

Walk in Love

A 40-day walking practice to turn toward God

July 29-September 6, 2020



Let's not struggle through these trying time alone. Join us as we walk, reflect, and pray our way to turning toward God and remembering we are all held in God's almighty hands of love.

Psalm 85:8

*Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people,
to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts.*

INTRODUCTION

There is a translation of Matthew 11:28 in our Book of Common Prayer that reads, “Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” The word travail always stuck with me; it’s such a dramatic word for “weary,” which is how that verse is usually translated these days. But what are these times we are walking through if not dramatic? And we have no choice but to walk through them.

I think I spent the first few months of the pandemic thinking, “I’m just going to keep my head down, walk forward, and soon we’ll be out on the other side.” It wasn’t my first instinct to turn to God. I don’t think I’m necessarily alone in that. Most of us seem to want to take care of things ourselves. Even those of us with faith resist needing help for some reason. By the third month, I realized my mistake. Am I the only one who spends so much time and energy pushing through that I forget that God is still with me, and longs for me to turn and accept the offered rest and strength? The Bible calls us repeatedly to turn to God and to turn together. I am anxious to find ways to do that. Ways that are more intentional than just waiting to be overwhelmed and crying out, “Dear God, please help me!”

What happens if I don’t wait until I am in agony? What happens when we experience the rest offered in simply turning to God? The strength? The hope? And how do we get there? That refreshment from Matthew is looking increasingly appealing.

One of our most vivid images of God comes in Genesis 3:8, *“And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.”* I’m captivated by the idea of God strolling through and enjoying that first garden. What if we can walk with God in the garden again? Could we walk without fear or shame because, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we were restored as God’s own? What could be made new if we walk and open ourselves to the Divine presence in creation? And what if we do it together, for a restorative period of 40 days?

As I thought about these questions, I realized, in addition to its health and wellness benefits, walking is a spiritual practice as old as time. Jesus walked for miles healing and teaching. The disciples walked, sharing the Good News. The desert mothers and fathers walked to refine their faith, early Christians walked to Holy sites, and later Christians turned those walks into pilgrimages. The Camino Santiago has even been named a UNESCO world heritage site.

I adapted practices from a lifetime of books and resources to create an intentional 40-day practice to turn to God by walking. Developed for all age levels and almost every fitness level, we will walk (or ride or something else) while listening for the Divine Voice in creation, scripture, prayer, reflection, and play. The goal is not the walk, not the prayer. The goal is to transform our spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing both individually and as a community by the intentional practice of turning toward God.

BRIEF NOTES ON WALKING

"As our physical bodies move through space, our minds move too. And as our minds move, God can enter into our beings because movement creates space and new possibilities."

-Daniel Wolpert Creating a Life with God

Recently, I was talking to a physician about the pandemic. She told me she was advising her patients to get out side and walk for at least 15 minutes a day. No mile count, no step count. But she insisted it had to be outside. Then she looked at me and warned me not to go overboard and hurt myself the first day by walking for hours and then just give up. What can I say, my family's motto has always been if it's worth doing, it's worth doing to excess. To my "why?" she answered, "more energy, better memory, improved mood, better sleep, and it helps make up for that extra wine everyone seems to be drinking under lockdown." It sounds like magic.

It seems like spiritual magic too.

"Walking is a spiritual practice that yields so many dividends: replenishment of the soul, connection with the natural world, problem-solving, self-esteem, health and healing, and heightened attention. Movement seems to encourage dialogue and conviviality, leading to richer conversations with soul mates, friends, and even strangers. Artists report that walking activates the imagination and opens up the creative process. It is deeply restorative."

Throughout time, walking has played an enormous role in the devotional life of people from all the world's religions: prayers and mantra practice while walking, pilgrimage to sacred sites, walking the labyrinth, walking meditation, and informal spiritual practices that make the most of strolling, sauntering, or cavorting.

And then, of course, there are the routines of walking the dog, taking a break, walking around the block, or communing with God at the end of the day. These rituals of everyday spirituality lift the spirits and provide peace and contentment in our stressful times." -Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat

Add to all that almost everyone can do it, and you have a great starting point for a new spiritual practice. If you are unable, pick another activity that helps you clear your mind and focus on God's presence. Sitting on the back porch? Observing the evening sky? Listening for the variety of bird songs. Any of those would work and many others. Be creative, this is meant to be adaptable to your unique circumstances, so feel free to make it your own!

The Basics:

#1 BE SAFE! If you will be walking around others, please wear a mask, and stay an appropriate distance apart. If you have any health issues, make sure you check with your Doctor to make sure she approves. Bring water if it's hot, and sunscreen if it's sunny.

#2 READ. Each day has a specific scripture verse. Read the verse before your walk and think about it while walking.

#3 WALK. Walk 15 minutes (or more). Walk alone, or with your family, an appropriately masked and distanced friend, virtually while on the phone with a friend who is also walking, or with your dog (neighbors dog works well too). It's not a competitive challenge, but I know some folks need more than 15 minutes. That's okay as long as you don't over do it and it's okay with your doctor.

#4 PRAY AND REFLECT. Write or draw about your thoughts and feeling during your walk. If you are stuck think about the following questions: Where did I walk? What did I think about? What did I feel? What did my senses tell me? What inspired me? What do I need? What am I grateful for? What's next? Pray by journaling a list of how and where you experienced God's presence and another list of how God was revealed to you during your walk. Sunday journal pages have a specific prayer, but feel free to journal a prayer or pray another prayer.

#5 (optional). Check in on our Facebook page and join the conversation by joining our private group where we can chat and share stories. https://www.facebook.com/standrewsencinitas/groups/?ref=page_internal

#6 CREATE. Weekly activities are sent out to help you on your journey. Go ahead, you're not too old to get your hands muddy!



A LITTLE MORE INFO

- Runs Wednesday, July 29th– Sunday, September 6th
- Scripture and prayers are centered around 3 themes:
 - Days 1-13: Love (Kindness/Compassion/Service)
 - Days 14-26: Acceptance (God created all things and all things are good/Diversity,/Recognizing the Face of God in self and others)
 - Days 27-40: Worship (Awe/Praise/Gratitude)
- There is a journal sheet for each day that includes the daily scripture verse and notes for reflection and prayer. On Sundays instead of a journal prayer, there will be a prayer written on the journal page.
- You don't have to use the journal sheets provided. You can use your own journal or notebook and just write the day and goal at the top. You can also add the verse and the prayer if you wish.
- You can substitute prayers of your own creation, or others that you have found and love. Many of the prayers in the handout are from the New Zealand Book of Common Prayer.
- You don't have to journal by writing if there is something else that will work better for you. You can draw or paste pictures you have taken while out on your walks. You can journal in word lists, song titles, or even a voice recording. The journal is yours, make it meaningful to you.
- If you have any questions or comments, or need any assistance, please contact me at education@standrewsepiscopal.org. I am "in" the office Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Messages received after 3pm on Wednesday will be read the following Monday.
- Join us on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/standrewsencinitas/groups/?ref=page_internal for discussion, support, ideas, and more (maybe even some pop-up prayer. If you cannot access FaceBook, please let me



Day 1

Matthew 11:28-29

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart,

Intentions/Goal: _____

Time/Miles/Steps Walked _____

Write or draw about your thoughts and feeling during your walk. If you are stuck think about the following questions: Where did I walk? What did I think about? What did I feel? What did my senses tell me? What inspired me? What do I need? What am I grateful for? What’s next?

**God,
you have made known your love
through Jesus’ life and words.
Help us to receive his teaching,
to find the fulness of that love
And bring its fragrance to others.
Amen**