

Walking with God: in the Neighborhood - during a Pandemic

Introduction:

Over these past several months, many have shown their love and care for others by restraint. While the lives of our elders, our vulnerable, and the essential workers in the community are at stake during the COVID-19 pandemic, tens of millions of us across the globe have been restraining ourselves at home, choosing *not to do* many things in order to protect those we love (and those who are loved by others). Yet, we still seek ways to be present with God and to minister to our neighborhoods.

Walking with God recognizes an invitation from God to walk with us even in the midst of social distances.

God invites us to join in a field trip into our communities to help us to –

- Deepen our love and understanding of the world beyond our doors.
- Broaden and enrich our relationships with each other, learning together.
- Discover that God is truly not confined to the church building.

What is walking with God? Walking with God (which could also be riding, driving, or looking out your window – however you are prompted or able) is an approach that combines community observation with prayers for God’s mercy and blessing upon that community.

The purpose of walking with God is to seek God's blessing, mercy, and transforming power -- both for the community in which we live and where our church building is located and for ourselves as God's servants in the community.

Become more aware of what you see while you walk and pray as you connect walking with faith filled observation. This is one way of “being the Church” – you are the face, voice, hands, and feet of Jesus in the community.

General guidelines for walking with God

- * At an assigned time, start alone or meet with others, observing social distance guidelines, and engage in prayer to initiate the walk.
- * Plan routes ahead of time to cover as much of the area as possible, whether you are walking by yourself or with members of your household.
- * Pray aloud in a quiet, conversational voice, if you feel comfortable doing so. Or pray silently, letting your prayer partner(s) know what you are praying about. Don't call attention to yourselves. You

can join with God walking in your neighborhood without making a scene.

- * If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "We're praying God's blessing on this neighborhood. Is there any special way we can pray for you?"
- * Although it is not the primary purpose of walking with God, be open to opportunities to interact with and bless people that you may meet. (With a smile, a caring statement, a prayer, awareness you are not alone...)

As you pray, ask God's grace and help for the people, homes, or businesses in view. In doing this, you'll find that your hope for those people begins to grow. You'll begin to see people as God sees them. You'll likely find yourself becoming more interested in the welfare of the people you are praying for. ... Watch for the ways God impresses you to display God's love in practical acts of kindness.

- * Plan to walk for about half an hour. Remember, if anyone in your church is not comfortable with walking or it is not practical for the setting of your church, they can prayer-drive around the community instead.
- * Afterwards, you may gather to share your prayers, observations, and experiences. What did you learn about the neighborhood? How was God present to you in this experience?
- * Encourage people to continue praying for the community during the week.

How do you pray?

- > *Pray for discernment* -- seek the gift of seeing the community through God's eyes, and to discern what God is already doing among the people; ask God to reveal what you need to know to inform your prayers for the people, events, and places in the community.
- > *Pray for blessing* -- over every person, home, and business you encounter; for God's intervention in each life, so that each one can be fruitful in God's kingdom; for God's will to be done in this community "as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).
- > *Pray with empathy* -- see and feel what residents live with every day; offer intercession for those things that express brokenness and grieve God's spirit and give thanks to God for the blessings and gifts that exist in the community.
- > *Pray from Scripture* -- prayers based directly on God's word can be especially powerful. You may want to bring a Bible with key passages highlighted or copy verses onto note cards.
- > *Pray in God's power* -- allow times of silence for God's spirit to speak to you, or for you (Romans 8:26). Ask with confidence in the power of Jesus' name (John 14:12-14).