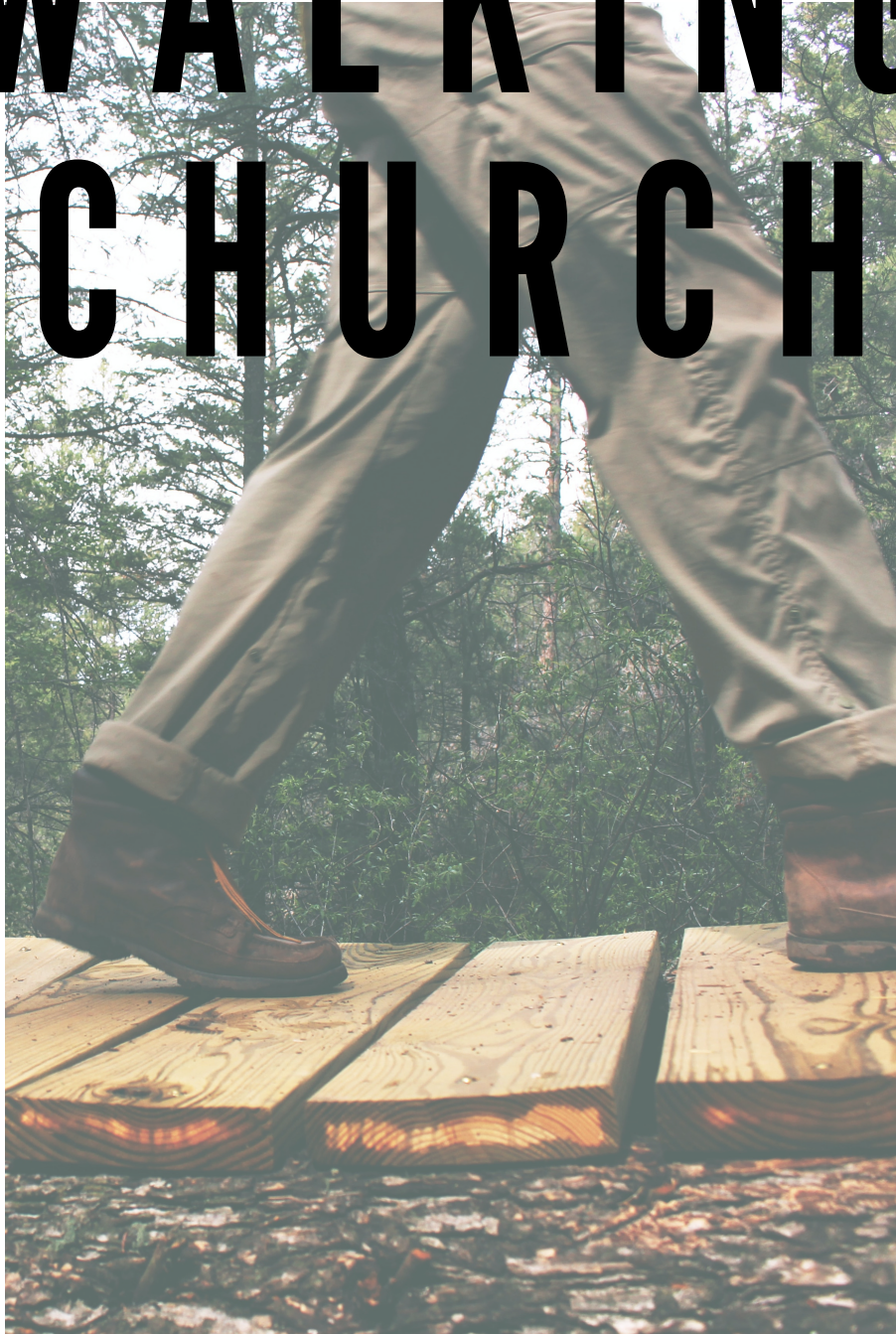


# WALKING CHURCH

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REFLECTIVE WALKING EXPERIENCES  
TO RENEW YOUR SOUL



**TURN OFF THE SCREENS.  
TAKE A BREATH.  
GET YOUR SHOES ON.  
GET OUTSIDE.  
GRAB A FRIEND | OR NOT!**

**START WALKING.**

**GROUND IN GOD.  
WALK WITH LOVE.  
PRAY WITH YOUR FEET.  
LISTEN DEEPLY.  
RENEW YOUR SOUL.**





# INSTRUCTIONS

## GETTING STARTED

### The instructions are simple:

- Get your shoes on.
- Choose one of the five guided meditations.
- Start walking!
- Share your experience.

