

Prayer Walking.....Thank you to Revd Peter Williams

A prayer walk is exactly what it sounds like: a walk filled with prayer. Prayer walking has been woven through the history of the British church for centuries. People would walk from Cathedral city to Cathedral city on pilgrimage, and these pilgrimages were all about prayer. Still today, many Anglican churches mark Rogation Sunday (this year on the 17th May) with a prayer walk around their parish boundaries. This tradition is called 'beating the bounds', and is an act of claiming the ground for God in prayer.

Prayer walking simply involves walking around your community, praying for the places and people you see around you. You may plan to stop at specific locations, or you may just walk and see where the Spirit leads – either way, it's an exciting and engaging way to pray.

As I leave my back door, I pray 'Aaron's Blessing' on all my neighbours:

'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26)

It is a warm spring day and we are all in lock-down; I can hear people busy in gardens and I think of all those trying to get on with their lives in these strange times. I see rainbows and teddy bears in windows, which makes me smile, and I try to picture all the families I know as I pass by their houses; the young families wondering what to do with the children, and the older ones – some poorly, some anxious – and pray that they will all stay safe and well.

I see the sheep and new-born lambs in the field and hear the birds singing in the hedgerows. I give thanks for new birth and remember that Jesus is our shepherd who leads us into green pastures.

I come to the traffic lights on the A39; no problem crossing the road today as there is very little traffic again. I see delivery lorries passing by and remember all those still working hard providing our necessities.

I pass the school, closed now like so many other buildings, and remember the assemblies and stories we have shared with the children over the past years. I pray that all the staff and children are safe and well and that return to school will not be too far away.

I come to the bottom of The Mount and start to climb the path. I turn back and see blossom on the trees in the gardens below me and give thanks for the warmer spring weather. This staying at home has certainly improved the gardens.

Once at the top of The Mount – slightly out of breath – I look around and down on our village. What a lot of houses, and I realise that I probably only know about 90% of the people that live here. I am comforted though by the fact that God knows each and every person, and all that we do on his behalf is for each and every one of them, whether they know him or not. So I pray Aaron's blessing again on all of them. I am saddened by the fact that there is no cross on The Mount this year, such a witness to our community. Is that Glastonbury Tor I can see in the distance, or am I just imagining it?

I take the footpath across the field and notice green shoots – is it some kind of barley – and I think of the farmers, busy with their ploughing and sowing (and spraying that smelly stuff too) and give thanks for the food on our tables.

As I continue along the footpath behind the football pitch and playground (now also closed of course) I see other walkers, usually with dogs, and wonder if they realise what's happening around them. I say a friendly hello – from a distance – and realise that while most people are friendly back, there are some who continue, head down, and I wonder if they are coping alright.

Up through Millennium Wood and a sit down at the picnic table. Surrounded by daffodils that are now passed their best and the first signs of apple blossom. It is very quiet and peaceful here and just the place to give thanks for the beautiful countryside we live in.

Back across the A39 and a circuit around the church and churchyard. It came as quite a shock to be told that all churches must close and that we mustn't meet for worship. And now, after 2 weeks or so, it has become the norm. But it will soon be Easter; surely we can't miss that celebration. Celebrate we will, but not in church; it has been amazing how we have become used to 'virtual' church via our televisions, iPads and phones. So, I give thanks for this building and for all the wonderful ways it has served this community – and will do so again.

Passing the Fire Station, I remember all our emergency services and give thanks for all those still working to keep us safe. As I see people queuing outside the surgery for their prescriptions, I also give thanks for all who work in there, as well as our doctors, nurses and staff in the hospitals around the country.

Going back through the village I think of all those working in our shops and say a prayerful thank you for their service to all of us. As I pass the gaol I notice that it is being used as a 'bring and take' store for those who may need stuff. Aren't people kind? I also see the Parish Council office, now closed, but I am aware of all the work going on behind the scenes with deliveries and information.

And so, back home for a nice cup of tea and a final prayer:

Bless your world Lord, and help us to be blessings to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Thank you, Peter. A wonderful walk with ideas of who to pray for.

I wonder if you could say a prayer during your daily exercise. Who are the people in your life today? People who are helping or supporting us.

Are there any stories in the Bible that come to mind as you go on your walk? Peter mentions Jesus as our shepherd.

If you would like to write a few words (need not be a long as Peter's!) after you have been on your daily walk and send them to Rebecca, Revd Kate or me, I'll bring them together and send them out. No names required!

Happy walking!

Eleanor