



Assessing the Strengths and Character of the Neighborhood Community Walk - Walking Humbly

A walking pilgrimage or community walk is a no economic cost way to listen for the voice of the community. Walking pilgrimages through the neighborhood and community surrounding the church offers the opportunity to simply be in and breathe in the realities of daily life.

How to:

1. Plan your route. Block off a manageable area around the church.
2. Set aside a block of time (hour at least). Try to walk on a variety of days and times, not just Sunday morning. What's happening on a Tuesday at 5:00 p.m.?
3. Should be done with a SMALL group (2-6) (or pairs of people) and preferably with people of the neighborhood.
4. BE SENSITIVE - (especially if this is NOT the neighborhood in which you live). Don't call attention to yourselves. Respect the dignity of community members. Be present as servants, not tourists. As veteran prayer walkers say, "You can be on the scene without making one."
5. Pray that God will be your guide to open your eyes, hearts and minds.
6. Note the details.

Pay Attention (Listen and Learn): Walking through the community should engage the following critical reflection questions.

- What do you see (with your collective physical eyes)?
- What do you hear (with our physical ears)?
- What do you sense, feel, and perceive (in the Spirit) to be true about the community?
- What do we need to lament and hope for about our neighbors and our neighborhood?
- What is Christ telling/showing you in this place?

On your walk look for evidence of the following: Treat it like a scavenger hunt!

Structures - (homes, buildings, styles, condition, who owns them, what are they used for)

Where do people gather? Are their churches near each other? What organizations?

Scraps of Life - (art, artifacts, activities, relational dynamics, values) What are in yards, what is sold in businesses? How do people engage with each other, enjoy life? What gives identity?

Signage - (advertising, target audience, language, bumper stickers) What is being marketed, what are cultural events, community events?

Space - (land, features, boundaries, fences, parking, yards, private/public, streets and walkways, gathering spaces) How do people define areas versus how streets/official areas are defined?

Services - Where do people go to shop, eat, study, worship, and receive assistance? What appears to be the quantity and quality of available services? Who provides services, and who is receiving? What is the transportation?

Sound and Smells - (food, music, language, noise level, nature, vehicles) What do these things tell you who lives there, how are they similar or different from one another, and what is valued?

Signs of Hope - (evidence of life/energy/passion, resource people, future partners, presence of other community organizations) What is God already doing, transformation? Where is life? What brings joy?

7. Return to starting location and gather and share information. • What did you learn about the neighborhood? • Where was God's presence especially apparent? • What surprised you? • What was hard? What was engaging?
8. Map the assets and information you discovered.

GOAL: The goal is to stir and stimulate one's biblical imagination for the possibilities not to be overcome by the real problems that must be named also. Think of it as a pilgrimage more than a prayer walk. "Although prayer walks offer powerful experiences of community witness, prayer walks are one-way talking to God about the community without listening to how the community talks about God working in the acedia of daily neighborhood life." (Let the Community Say Amen, Madison Keith Daniel) Be on the lookout for opportunities to listen and learn from the people in the neighborhood.

What will the information do:

1. Helps to Assess, Develop and Change church plans
2. Helps the community develop a vision for themselves
3. See strengths of a neighborhood and Organize positive change built on strengths
4. Ties a church's worship to its neighborhood
5. See injustice and Determine how to address injustice (policies, laws, systems that work for everyone)