### Tips for you and your church community...

- Are you walking on your own, or with a family member and friend? Why not invite others from your faith community to “join you”, even at a distance.
- Determine if you want to walk at the same time...on a Sunday morning, a weekday evening, a Saturday afternoon, etc.
- Consider using these meditations like a spiritual retreat experience with your church community and small group.
- Use these creative meditations to support your personal and the group’s spiritual journey.
- You can walk anywhere you feel comfortable. Consider a new trail!
- How long do you have to walk? The longer you have the more you’ll be able to enjoy these guided reflections. Aim for at least thirty minutes... or take the whole day! An hour is ideal!
- If you’re using these with your community of faith, consider walking for the first hour, and then debriefing afterward. Using online meeting platforms like Zoom is a great way to support people.
- Pack accordingly. Don’t forget your water! Plan to pick up garbage as you go...bring a bag.
- Consider which Indigenous land your walk is located on. Begin by honouring and acknowledging with respect. Not sure? Check out: <https://native-land.ca>
- Pick one of the four walking meditations. You can choose and use them in any order, however, they are numbered one through four, and using them consecutively may be helpful.
- If your church community is looking to break up the online service schedule or small group online meeting, these walking experiences offer something creative. Consider alternating weekly between a regular online offering and a creative walking meditation experience outdoors.
- Read the short, simple instructions before you begin walking. Feel free to print them out to carry with you, or have them stored on your smartphone for quick reference.
- Consider turning off your device while you walk, and only turn it on if needed. Creating as much of a tech-free, uninterrupted space is best.



# INSTRUCTIONS

## AFTER YOUR WALK

### Once you have completed your walk, you can do any of the following:

- Jot down your thoughts, and answer some of the “Post-Walking Reflection Questions” to continue processing your experience.
- Draw a picture, or write a poem, prayer, or a song that captures your walk with God.
- Find a song and play it as a way to end your reflection and retreat experience.
- If you walked with someone, take time to share your observations together..
- If you’re using these with your small group or larger faith community, consider how best to share and debrief your experience together.
- Determine when you’ll walk again, using the other reflections.
- Who can you ask to join you, even if from afar, on your next walk?
- You can use these same Guided Reflections over and over again! You might be surprised how different your experience is from one time to the next.
- If you are using one of the walking meditations to replace a typical online gathering, don’t forget to continue supporting your own faith community financially during this time.

**Please consider a “thank you” donation for use of this resource:**

**[www.soulplay.ca/donate](http://www.soulplay.ca/donate)**

*-Christa*







# IN GOD I LIVE AND MOVE

## WALKING EXERCISE 1

To “Saunter” means to wander and walk in a slow and relaxed manner. It comes from the French phrase, “a la Sainte Terre” - “to the holy land” and reminds us that all of our steps are on holy ground. Life at 4km/hour is an opportunity to slow down and really tune in and pay attention to what your physical senses are experiencing – an opportunity to look for the “true, compelling, beautiful things to praise”. Indeed you are standing and walking on holy ground.

### **Instructions:**

Regardless of where or how you walk, take time to focus on just one of your physical senses at a time. Try to give yourself ten minutes for each of these senses: seeing, listening, smelling, and feeling what is around you. If you’d like, you can also use the sense of touch and the “sixth” sense of balance.

Your mind will wander, and as thoughts arise, gently let them go and return your attention to your sensory experience. No judgement for your active mind...just compassion for yourself as you practice paying attention.

Before you switch senses, stop where you are and say to yourself a few times: “I am here.” “In God I live and move and have my whole being.” “I’m walking on Holy Ground.” “It’s all sacred.”

Notice how each sense has gifted you with Reality, and grounds you in the moment. Consider how your senses can be a portal to experiencing the love of God.

“I’d say you’ll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned”

Philippians 4:8



# HOLDING MY WORRY WITH GOD

## WALKING EXERCISE 2

Read the verse to the side slowly three times and notice which word or phrase jumps out at you? As you read it, are there any images emerging? What does this quote have to say to you about your own life situation right now? How do you feel as you read it; what emotions are arising?

What worries, concerns and petitions do you have right now that you don't have the answer too, and aren't sure if, when, or how you will?

### Instructions:

Find a small rock or stick and hold it in your hand as you walk. This rock represents the worry or concern that you're being invited to hold and carry in your life. The invitation is to pay attention to how it feels to carry it and to bring your question forward to God who wants to hold it with you.

