

Talk, Walk and Pray with the Moderator

Hello Presbyterian Church in Canada. Today I am inviting you to Talk, Walk and Pray with the Moderator this summer.

As you likely know, the 2020 General Assembly is cancelled, so I'm continuing on as Moderator for an additional year. But with the COVID-19 pandemic, all my Moderator travels are cancelled too. I'm grounded in Regina (which is a lovely place to be stuck for the summer), but I'm longing to visit and connect with Presbyterians across the country, and to offer you support and encouragement during these difficult days.

So, I'm going to be inviting some Presbyterians in different places and circumstances in the coming months to "Talk with the Moderator" by video conference. We'll record those interviews and share them across the church. It's just one small way to connect our Presbyterian community – by hearing each other's stories and experiences, and lifting one another up in prayer. Watch for the first "Talk with the Moderator" segment next week.

I can hardly believe that it's already been two months since the Coronavirus outbreak was named a "pandemic." I've been leading livestreamed worship services for my congregation for the last 8 weeks, working mostly from home, and spending way too much time on the phone or sitting in front of a computer screen.

I have appreciated the fact that worship, fellowship, outreach, Christian education, pastoral care, and governance have all been able to continue in different ways during this crisis. But I've also struggled to maintain balance in my life between work and rest, between meetings and time for personal reflection and prayer. And it has taken great determination to find opportunities to keep moving my body, rather than just sitting and meeting and eating all day.

Almost four years ago, I made an intentional decision to walk every day. I did it to improve my health and increase my energy level, beginning with just a kilometre or two each day, and slowly increasing my pace and distance.

The difference it made in my health was remarkable, and it led me to make changes in my food choices as well. But the extra blessing that came with the addition of walking in my life was that it opened up space in my days for thinking, pondering, and prayer. I never started doing things like listening to podcasts or music while I walked because I really appreciated the quiet.

Walking every day, even on the coldest January days in Saskatchewan, has encouraged my spirit, helped me to pray, reduced my stress level, made me a better preacher and a more confident leader, and given me a fresh appreciation for God's Creation.

So, this summer I would like to put my daily practice of walking at the service of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. I'm going on a pilgrimage of prayer for the PCC. It won't be a pilgrimage to a certain destination. I'll walk around my own quiet neighbourhood, and maybe

go out to some other beautiful, wide-open spaces on the Prairie. It will be less about a destination, and more about the journey.

I'll pray as I walk, and I plan to walk 1 km for each ministry of our denomination, plus 1 km for our ecumenical partners in the Canadian Council of Churches. That's about 10-11 km per day, just a little more than my usual daily average.

We've created a list of ministries, starting at the West Coast and going towards the East, with National ministries and ecumenical partners added throughout. There is a jot form on the website so you can submit a specific prayer request for your congregation or ministry if you wish.

And you're invited to walk and pray with me this summer too, starting on June 1st and going through until August 31st. Choose whatever distance is appropriate for you. Give thanks for the body God gave you and the fact that it can move. Get out of your home to somewhere you can safely walk and keep physical distance from others. Enjoy the air and the sun and whatever beauty you may see along the way. And pray with me for our wonderful, creative, faithful, and diverse Presbyterian Church in Canada and our ecumenical siblings in the One Body of Christ.

Join me for a webinar on June 1st at 3 pm Eastern to pray and begin this pilgrimage together. We'll check in online again every month or so until the end of August.

May God the Father who created you, guide your footsteps.

May God the Son who redeemed you, share your journey.

May God the Holy Spirit who sanctifies you, lead you on life's pilgrimage.

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you wherever you may go. Amen.

(A pilgrimage prayer from www.pilgrimswaycanterbury.org)