of insight and heights of joy–each illustrating the wonder of love. While the road you travel may not have become easier, it nonetheless became more meaningful, richer, hopeful, and loving.

As you journey inward by reading and prayerful meditation, Water to Thrive invites you to consider the people in the world that Jesus pointed to where Christ was present. This pamphlet will set up some guideposts for the journey. These include: 1) References in Scripture that offers direction; 2) Suggestions for prayer, 3) Actions sharing with others through Water to Thrive.

You may download this guide at ***https://www.watertothrive.org/journeywithchrist.***

The Journey Begins

Basic Scriptural Map for the Journey

ONE

Text: Luke 24: 13-17, 28-32 (*The Message Bible* translation by Eugene Peterson)

13-16 That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was.

17 He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?" They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?"

19-24 He said, "What has happened?"

They said, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene...(They then explained the crucifixion of Jesus and their loss of hope, the empty tomb, their confusion)....

25-27 Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? ....Then he started at the beginning,.... pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

28-31 They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared.

32 Back and forth they talked. "Didn't we feel on fire as he conversed with us on the road, as he opened up the Scriptures for us?"

Ponder and Pray:

Here is one of the Biblical stories of the presence of the risen Christ in our midst. As the followers of Jesus traveled their road, Christ appeared in the midst of their worrisome journey and interpreted life's events to them. Finally, they recognized Christ's presence with them as they shared the bread at table. And they knew their hearts were on fire with the clarification and awareness his presence had made.

Ponder could you be one of the disciples traveling the road? Do you also walk through life bound by your own thoughts? Goals, worries, or fears? Do you go through the days with mind or heart more in the past or future than in the present? Ponder your day. Your last week. Did you pass some you didn't even "see" as you moved through your agenda? Scripture catches us with this common reality: through our own story-tinted glasses we so often fail to recognize who walks with us or whom we meet, or who/what we miss. Is this likely true for you whether it is Christ speaking through a stranger or friend, or some inner voice awakening your heart?

Pray for awareness of Christ's enduring presence in your life. Whether on your outward journey fulfilling your life's vision, serving your family or others, or on your inward journey to discover yourself and your relationship to God and others–pray that you will be open to the Christ within and alongside you as a guide and strength.

Act

Introduce yourself to the needs of others for sustaining clean water for life. More than 62 million people are impacted by the Ethiopian water crisis; in fact, 7.5 percent of the global water crisis is in Ethiopia alone. The Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), a global database of water, sanitation, and hygiene data, reports that 31% of the Ethiopian population relies on unprotected water for their daily needs. That's 32 million people. Another 28% of the population has what JMP deems "limited" access, meaning the water is likely safe, but it takes over 30 minutes to retrieve it because of distance, overcrowding, or both.

View this page and its video on Water to Thrive's website **https://www.watertothrive.org/volunteer-spotlight-meet-spencer/.** Make a commitment to continue your journey of outreach to these strangers thirsty for clean water.

TWO

Text: Mark 12:30-31 (*The Message Bible* translation by Eugene Peterson)

Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so, love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

Ponder and Pray:

Jesus was asked by one of the teachers of the law what must be done to inherit eternal life. He was searching for the meaning of life, indeed, the good life. He wanted to know the road he must walk to get there. He asked this new teacher, "what road must I take to make my life worthwhile and rewarding?" Jesus' answer was short and directed. Love. "Love God totally. Love everyone else as you love yourself. This will make your life complete and rewarding."

Ponder Identify your understanding of who God is for you. Focus on this image, this identity as the object of love for you and your everyday life. It may be clouded by a mystery but see that mystery as part of your identity and focus on your loving intention that loves God greater than any other person or thing in your life. Heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Pray that your love of God may grow deeper in understanding and more central to your life as you journey through each day. Pray that this same love being expressed toward God may also become the love that you hold for yourself in relation to God. You walk lovingly together on the journey. Pray that your love grows not only deeper, but broader to reach all others you meet and know as your journey continues. Pray for growing love that unites God, self, and others on life's road.

Act

Turn to the information you have from Water to Thrive on their website **https://www.watertothrive.org/beneficiaries/birtukan/**.

Meet Birtukan and hear her story of what it means to live in a village in Africa where there is no safe water to drink. Recognize the impact of what it means to know people who thirst for clean water and healthy life, and yet waterborne disease, violence, abduction, and rape are the settings for gathering water from local streams and watering holes. Are there boundaries to loving neighbors who thirst? Does your awareness of the needs of others give you the empathy to reach across the boundaries to make a donation to provide water to someone who still lacks access to clean water? If so commit yourself to make a difference.

THREE

Text: Mark 12:30-31 (*The Message Bible* translation by Eugene Peterson)

Jesus said, "The first in importance is, 'Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one; so, love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.' And here is the second: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' There is no other commandment that ranks with these."

Ponder and Pray:

Ponder Love with passion, prayer, intelligence, and energy. These are the words Eugene Peterson uses to translate the Greek texts for our human centers of will or emotion, of the vital life principle or energy within, of our reasoning power. Nothing is to be left out of our total focus on love toward God. These are the powers that hold us together as humans and allow freedom of will, hope to engage us, a reason to discern truth, and energy to travel our road and pursue our purpose or vision. We can choose and focus our love on God, ourselves, and our fellow travelers through life.