Take time throughout your walk (suggested every 10-15 minutes) to ask yourself these questions:

- How does it feel to carry this concern that I don't have an answer too?
- What would it mean to carry this question well in this season in my life?
- How can I walk out my worries with God?
- How might "praying with my feet" be a prayer practice that helps me during this time?
- Is there anything from my experience walking that will remind me and help me carry this question well?
- Who can help me carry this question?

Before you end your walk, take notice of how you may have "settled down" a bit. Do you have a sense of "God's wholeness" as described in the verse? How does it change your thoughts about your worry? How does it change your emotions? How does it feel in your body?

"Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life."

Philippians 4:6,7





# EMBRACE GOD'S PACE

## WALKING EXERCISE 3

As you bring your life to mind, you are well aware that you are a mix: of strength and weakness; of gifts to give, and vulnerabilities to bear; of good decisions and mistakes made; of life-giving experiences and soul-crushing ones. All of these belong because you are exactly who you are because of it all. Sometimes you're "fast" and strong; sometimes you're "slow" and weak. You have a unique and beautiful pace.

### Instructions:

As you walk, notice your pace. Is it quicker or slower than how you normally walk? How does it compare to other people's pace? Feel free to play around with your pace while you walk – speeding up and slowing down. Does your pace change on different terrain (ie. flats vs. hills)?

Consider the following questions. You may want to bring a journal along.

1. Think about your personal "pace in life" – both your strengths and vulnerabilities. What are they, and how do they contribute to your unique "pace" in the world? When have you've been "fast" and "slow"? How did each of them feel to you? Where can you identify God in the midst of both "paces"?
2. How have your strengths helped you and others? How have they acted like gifts to the world? How might your weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and mistakes be an opening for your own growth and a grace gift for others?
3. How do you protect yourself from feeling your vulnerability (in both your weakness and your strength)? How can you embrace your unique pace more fully in this next season of life? How do you see this embrace as a way to embrace the Divine life within you?

"My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness."

2 Corinthians 12:8

"My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that."

Galatians 20:21



# THE ANCIENT WAY HOME

## WALKING EXERCISE 4

When we feel at home to, in, and with ourselves, we are “re-membering” whom and whose we really are. We are created in the image and likeness of God. Our inherent dignity as human beings is not something to earn, but to receive, simply because it has been given to us by God. Consider this: If God is Love and we are being sustained and held by Love, then letting ourselves be held by this Reality is the work (and play!) of our lives.

### Instructions:

Prepare to take a leisurely walk wherever you can get “lost in your thoughts”. Don’t take a new or complicated route. As you walk, take notice of the terrain: if it’s an urban landscape, notice the shape of buildings, curves & grooves in roads and sidewalks, how the skyline changes, etc. If you are in a rural/wooded area, notice the fields, forest, rocks, and sky. Take in the entire landscape and notice.

1. What are the different “landscapes” in your life (your work, your family, your hobbies, your friendships, your volunteering, etc.)? How do they fit together? How have they changed during the different seasons of your life? How has each landscape on your path contributed to who you are today, where you are, and how you are today? Where do you see the thread of God woven into your life?

2. If you can find a “crossroads”, or an intersection, consider standing for a moment and look in all directions. Read the passage from the prophet Jeremiah (above): What word/phrase stands out to you? How does this word/phrase connect with your own life right now? What is the “ancient, good way” that you’re being invited to walk right now? Take four deep breaths and then take it.

3. Finally, as you make your way “home” (or back to your car), take a moment and pause and consider how good “home” feels. It represents a place of rest, of security, of being, and not doing. How can you come home to yourself in this next season of life? How can you awaken to the reality that you are always home in God?

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Jeremiah 6:16





# THE TREES WILL CLAP

## WALKING EXERCISE 5

In effort to be radically present to the season of your soul, take time to be radically present to the season you're in, noticing that God is present in every step.

### Instructions:

Begin by reading the verse from Isaiah provided. As you walk, see if you can be present and really notice the vitality, vibrancy, and fecundity of nature around you. Don't rush through. Really take your time with each element on the list. You can do this with any season, and the following is an example of how to pay attention in the season of spring.

