

This Lent
Cary Presbyterian Church
invites you to



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Warren, Michigan

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Cary Presbyterian
C H U R C H PC(USA)

Benefits of The Walk to Jerusalem

The Walk to Jerusalem is an imaginary walk that encourages walkers and those who choose other forms of exercise, physical or spiritual, to increase physical activity as able, spiritual growth, and cultural awareness through a virtual tour to Jerusalem. Throughout this Lent, by walking and other physical and/or spiritual activities, our communal goal is to reach Jerusalem from Cary by Easter--6,106 miles! Some congregations have made it to Jerusalem and even returned during the Lenten season due to enthusiastic participation.

The good news is that Jesus Christ proclaimed and demonstrated isn't only a spiritual reality; it is also very physical. Jesus made this clear with his very tangible metaphors and parables about wheat and coins and seeds and wine. His healing of the body was as important as his healing of souls and spirits. God became flesh in the incarnation. The resurrection was marked with the movement of a solid rock, revealing a resurrected body! These physical truths point to a spiritual reality. Our faith unites the body and spirit in a whole being.

"Being" in Lent: 'Interestingly, Jesus shows us remarkably little interest in people's spiritual lives. He is, however, passionate about people's lives - who, what, how they are in toto: their body, mind, and soul. Jesus promises to be with us always, wherever and however we are. If we are going to be present to Jesus' real presence - and not just virtually present - we need to find practices for "being there," living life as an ongoing invitation from God. Whether we work, or walk, or weep, or wait, God is with us. Many of us need periodic reminders of this truth. Lent can be a great help to retrieve, recover, redeem what is most important to us, yet may have gotten lost along the way.' From <https://www.buildfaith.org/lent-for-practical-christians/>

Lent is a time to explore walking as a spiritual discipline that takes us closer to the heart of God. Walks can take a variety of forms: walks around the community for special purposes, such as praying for the neighborhood; community-centered walks that welcome the wider community into this healthy activity of the congregation; devotional walks that can include reflection and prayer while walking or at the beginning or end, etc. This doesn't have to be complicated: a few friends, choice of routes, and a devotional resource (this packet, or some of the books set out for this purpose). Anyone can participate, regardless of your age or physical fitness level. Activities are not just walking, but can include jogging and running, yoga, other forms of exercise, and include activities such as daily Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, and other more spiritual exercises. Weather permitting, walkers can be outside on nature paths, sidewalks, or tracks. They can also be inside malls, large stores or fitness centers. Individuals can choose the length of time and pace of walking.

Take these 40 days to engage in spiritual practices or establish new physical and spiritual habits, remembering Christ's life, teachings, journeys, and sacrifices for us, preparing us for the joy and transformation of Resurrection lives.

If you have questions, contact Medora Hix at 919-467-8700, or medora.hix@carypresbyterian.org.

DEVOTIONS FOR THE WALK

Below are semi-weekly devotions to use on the Walk to Jerusalem. Most were written by the author of this program, Nancy Evans, RN, BA, St. John Providence Health Parish Nurse. Others were written by members of other churches.

Week 1

Making the Decision – I

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5:7

The 259 steps up to the Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's Cathedral in London are challenging. The passageway is narrow, the steps sometimes slippery and the light is dim. The view at the top, however, is breathtaking.

Not all visitors to St. Paul's make the decision to climb to the Whispering Gallery. Some have legitimate physical reasons for bypassing the challenge, but others are too hurried or not convinced that the climb is worth the exertion and energy.

We make decisions everyday regarding our physical, spiritual and emotional health. It is so easy to procrastinate and fill our days with everything but that which is good for us. This week as you begin on this walking journey and decide to be good stewards of the body God has given you, may you walk by faith and grow stronger spiritually and physically as you spend time with your Heavenly Father.

Congratulations on making that decision to come on this journey!

Questions to ponder:

- How has my faith developed throughout the years?
- Were there special people who mentored me in my faith?
- What steps am I taking to strengthen that faith?
- Is God telling me to step out in faith about some issue?

Making the Decision - II:

Written by Doug Schunk

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

Running a marathon is just dumb. Why would you want to run 26.2 miles? More importantly, why would anyone pay to run 26.2 miles?

I ask myself that question a lot, especially when I'm getting up at dark o'clock and running in the cold darkness of January. For me, the best explanation for why I run is to fight genetics and be a father, husband, son, and friend for as long as I can. Running prevents me from going back to where I was a few years ago... 140 lbs. ago.

Did I ever intend to run marathons when I started? Heck no! But as I started to make positive changes in my life, God continued to suggest other challenges for me. At first they seemed daunting and unrealistic. But as the Bible says in Philippians 4:13 - "I can do all this through Him who gives me strength." If God presents you a challenge, have faith that God will also get you through it.

Whether it is for a walk around the block or running a marathon, the hardest part is the first step. Making the effort to making positive changes in your life is the hardest part. Congratulations, by making the commitment to walk with [Cary Presbyterian] to Jerusalem, the hardest part is over. Now we just have another 6,080 miles to go.