Pray Quiet your mind and open yourself to that inner peace that waits in silence. Slowly breathe in and visualize breathing in the Spirit that is God. Feel the fullness of this presence as you continue slow breathing. Open your thoughts to being loved and held by God. There is no fear, no worry, no distraction, and no guilt. Let the names and images of those close to you come into focus and visualize your love flowing out to them in your breath. Continue, gradually enlarging your images until you have "seen" the vast array of people traveling the road with you, near and around the world. All are receiving the love flowing from you. Close this time with deep thoughts of gratitude for the all-embracing love that binds you together–God, self, and others.

Act

Many on life's road have a short journey with great difficulty. Your vision of outflowing love probably included some of those people. A lot of them live in Africa and have no access to clean water. Life is precarious and often short. Look at this page on the Water to Thrive website **https://www.watertothrive.org/about-us/**.

This is tough terrain for your fellow travelers. But water can flow with love. After bible study, one church raised money for 12 water wells. Could your love prime the pump for water to flow?

FOUR

Text: Matthew 25:34-40 (*The Message Bible* translation by Eugene Peterson)

34-36 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why:

I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink,
I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes,
I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.'

37-40 "Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me–you did it to me.'

Ponder and Pray:

In a series of stories, parables, and interpretations of who Christ is, Jesus tells the story of "The King" who comes at the end of times and separates two different kinds of people: those who followed the road leading to life and its rewards, and those who did not. That road had many people along the way who were overlooked, dismissed, hurting, marginalized, and left out. But those whose love was shown to each of these by helping them in their need found life's rich reward.

Ponder Those who traveled the road to its end found the fullness of life even though they were unaware of their extension of love on their way. Indeed, it was Christ receiving their love even though unrecognized in that outpouring of love. Ponder your journey and open your eyes to those you typically pass by or even encounter that are among those whom Christ pointed to. Whom do you see? What do you feel? Do they fit into your life's journey at all? Does the "loving Christ" abiding within you recognize or respond to the "face of Christ" of those Jesus identified? Or are they "outsiders" to be left along the road as you travel?

Pray Open your prayer by giving thanks to the loving God that upholds you on your journey, and then move your prayer into gratitude for the presence of Christ within you who travels with you through the dark valleys and over the high mountains. Turn your prayerful attention to your fellow travelers that you have trouble admitting into your loving embrace of acceptance and service. Ask for prayerful guidance for yourself as you come to terms with your life among all kinds of fellow travelers.

Act

You see here the artistically beautiful picture of a mother carrying her child on her back while reaching into muddy water with a container. While this touching picture shows you the diagonal line of her arm ready to draw the water to quench their thirst, be aware this may likely be the arm of death rather than life.

Go to the Water to Thrive website and read about the quest for water on life's journey and see what awaits them when they drink the only water they have available **https://www.watertothrive.org/giardiasis-part-3/**.

Your journey has many thirsty fellow travelers. What can you do to offer clean water to meet their needs and give them life? Your arms are not very long but can move beyond muddy water. Does your love extend your gifts into rural areas without clean water? If so, your empathy can reach them by donating to Water to Thrive to give boys and girls a clean drink. You may see in them the face of Christ, but you certainly will also experience the loving Christ within you.

FIVE

Text: 2 Corinthians 9:8-13 (*The Message Bible* translation by Eugene Peterson)

8-11 God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you're ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done....

This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.

12-15 Carrying out this social relief work involves far more than helping meet the bare needs of poor Christians. It also produces abundant and bountiful thanksgiving to God. This relief offering is a prod to live at your very best, showing your gratitude to God by being openly obedient to the plain meaning of the Message of Christ. You show your gratitude through your generous offerings to your needy brothers and sisters, and really toward everyone.

Ponder and Pray:

St. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth about relief offering for the poor in the faith community. He refers to their enthusiasm for such an offering and is urging them not to let him down. So, he sends an "advance team" to them to help them get ready to give to the cause. This passage is a reminder of what it means to be loved by God and respond in love to others. His words just before the start of this quotation are to say, "God loves it when the giver delights in giving" ("a cheerful giver" in some translations).

Ponder this meaning for you. Our response to the needs of others can be varied. Sometimes it is out of personal knowledge or reluctance toward the person and their use of our gift, or out of fear or distrust. Considering our own resources is usually a part of whether we give and how much. What can we "afford to give away?" Paul knows these considerations and alerts us about them, using the language of "lavish" versus "sparingly" regarding God's gifts to us, and our giving to others. Consider the factors in your love and reason as you deliberate not just whether to give, but the amount that makes an honest response reflecting your ability and their need.

Pray for Christ's inner light to guide your response to what you have learned about our human family struggling to live without clean water. As you pray quiet your mind and breathe slowly. Give thanks for the blessings of your life and the richness of love from all those around you. Ask for clarity about how your response can reflect your own gratitude and generosity for the gifts of life that you have. Be in calm prayer and wait until your mind and heart are at ease and clear. Prayer is not only "speaking", but is even more often "listening".

Act

Determine the amount you are willing to give to provide clean water to the families and villages without access. There is a simple guide to help determine the impact of your financial donation:

$10 provides clean water for one person.
$70 provides clean water for a family.
$2,500 provides clean water for half of a village.
$5,000 provides clean water for an entire village.

With every well we build, over 500 lives are forever changed, but for approximately 44 young children, this new well means life!

Go to the Water to Thrive website here for a place to make your donation directly to Water to Thrive via credit card or check **https://www.watertothrive.org/donate-for-water/**.

Or speak with your congregational leaders about options for giving to Water to Thrive through your church **https://www.watertothrive.org/campaign_category/current/.**

Contact Water to Thrive for other options with their water project sites.

May your journey with Christ be a blessing to the world.

water to thrive
BUILD WELLS CHANGE LIVES

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