When we worship, we gather with others before God. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to God. As we break bread, our eyes are opened to the presence of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made one body – the body of Christ sent forth to live the Way of Love.

In this episode of Traveling the Way of Love, we visit with the Rev. Elsa Marty, pastor at St. Lydia’s, a Lutheran congregation in Gowanus, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. Long associated with industrial buildings, warehouses, and a polluted canal, Gowanus has been undergoing rapid gentrification. All around, construction has been popping up as families and young professionals move to the neighborhood. It was in this setting that St. Lydia’s found itself, without a traditional church building but with a rented storefront space where neighbors – who may or may not ever walk through the red doors of a traditional church – could gather, hear God’s Word, pray, sing, and celebrate the sacraments.

As a church focused around meals, there is plenty of preparation needed before worship. In fact, everyone who comes to church on a given evening is offered the chance to help prepare the space. Some set the table, some practice the service music, some greet guests, and some are even asked to chop vegetables for the soup. In fact, it feels a bit like serving on an altar guild, with a process of readying not only the physical space for communion, but also our hearts and minds and souls, coming before God’s holiness even in our small ways.

As you watch this third episode of Traveling the Way of Love, consider how you prepare for worship. When you attend a service, take note of the parts that especially move you and help you feel the presence of God. Is it in the reading of Scripture? In silent or group prayer? In receiving the Eucharist? In confessing sins and receiving absolution? Think, too, about the times that you don’t feel particularly moved, and consider ways you might train yourself to focus more fully on how God and how we are moving throughout our worship.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. –Luke 24:30-31a
After watching Traveling the Way of Love: Worship, consider engaging the Way of Love with one or more of these suggested practices.

TURN
Consider the many ways we as modern folks might decentralize worship in our lives. Perhaps family commitments, the stress of getting ready, not wanting to miss sporting events, or just generally not being able to fit another thing on the to-do list keeps us from faithfully worshipping weekly. Then, make a commitment – it can be small at first! – to begin prioritizing worship as often as possible.

LEARN
Read Luke 24:30-31a and meditate on its meaning for five minutes. “When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”

PRAY
Say the Prayer of Self-Dedication, found on pages 832-833 of the Book of Common Prayer: Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray you, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

WORSHIP
At worship this week, if you normally read along from a printed bulletin, try simply listening to the lessons, the Gospel readings, and (if offered) the Eucharistic prayer. Imagine the stories that the readers and celebrant are sharing. Does this change the way you experience worship?

BLESS
The Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have been in full communion with one another since 1999. The agreement that recognizes this full communion, Called to Common Mission, describes how our two churches understand each other and will work together to “engage more fully and more faithfully the mission of God in the world.” Using the Episcopal Asset Map, find out whether there is a Lutheran-Episcopal ministry near you. If so, learn more about it by reading the profile, pray for it, and reach out for conversation: bit.ly/eamworship.

GO
Is there a place where your congregation can meet – either in small groups or as a whole – to host small prayer sessions outside the church? Choose a regular meeting place where you can be more visible to the community as a prayerful and welcoming presence.

REST
Before worship, center yourself on the time to come. Pray quietly, meditate on the week, and open yourself for the full experience of worship.

OTHER RESOURCES
Watch How2charist and learn about what happens in one worship service at how2charist.com.
Use the Episcopal Asset Map to find a congregation near you at episcopalassetmap.org.
Learn more about the Way of Love at episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove.