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PRAY ON LOCATION

Walk and pray through your community

As you'll have read in Diane McBeth's article on [The Prayer Network](#) (page 3), Baptist Women is creating resources that invite you to pray with others for others.

There are many ways to do intercessory prayer. One way is through prayer walking.

We know that some people may never have the privilege of knowing a believer who will pray God's love and peace over their lives, families and neighbourhoods. Prayer 'on location' that brings prayer to people costs us little, except a bit of time and exercise in walking around the places we feel led to bless. We can pray for our neighbourhoods, work districts and more. In fact . . . doing a prayer walk (or drive) on the streets around your church offers you one way to discern what the community needs and where God is already at work.

CONNECT TO MISSION

To help you get started, Baptist Women has produced a guide called *PRAYER WALKING | praying on location*. You'll find it at baptistwomen.com/resources/prayer-network.

In this feature, Cathie Phillips shares about how a prayer walk can help a church both bless its neighbourhood and discern outreach possibilities.

THE COMMUNITY AROUND our church, Heron Park Baptist Church in Scarborough, is a mix of many wealthy families as well as a very large number of families who struggle to survive.

Over the years several of us at Heron Park had wanted to have more of an outreach into the community but had not known exactly how to do it. The church had a multipurpose portable that we thought would be a perfect place to do something. The need that was expressed over and over was a place for people to gather and just "be." We wondered about doing an ESL class for newcomers, something for the youth and seniors as well.

We did a community assessment, visiting several businesses, the community centre, the library and the police station to find out what each group felt was a need in our community. We also asked each group to suggest what our church could do to help the community to come together. Under the direction of our youth pastor, Greg Banik, we conducted over 40 of these visits and interviews.

The prayer walk came out of our Wednesday night Bible study and we did it as the final session of that year's spring Bible studies with our senior pastor, Dan Clark. There were 12 of us and we set off in four directions from the church building, walking for about 30 to 40 minutes. The common theme of our prayers

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was how to be a blessing in our community. We trusted God in His own time to show us the way forward.

During the next school year, Pastor Greg led us on a discernment process that narrowed down about 25 different ministry opportunities to two. The first priority was to help disadvantaged youth through music. This program took place during the summer, involving a number of families from the community. We depended upon prayer to see whether this program should continue all year long and we concluded that it wasn't sustainable.

Meanwhile, the missions committee had been praying about the second priority: a place for people

WHY DO A PRAYER WALK OR DRIVE?

- 1 It makes us more sensitive to what's in God's heart for people as we look at the world around us through His eyes.
- 2 It can shift the spiritual climate in a place, making people's hearts more open to God.
- 3 It prepares/protects a place for open ministry.
- 4 It unites the Christians in a neighbourhood when they come together in the same Spirit.
- 5 Most of all, such prayers please God, because we are praying for "all people," not just ourselves or those we know.

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CONNECT TO MISSION

to meet and just be. We decided to have a trial run of a dream that had been forming. We would open the portable for a drop-in centre one day a week from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. We called it *Gathering Place*. Volunteers had three training sessions and we began in May, 2017.

We distributed flyers around the community and had a sign outside. Volunteers brought food. We served the tea and coffee, used nice china plates and cups and sat around tables that had games, puzzles and colouring pages laid out. We decided to try it for six months and then re-evaluate. Very quickly we saw the need to serve lunch.

Now we are coming up to two years. What has happened has been beyond what we dreamed. Over this time, up to 60 people from the congregation have come in and done set up, food preparation for lunch and clean up. And over 150 people from the community have dropped in. Heron Park people continue to offer listening ears and prayer to those who visit. There is deep sharing of lives and problems, and the opportunity to share Jesus.

Many who have come out have started to come to the church and Bible study and women's fellowship. We all see this as one of the best tools of evangelism and discipleship that we have ever been involved in. ■

3 TIPS WHEN DOING A PRAYER WALK OR DRIVE

- 1 Your group needs a degree of unity in the belief that God can, and will, bless people you've never met . . . through your prayers.
- 2 Be observant to every detail as you walk slowly through the neighbourhood: houses, toys in the yard, the number of cars parked outside, government agencies, community centres. Ask the Lord to give you imagination beyond what is in your immediate visual field.
- 3 At the end of the walk, after you have asked the Lord to bless the community in which you've walked with salvation and for people to become disciples of Jesus, take time to write down all the ideas that come to you.

PRAYER PROMPTS AS YOU WALK

The best base for strategic prayer over your neighbourhood is Scripture. Praying Scripture keeps your prayers positive, focused on God and people and gives you confidence. You are praying God's will for your community, using His Word.

Here are two great Bible passages to get you started.

For the life of the Kingdom to come

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy (Isaiah 35:1-6a, *ESV*).

For those in authority

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4, *ESV*)