

LET'S GO ON A PRAYER WALK!

(A big thank you to the Australia Territory for sharing this lesson with us!)

PURPOSE: For children to explore and identify the needs of their local community. To participate in the experience of interactive prayer for their community. To explore and understand the diversity of prayer.

'First of all, I ask you to pray for everyone. Ask God to help and bless them all, and tell God how thankful you are for each of them.' 1 Timothy 2:1 (CEV)



CONSIDER & PREPARE

Read:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
- Deuteronomy 6:5–9
- Acts 2:42

Prayer walks aren't a common form of prayer in The Salvation Army but they do have a long history within the broader Christian Church. They can be a good way to get children (and adults!) thinking about more creative ways of praying, and also confirming for them that prayer can be active, dynamic and relevant.

Imagine how liberating and encouraging it can be for a child to learn that they don't have to pray just at church or at their bedside or with a parent or kids' church teacher—they can pray while walking to school, while playing at school, while with friends, while at the beach, while out shopping with a parent, etc. Prayer should be a part of everyday living.

This lesson may need a little more time. You could do the 'Connecting In' and planning and preparation the week before and then do the walk and debrief the following time, or perhaps even at another special time.

Safety consideration: bring some Big Buds or family members or people from the congregation who might like to join the prayer walk for the day; this will also help with safety while walking around your community. Be especially diligent with crossing streets, passing road works and nearing big dogs!

What you will need:

For 'Connecting In'

- A copy of *Everyday Zoo: Every Which Way to Pray* by Joyce Meyer ([Amazon.ca](http://www.amazon.ca) kindle version \$3.99)
- A copy of the *I Pray* DVD – download this from <http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/en/Resources/children/Videos/>
- Ability to show above clip on computer or screen
- Local newspapers, maps and relevant community information
- Butchers paper and markers for planning the walk

For 'The Main Thing'

- Depending on what you plan to do on the walk will affect what items you will need to prepare
- Bibles

For 'Tying In'

- Journals
- Markers

For 'Home & Beyond'

- Print off the Home & Beyond cards for each child.

CONNECTING IN

Setting the scene...

Before you go walking it is important to set the scene for children about prayer and especially about prayer for others in their local community. It is good to talk about the variety of ways that we can pray as well as what it will look like to take a 'prayer walk'. Below are a few suggestions of how you can connect your children into this topic.

Depending on when your children meet and how much time you have available, you may like to do 'setting the scene' prior to the day you actually go on the prayer walk. They can do their planning etc. and then be all ready to go when they come together on the day of the walk.

Every which way to pray...

There are so many possibilities when it comes to praying. The book below is a great fun way to help the children to see that there is not just one way to talk to God.

Everyday Zoo: Every Which Way to Pray, by Joyce Meyer (Zondervan, 2012)

This book is filled with a cast of quirky animal characters who interact and explore prayer and what that looks like as they engage with others in their community. Readers will discover that prayer is simply talking to God like a friend wherever and whenever and should be the easiest thing we do each day.

Link: Well, we have just read about prayer and how we can pray anywhere and whenever we want; there are no strict guidelines to what prayer looks like. Some of you may have heard of a 'prayer walk', that is what we are going to do today. Basically we are going to walk through our community and find creative ways to pray for the people who live, work and play here as well as for important services that are provided in the community.

I Pray...

Show the group the 'I Pray' clip.

Link: The children in this clip are talking about prayer, about the things in everyday life that they pray about.

→ I wonder what you pray for.

→ I wonder when you pray (give the children some time to respond to this).

Planning and Preparation...

You will need to take some time with your group to plan your walk. For this planning and preparation time it would be good to have some local newspapers, maps and any other information that you think might be helpful in mapping out and planning the content of the walk.

Some things to consider in your planning:

- If you have a large group you might like to divide into smaller groups and go to different areas.
- What are the key locations in your community e.g. school, hospital, police station, park etc.?
- Identify some of the needs of your community
- What are you going to do if it is raining or the weather is not suitable e.g. relocate or set up some stations inside that represent key areas in the community?
- At what places or times are you going to pause?
- What will the prayer look like on the walk? How will you make it prayer and not just a walk, e.g. silent times, times of sharing, pausing and focusing on prayer?

- How can we pray when we are out walking?
- What makes prayer? What should be included?
- What should we do when we walk?
- Should we acknowledge God at the start? Where else?

Link: There is so much variety in prayer and communicating to God. This is your prayer walk, I wonder what it is going to look like and what you will do and how you will pray. Thanks, God, for the opportunity to pray for our community.

THE MAIN THING

Interactive prayer options...

In preparation for choosing your options read together 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 and ask the children to share with you what it says about praying. What do you think it would look like in our everyday lives?

Below are some suggestions of interactive prayer options to do on your prayer walk. It would be good, as a group, to look at these and think of some other things to do as well.

