

## **Walking, looking, praying**

Here are some simple thoughts and ideas. I hope you find them of some help.



### **Walking**

We are being encouraged to exercise and stay healthy. Body, mind, soul and spirit can all benefit from the simple act of walking.

### **Walking with God**

We sometimes use the term to 'walk with God' to convey something of our spiritual life.

'Thus says the Lord: stand at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it and find rest for your souls.' Jeremiah 6 v16

'Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways.' Psalm 128 v1

'Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' Isaiah 2 v3

'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.' 1 John 1 v7

'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.' Proverbs 3 v5-6

'He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God'. Micah 6 v8

## Walking exercise

Walking can be so many things to us from gentle to strenuous, from quietening the mind to helping our thinking. It can bring rhythm to our bodies and breathing. It can also be an aid to our prayer as in the way of walking a labyrinth.

From the poem 'In praise of walking' by Thomas A Clark

*'That something exists outside ourselves and our preoccupations,  
so near, so readily available, is our greatest blessing.*

*Walking is the human way of getting about.*

*Always, everywhere, people have walked, veining the earth  
with paths, visible and invisible, symmetrical and meandering.*

*There are walks on which we tread in the footsteps of others,  
walks on which we strike out entirely for ourselves.*

*A journey implies a destination, so many miles to be consumed,  
while a walk is its own measure, complete at every point along the way.*

*There are things we will never see, unless we walk to them.*

*Walking is a mobile form of waiting.*

*What I take with me, what I leave behind, are of less importance  
than what I discover along the way.'*



During these days of restrictions it may not always be possible to go out for a walk but we can all 'take a walk at home'. I decided to walk around my house and as I did so I varied the route slightly. I stopped to look at things in the house, or out of the window and I put a CD on so music came in bursts as I came and went from the room it was playing in. I have stairs at home so I could vary the pace, or the effort of my walking, by using the stairs but I could vary the pace on the level as well.

## Looking

As I walked, I found that I started to look at the pictures on my walls, the photographs around the house, the objects and ornaments that I have. I don't know about you but despite seeing the things in my house every day I had stopped noticing them. They had become part of the background, so to pay attention to them again was like visiting old friends. Many took me to places that I have been to, Norfolk, Wales, Northumberland, Scotland, while others brought associations, gifts from friends and family, things from the natural world, people and things that I love.



Remembering, noticing and giving thanks can be offered as prayer even if not formed into words, or more specific prayers may come to mind for people and places.

In the kitchen, perhaps when preparing a meal, take note of where your food has come from and this could prompt a brief prayer of thanks, or intercession, for the people and places that live in those countries.

### **Walking the cross**

Another prayer-focused walk came to me and that was the idea of walking the shape of the cross. I did this in my living room where I am spending a lot of my time but it could be in any room. In my mind I marked out the shape of a cross and I traced the beams in my steps, pausing at the end points and where the beams cross. As I paused I remembered the people and countries to the East, West, North and South but I think many things might come to mind both for others and for ourselves. I found it very special and not only in the doing but also in the 'trace' it left in my mind and in my living room.

### **Walking a labyrinth**

I think walking the cross could be seen as a very simple form of labyrinth. I went to a workshop on labyrinths a couple of years ago with a lady called Barbara Wallace from Pilgrim Paths Ltd.

This is a brief excerpt from one of her handouts - Walk and Pray:

'Walking a labyrinth is like making a pilgrimage. It is a journey where you might think about loved ones, distractions or burdens on the way in, be open to receiving the grace and love of God at the centre and return uplifted, blessed and renewed.

Labyrinths are ancient spiritual pathways found across the world and embraced by church communities at various times since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century as a support for prayer.

Today, labyrinths are again being created to offer a spiritual space for prayer and reflection providing a stilling space in a busy world. They are a way of slowing down .. of being thoughtful .. of spending time with God.'



It is easy to make a simple labyrinth to walk in your house, or in your garden. You can use all sorts of things to mark it out but do be careful to leave enough space so that you are not going to trip on whatever you use. Here are some ideas but you will have your own too ..

- Barbara Wallace told us that she had made a labyrinth using tins and focused on praying for food banks
- She had also made a labyrinth with children, using their shoes to pray about the change from primary to secondary school
- How about using string, or newspapers, or books?....
- In the garden, how about using flower pots – you could even plant them up if you are leaving them in the shape of the labyrinth, or you could mow the pattern into your lawn. You could use pebbles, or sand ...

See attached sheet for the pattern, or download from Pilgrim Paths – free resources section at [www.pilgrimpaths.co.uk](http://www.pilgrimpaths.co.uk),

### **Finger labyrinth**

If you would prefer a sitting version, you can still use a labyrinth by tracing a 'finger labyrinth'. You could use a simple paper pattern, or you can draw it yourself; or you could sew the pattern onto a piece of cloth using ribbons or buttons ....

See attached sheet for the pattern, or download from Pilgrim Paths – free resources section at [www.pilgrimpaths.co.uk](http://www.pilgrimpaths.co.uk),

(Labyrinth sheets: How to draw a 3 circuit / finger labyrinth / colour in labyrinth)