Questions to ponder:

0 Why are you participating in the Walk to Jerusalem?

0 What challenges has God put in front of you?

0 In the past when God has put challenges in front of you, how has God gotten you through them?

Week 2

Preparing for the Journey Written by Linda Keisling

He told them, "Take nothing for the journey - no staff no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic." Luke 9:3

When I set out on a trip, it most often involves planning, anticipation and many details to be double-checked. Piles of things are gathered to go into suitcases and bags- snacks, clothes for every condition, sunglasses, medicines, camera, gear and resources for every eventuality. I don 't like to be caught off guard! A walk in my neighborhood doesn't take so much planning. I check the weather outside my door, put on walking shoes and clothing to suit the day and grab my house key, water bottle and phone, Pretty simple, just like Jesus' instructions.

As we walk together toward Jerusalem, we travel as one of Jesus' disciples. His words to them in Luke say that they were to take nothing! There were no maps, departure and return dates, spare outfits or food. They did not however go from that place empty or without resources. They had in their hearts and minds his teachings, his role model behavior and their faith that he was with them. Their purpose was clear, to spread the good news!

When I walk, I like to take in the details of things around me. Nature is the easiest for me; love the colors, smells, sounds and beauty. Walking at the mall or on a public street is a little more challenging; I note people's expressions, their pace, how they balance backpacks, briefcases and coffee cups. Parks and playgrounds often delight me with beautiful flowers, active kids and exuberant outside voices. While I walk, I pray...lots of thanksgivings to God, prayers for healing infirmities, peace and joy for the burdened and strength for the weary. If for a moment my mind is blank, I remember the instructions in Philippians 4:8 — to meditate upon whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy, and my heart turns immediately toward God, who directs my steps. Be ready with a good word or blessing to share; be ready to tell about the source of your joy. May you be blessed in your journey.

Questions to Ponder:

0 What is the extra baggage that you carry which could be left behind?

0 What Bible verses spur you on even when the going gets tough?

O How do you apply lessons learned from your life and scripture as you continue to travel?

O What new promise of Jesus can you now accept by faith to accompany you?

Taking the Time

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Psalm 139:6

Have you ever said, "There just aren't enough hours in the day..." Our days can become pretty cluttered – and yet it says in Psalm 139 that "all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Does that mean that God knows when we waste time or when we pack too much into our days? Isn't it a mystery that we don't know the number of our days or what the future holds? Only a wise God – ever knowing and ever wise – could create such a system. And yet, we live and act as if we know everything and can control our future! Maybe we need to ponder just exactly how we fill our days. We can take the time to ponder, and while we walk this week, let's do just that: take time to ponder the mystery of our all-knowing, all-loving God who knows what lies behind, before and with us today.

Questions to ponder:

- God thinks of me constantly. How often do I pay attention to God?
- What percentage of my day is spent with God?
- What percentage of my day is spent on enriching my relationships with family and friends?

Week 3

Plotting the Journey

The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps. Proverbs 16:9

It was one of those long car rides through Tennessee on Interstate 75. The triptik (or GPS) didn't indicate any detours or road construction, but the large orange "detour" signs and the accompanying orange barrels were unavoidable. The course had been smooth, up until this point. The detour would delay our arrival and change our plans. We exited the freeway and found ourselves on a narrow winding road dripping with fresh mountain streams and fringed with delightful wildflowers. The turns in the road were hard and narrow, and the prospect of an unseen approaching car suddenly appearing on one of those hard turns kept us alert and expectant. The road was also quite brief. It seemed as if time stood still as we focused on the beauty surrounding us and the winding road. In minutes we were back on the highway. The drone of the widely paved road lulled us into a senseless stupor of grey cement and blurry green forests. We struggled to keep awake. As you walk this week, let your senses come alive as you ponder God's creation and creativity.

Questions to ponder:

- Am I including God in my decision making? Do I trust God to direct my paths?

- Am I taking the time to see and appreciate people, things, blessings in my life or am I riding the highway?
- Am I noticing the details of my life, and those around me?
- How do I handle detours along the way? Am I flexible to change, or very rigid?

Walking Cheerleaders

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. - Hebrews 12: 1

Being the mother of a cross country runner, I know what it is like to be in the "cloud of witnesses" that cheers on the runners. The runners disappear in a flash as they emerge from woody trails, but I am told that a familiar face – an encouraging "Go, Dave" or a thumbs up gesture is energizing to the runner. Likewise surrounding ourselves with encouragers and being encouragers ourselves is uplifting to our spirits and helps us continue on the course set before us. It has been said that there are no "lone-ranger" Christians. We need each other. Walking with a companion makes the walk seem much shorter. This week as you walk, think also about that "great cloud of witnesses" in heaven – cheering you on to run the race and persevere in your faith.

