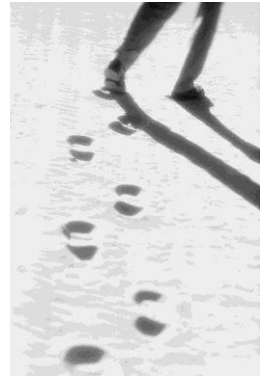


Prayer Walking



Anglican Fellowship of Prayer (Canada)



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Praying While Moving

When we think of prayer, most often we think of being still – standing, kneeling or sitting – while connecting with God. However, being still is not the only way one can pray.

Some people do their best and are most comfortable praying while they are moving. Prayer Walking can be a wonderful gift for those who like to get up and move around while intentionally communicating with God. Prayer Walking can be done in any location at any time, sometimes alone or with a group.

Prayer Walking is a modern version of the earlier practices such as:

- ❖ Making a pilgrimage;



- ❖ Walking the stations of the cross;



- ❖ Walking a labyrinth.



Intercessory Prayer Walking

As a type of intentional intercessory prayer, Prayer Walking invites people to walk to a particular site of their concern such as:

- A church
- An office
- A school
- Government buildings
- The neighbourhood
- A house
- A hospital
- A hotel

Once at the site, prayers are offered while moving and/or while stopped for a short time at a particular place. For example, if Prayer Walking in a church, an individual or group might want to walk around the building, praying and stopping at specific locations to offer prayers particular to that location.(e.g. altar area; choir area; centre of the nave; church office; kitchen; meeting hall; Rector's office etc.)

The immediacy of the location or the reason for going to the place can fuel prayer and offer a way of listening more deeply to God, to what God's concerns for this place might be.

When done in a group, prayer walking is a way of saturating a particular place and people with prayer. This discipline draws us out of prayers that are limited to our immediate concerns and into a larger circle of God's loving attention.



Sometimes Prayer Walking precedes a particular mission endeavour. A team of people go beforehand to walk through the neighbourhood, town or city in order to pray before the actual mission event happens. Often this type of prayer is intentionally organized rather than happening spontaneously. It can be as a onetime event or part of an ongoing prayer ministry. Perhaps you can think of locations and/or situations where this type of prayer would be useful.

Doing a Guided Prayer exercise may not only be useful in itself, but it can lead to people being more aware that they can pray for people, places & activities as they see them or pass them in daily life.

One of the questions we might ask is: “What should we pray for?” when Prayer Walking. The first thing in answering that question is to realize that prayer is not always, or even primarily, about asking God to do things. It is essentially connecting with God heart to heart. So listening to what God is saying to you in your heart is the first thing. As a suggestion for those who have not experienced this type of prayer before and may be hesitant, it would be helpful to remind them that it may be useful to bring to God three main aspects that apply to the particular location, namely:

- The people who might be occupying or passing through this place;
- The activities that occur in and around the place; and
- The results or effects of the activities.

It is also important to remember that we can offer prayers of thanksgiving and praise applicable to the location as well as prayers of asking.

When we think about the various topics we might bring to God in prayer, the first step might involve a time of silence in order to listen for God’s wisdom. Then we have guidance on what to pray about. For example, if I am at an office, I can bring to mind those who work there, the type and quality of the work that they do and the results of their work. If God is saying that there is hurt or that bad things are happening here, then I can pray that healing and reconciliation take place and that circumstances will change and become in accordance with God’s will. I may hear God saying to me that many good things are happening in this place and I can offer thanksgivings for the presence of the Holy Spirit here and the love of God that is present.



Questions for Reflection

1. What does it mean to you that God is in every place?
How does this affect how you pray?
2. How does moving or being still affect the way you pray?
3. What most helps you concentrate on God?
Is what helps you concentrate on God part of your regular prayer practice?
4. What is it like for you to pray, listening to God's heart for what a particular prayer might be?

Prayer Walking Exercises for Adults

1. Walk through your home or church in the company of Jesus. Pray for each room and what happens there. How would recognizing Jesus' presence reorient your interaction?
2. Spend some time walking with other believers through your work place. Pray for your colleagues, the custodial help, the customers, the delivery people, the kitchen staff, and the management. Offer yourself to be Jesus' hands and heart in this place.
3. Visit a playground and school near you. Walk through it in the company of Jesus. Pray for those who work, play and study there. How do you see the heart of God for this place?
4. When you are on vacation or in a natural setting, allow God to draw you into prayer for a particular place. Let your interaction with the created world lead you into prayer. Pray that the exquisite beauty of the world will not be snuffed out.
5. Before a neighbourhood picnic or school event, join other believers who will prayer walk for the crowds and people who will attend. Ask the Lord to give you His heart for them. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work even in this event.



Prayer Walking Exercise for Children

1. Plan a route ahead of time. Make sure there are at least two adults in the group. Make a bathroom call before heading out.
2. If possible walk to: the school, hospital or nursing station, police station, fire station, store, nursing home, day care centre, playground, a family home and the final stop, outside the church before you head in again.
3. At each spot, stop, wait till the children are quiet, then ask the Holy Spirit to fill this place with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...ask the children to name these "fruits of the spirit". (Galatians 5:22-23). With each spot they will begin to remember more & more of them.
4. Leave time for special prayer intentions the children might have. The teacher/leader might need to do the first stop or two, but the children will soon start coming up with some; e.g. that all the children try their best in school, that there is healthy food in the hospital, etc.

Pilgrimage – An Example of Prayer Walking

The ancient Christian practice of going on a pilgrimage is a traditional example of praying while walking. Most often walking while praying is involved, along with stopping at specific sites for special prayers. While one might be with others, the inner journey being taken is essentially personal and time spent alone is most useful.

While some people today walk on traditional pilgrimage routes such as the Camino de Santiago in Spain, one does not have to go far to make a pilgrimage. The essential thing is that the pilgrim set out with an intention of connecting with God in prayer.

For example a parish could organize an annual pilgrimage taken on the Friday before Palm/Passion Sunday where a group has a set route of walking from the church (leaving home) to a near by low mountain/hill (going to the mountain) then down to a lake creek or river (for foot washing) and then up to the church (up to the temple). This might take a morning and finish with lunch at the church. Repeating the same route, whether weekly or annually, creates a sense of expectation.



Acknowledgement: The inspiration and some of the suggestions and exercises in this pamphlet have come from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook - Practices That Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, Intervarsity Press, 2005.

For further information or pamphlets please contact your AFP Diocesan Representative or the AFP Canada Resources Coordinator.

Internet Web Site: www.anglicanprayer.org

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