- Write names in chalk hand prints outside the school gate or fence.
- Provide each person with a list of things to look for while on the walk, e.g. Litter: pray for the environment and our responsibility. A 'For sale' sign: pray for families facing change. A donation bin: pray for those in need. Emergency vehicles: pray for those who are sick or injured etc.
- Twigs/leaves/rocks—pray for protection of the environment.
- If there is a pond or lake in your area you might like to use some rocks to make ripples in the water, pray for those in our church to be a good influence as they impact others in the community. (Guidelines and supervision will need to be good if you are going to do this option.)
- Pray for people in your community that you meet or pass on your walk. You might like to (with leaders) ask to pray with someone, or you might like to pray as a group for someone without engaging them.

Prayer Walk...

Now that you have done the preparation... let's do it! Enjoy...be safe...and praise God.

TYING IN

Small group debrief...

It is really important to help the children debrief about this experience and to help them to take some of the principles and make them a normal part of their everyday rhythm.

- What did you like about the prayer walk?
- What was challenging about the prayer walk?
- I wonder if you had a favourite way of praying today. Share.
- How could you make this a normal part of your everyday life?
- What might you need to do differently if you were praying like this on your own? (e.g. safety)
- Brainstorm together some other ideas that you could do at home or in the car or at school etc.

Variations include:

Traffic light prayer: when you stop at the traffic lights pray for a person/group of people or service in the community, when you pass a green light pray for someone that you know and when you go through or stop at an yellow light pray for your family.

Newspapers: read the local newspaper and highlight some things that you would like to pray for. Walk to school: when you are walking to school either pray for those in the houses you pass or pray for as many students and teachers that you know at school.

Emergency vehicles: when an emergency vehicle passes you or you hear their siren, pray for those that are sick or injured.

Roll call: when the teacher is calling the roll at school, pray for all those called out.

Journal...

You might like to give your children some time to write or draw in a journal about their experience on their prayer walk. They might like to draw a map of where they went and write some of the prayers that they prayed or to highlight some of the things that they can pray for this week as they move about the community with their families.

Finish this time together with some corporate prayer, giving opportunity for the children to pray and then a leader to finish the day.

HOME & BEYOND

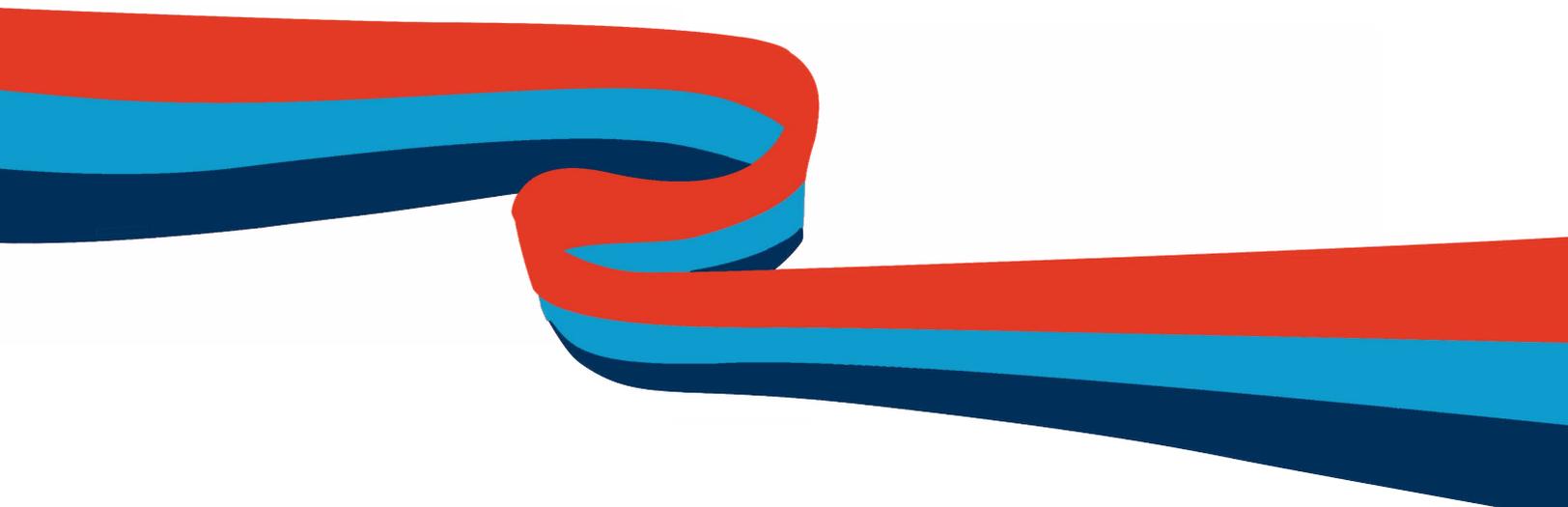
Print off the 'Home & Beyond' cards included. The children might like to keep these in a journals or notebook where they could write or stick the challenges, reflect, answer questions or complete activities each week.

Family Prayer Walk...

Take your family on a prayer walk around your area praying for people and services in your local neighborhood.

Local Paper Search...

Search through the local newspaper for stories that stand out, circle them with a marker. Pray about the people, places or activities that are happening in these stories.



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