Questions to ponder:

- How can I encourage someone in their faith this week? Think of a time when someone has been a great encouragement to you.
- Do I have someone in my life with whom I can share deep spiritual thoughts, hopes and desires? If not, is there someone I know who might be willing to share their spiritual journey with me?
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Week 4

Where am I Going?

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil 3:14

Are we almost there now? Are we really going to Jerusalem? How much longer before we get there? Are you sure we're heading in the right direction? These are questions that may bring to mind memories of past journeys traveled as a child or with children. Most of us know what it's like to be the child and the adult in such a situation. As a child, we must trust that the adult really knows the way. As an adult we must press on toward the goal, knowing that if we follow the map and continue to travel, we will eventually reach our goal. Having a goal helps us to continue until we reach the prize or the destination.

Your physical goal this week may be to walk 2 miles – or 5 miles – or 50 miles. Having that goal helps us to continue on. Your spiritual goal may be to read the Word of God daily, pray daily or memorize a Bible verse. The deeper spiritual goal

may be to have a deeper personal relationship with Jesus, to confront each other in a kinder more loving manner or to forgive someone. The ultimate spiritual goal is to become more Christ-like in our everyday encounters with people and society.

Questions to ponder:

- Do I have physical and spiritual goals for this week?
- Do I have physical and spiritual goals for my life?
- What is one thing I can do to help achieve my physical goal?
- What is one thing I can do to help achieve my spiritual goal?

What kind of walker am I?

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name,

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits –

Who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

Who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalm 103:1-3, 5

When was the last time you walked with a spring in your step? Was there a reason for that feeling of joyous abandon while you walked? Perhaps you just received an "A" on a difficult exam or maybe it was news of a baby's birth, or maybe your soccer team won the championship or you were offered a much needed job. While you walk this week, dwell on the verses from Psalm 103. We have many reasons to rejoice and praise God. God forgives all our sins and heals our diseases. God satisfies our desires with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagle's. Now that is something to rejoice about!

Questions to ponder:

- What are some of the benefits of following God?
- Think of some good things God has given to you...the things that made you walk with a spring in your step.
- What desires has God satisfied?
- Think about your deepest desires. Do you think they are in line with God's will?

Week 5

Who is My Neighbor?

Who is my neighbor? He answered, "Love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind and, love your neighbor as yourself. Luke 10:27

How's the neighborhood? That is sometimes one of the first questions a perspective buyer asks when looking at a house, but for many, gone are the days when neighbors sit on porches and spend time with each other. It's difficult enough carving out time for family, let alone neighbors. Jesus says we should love our neighbor as ourselves!

This week if you walk through your neighborhood, consider it an opportunity to pray for your neighbors. Pray as you walk by each house. If you see bikes and swing sets, pray for the children in the house. If the drapes are drawn and there's

little activity, pray for those who live in the house. Sometimes homes become secret cocoons of pain and strife.

Just as only God knows what is going on inside our lives, God is sometimes the only one who knows what goes on in our homes. Pray that the Holy Spirit can break through and ease the pain and strife that your neighbors may be experiencing.

Questions to ponder:

- What can it possibly mean to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind?
- Think about yourself. Are you pleased with yourself? Do you love yourself? Are you able to love others?
- How can you show love to your neighbors?
- How do you represent* Jesus to your neighbors? [* re-present]

Lenten Poem written by Ann Weems

Read this poem as both a devotion and a prayer.

Lent is a time to take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to let the events get up
and walk around in us,
a time to intensify our living unto Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of
Jerusalem or to walk along the sea and
listen to his Word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder....
Lent is a time to allow
a fresh new taste of God!
Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think,
for thoughts come unbidden.
Perhaps we're afraid to face our future
knowing our past.
Give us courage, O God,
to hear your Word
and to read our living into it.
Give us the trust to know we're forgiven
and give us the faith
to take up our lives and walk.

Week 6

Satisfaction and Keeping On

Sisters and Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:13-14

We're at the end of our walk to Jerusalem. Are you weary or are you physically more alive and spiritually more attuned? Hopefully this has been a journey of physical and spiritual renewal. Hopefully you've satisfied your soul with spiritual food and living water. Hopefully the increased exercise has renewed and revitalized the body God has given you and you are able to have more energy for God's vital work on earth. Serving God and being good stewards of our physical body requires perseverance and commitment. It helps if we keep our eyes on the prize and run this race to win.

Questions to ponder:

- How much energy and commitment am I putting into the spiritual race that Paul speaks of in Philippians?
- Am I more likely to strive for excellence in my secular life or my spiritual life?
- How can I keep on striving for excellence in my physical & spiritual life?
- Do I need to rearrange priorities?
- Do I need to eliminate some activities?

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Walk to Jerusalem MILES LOG

Name _____ Week of _____

| Day | Physical activity/miles | Spiritual activity / miles | Special or bonus miles | |
|--------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Mon | | | | |
| Tues | | | | |
| Wed | | | | |
| Thurs | | | | |
| Fri | | | | |
| Sat | | | | |
| Sun | | | | |
| TOTALS | | | | |

TOTAL THIS WEEK _____