### Spring

- The smell of dirt. What words would you use to describe it?
- The bird's singing. Do you know the difference between a robin and a bluejay? What do you think they are saying?
- The remains of winter. Is there snow and ice? Salt stains on the pavement? Can you say a proper thanks and goodbye to winter?
- The heat of the sun. Even if it's cold out, can you notice the quality of heat and light from the sun at this time of year? Let it sink into your bones.
- Rushing/moving water. Is there a lake or stream or creek that is flowing? What does it sound like? Take some time to really listen. How does it make you feel?
- Colour. Can you notice any burst of colour with flowers or the greening of leaves? Notice the contrast between the last few months of winter, and also imagine what is to come.
- Squirrels and rabbits and other animals. Have you seen any? Are they a bit "friskier" than normal?!
- Flowers. Are there any early-spring flowers popping? If you can find some, get real close...lower yourself to the ground and see them at eye-level. Do they have a smell?
- Buds on bushes & trees. Notice how some trees have buds and some trees don't. How are the buds different from bush to bush and tree to tree. Take time to reflect on what's going on inside those buds.

"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Isaiah 55:12



# THE TREES WILL CLAP

## CONTINUED

In addition to collecting the garbage, make sure you bring back 3 stones/rocks with you. Any size will do.

When you return home, take some time to sit with those 3 stones. If you're walking in winter and can't find a stone, find a few fallen sticks on the ground.

Each stone/stick will represent something you experienced on your hike that brought you the most hope, joy, awe, and delight, particularly how you were inspired to "shout with joy and clap your hands"!

Place them by a candle, or put them in a place where you'll be reminded of the simple gifts and the hope of this season.

Finally, take some time to consider what season your soul is in right now, and what might God want to show you about that from your walk.

**BONUS** | Now, once you've done this in the daylight, take time to do this by the night-light. Notice how sounds change in the evening, how your eyes adjust and see things in a fresh way, how the temperature is different, and how your sense of smell may be heightened. Be aware of any dangerous obstacles/hazards you might run into. Take time to notice the moon, and the "season-cycle it is in"!

Note: If you're walking in the summer, fall, or winter, you may want to compose your own list of things to look for before heading out.

"For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."

Isaiah 55:12





# WALKING CHURCH

## POST WALK REFLECTION

At the end of your walk, grab a drink of something refreshing and find a place to get comfortable to reflect on your experience.

Take a look at the "Quotes" page. Which one is your favorite? Does any particular quote ring true to you from your walking experience?

**Feel free to use these questions and activities as a way to guide you. These questions can also be used to facilitate conversation in a group.**

What was one gift I received on my walk?

What is one thing I learned and/or observed about myself while I walked?

What insight (regardless of how big or small) about my life, did I receive?

What is something I experienced through my senses that struck me with a sense of awe?

Is there anything about God, and the transcendent nature of life, that was brought to my mind and heart on the walk?

What is one thing I am grateful for? How can I express my gratitude in this moment?

What has this walk piqued my curiosity about? What is one thing I want to "look into" when I finish this walking reflection (ie. bird song, watershed, urban parks, etc.)?

Am I being prompted to make a change in my life as a result of what has emerged from this walking experience?

What is one thing I want to pay attention to in my next walk?

As I reflect on all these questions (or the thoughts and feelings I had on my walk), what is the one thing I'm being invited to hold onto?



## QUOTES

### WALKING CHURCH

"God only needs one thing: our willingness to be loved infinitely" ~ Thomas Keating

"God is not remote from us. God is at the tip of my pen, my shovel, my paintbrush, my sewing needle...my heart and thoughts." ~ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

"The path to heaven lies through heaven, and all the way to heaven is heaven."  
~ Catherine of Sienna

"In difficult times, carry something beautiful in your heart." ~ Blaise Pascal

"Against all attempts at programs and methods, the great art of holiness is to let oneself be. To be natural is to be holy. But to be natural is not easy in our technological and distant world. We need to re-discover and re-awaken our sense of instinct in the ancient rhythm that still sleeps in our souls." ~ John O'Donohue

"Attention is the beginning of devotion." ~ Mary Oliver

"God comes to you disguised as your life" ~ Paula D'Arcy

"We have been given such immense possibilities. We desperately need to make clearances in our entangled lives to let our souls breathe." ~ John O'Donohue

"I go to nature to be soothed, healed, and have my senses put in order." ~ John Muir

"Above all, do not lose your desire to walk; every day I walk myself into a state of well being and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts, and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it." ~ Soren Kierkegaard

"We all want quiet. We all want beauty ... We all need space. Unless we have it, we cannot reach that sense of quiet in which whispers of better things come to us gently." ~ Octavia Hill

"We find God in ourselves and we find ourselves in God." ~ Teresa of Avila