

Creation Walks - Saturday 2nd March

BUV Creation Walk Guide

Adapted from <https://christian-pilgrimage.org.uk/>

A creation walk is a walk specifically designed to help you to notice God's creation surrounding you. Set aside a focussed time to get out into nature (local park, national park, river or even your backyard) and consider what Jesus might be revealing to you today in what you hear, see, smell, or touch.

BEFORE YOU GO

Consider who you will ask to walk with you

- If you can, this is a nice activity to do as a group activity from your church / community of faith
- It is safest to walk in a group or with at least one other person
- If you are walking alone, you may wish to let someone know where you are going and share your walking plan on your phone or app

Choose a route

- Decide the length of your journey, and the sort of landscape you wish to explore.
- Make sure you can return from your destination, or pick a circular route.
- Pick 5 points to stop along the route for each of the 5 senses
- The journey can take place over consecutive days or separately if you have time constraints.
- Walking wisely and safely - Do not choose a route which is too far for your level of fitness.
- Don't forget to include rest and food stops.

Things to take with you:

- Phone or GPS
- A map (not everywhere has a phone signal),
- Food and water including some spare in case of emergencies. Consider taking some small snacks for sensor taste exercises along the walk
- Protective clothing – hat, waterproof jacket /pants, gators (if required)
- A bag or box to collect things along the way (part 1 – Look and see)
- This booklet, a pen and paper, journal or phone to record notes
- A first aid kit,
- Above all, bring an open mind and a heart ready to receive the gifts of the journey.

Respect, Protect, Enjoy!

- Respect other people - Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.
- Walk only on the designated paths
- Protect the natural environment – leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under effective control.
- Follow advice and local signs
- Enjoy the outdoors – plan ahead and be prepared.

5 SENSES

LOOK AND SEE

As you walk:

- Find a clear place to stand or a comfortable place to sit and look around you.
- Try and imagine that you have not been exposed to the things you are looking at for the first time, without knowing what they are. What patterns can you spot in your surroundings?
- You might want to look upwards at a tree, and notice the patterns that the branches make against the sky. The sky itself may be patterned with clouds, or spotted with birds or aeroplanes. Look at the skyline of the buildings and telegraph poles. Watch how the sunlight makes shapes on the ground as shadows change and grow.
- Look down at the ground – perhaps last year’s dead leaves have been swept into a circle by the wind, or twigs have fallen to the ground in a particular way. Does the grass have a pattern in the way it grows?
- Find one object, a stone or a plant, and examine it very closely. Look at the patterns made on its surface, the shadows and shapes. Are any the same, can you spot any similarities between objects?
- Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem celebrates all the strange and unusual things that we find in creation – it is not just the traditionally beautiful objects that show God’s love, but everything created.

*Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled
cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout
that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’
wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold,
fallow, and plough;*

*And all trades, their gear and tackle and
trim.
All things counter, original, spare,
strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows
how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle,
dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past
change:
Praise him.*

Reflect: There is a children’s game that involves finding as many different things as possible to fit in a matchbox – it is one worth playing as an adult! Use the box or bag you brought with you to collect small things as you walk. Once you have collected a few items, take time to examine each object carefully. See how perfectly it has been made, think how much care God has lavished on its creation, and how much he loves us, His own children, perfect in His sight.

Pray: *God of creation and re-creation, help me to be mindful of the wonders that surround me. Help me to journey reflectively, taking time to consider my spiritual landscape. As well as the countryside that surrounds me, And help me to rejoice in both. ‘This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.’ (Psalm 118:24) Amen*

Record: Take notes of what God may be saying to you

TOUCH & SEE

As you walk: Take note of the different textures that surround you - try to touch and feel as many as you can. Notice the wind on your face – is there moisture in air, is it blowing cold or warm? How does the air make you feel – energised and brisk or relaxed and comforted? If you wish, and if it is safe to do so, take your shoes off and walk barefoot for a while. Choose different surfaces to explore with your

feet – a path or some grass, a flowerbed or a road. How tender are your feet! What feelings are triggered in your mind by these unaccustomed sensations? Take some pieces of grass or vegetation between your fingers – you don't have to pick them to explore their shape and texture. Close your eyes and concentrate just on what you can feel.

Reflect: Find some soil and hold it in your hand. Examine it closely – see how it is made up of many different things; tiny stones, mud, plant-based material. Wonder at the potential for growth and nurture contained within this small handful of earth and then look around you to see this potential multiplied again and again. Remember that we have been created stewards of this earth, to care for it and to share its resources with others, and pray for the grace to play our proper part within God's creation.

Pray: *Lord God who has taught us only to ask and it will be given to us, we give you thanks for the beauties of your creation, and the love from which it sprang. We pray for nations and countries, that seedtime and harvest may endure until the coming of your kingdom on earth and the revelation of your true glory. Amen*

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LISTEN AND HEAR

As you walk: Walking as quietly as you can, listen carefully for the different sounds that are all around you. Don't be afraid to crouch down by a large patch of undergrowth or near some long grass – if you are very quiet you may even hear the rustling and clicking of beetles and other large insects. Allow all the sounds to merge and blend into a wonderful symphony of creation, a natural orchestra whose playing is so often ignored but which provides the rhythm and music of our lives.

Reflect: Prayer is conversation with God, which involves listening as well as speaking.

Answered prayers are wonderful things in which all can rejoice; they affirm our faith and deepen our trust. However, not all prayers are answered in a way that we like, or even recognise – these occasions offer a challenge to us which should be met head on and brought back to God. Sometimes we have to be quiet and still to hear God's voice; sometimes it seems as if we do not hear it at all, so great is the sound of our busyness, or our pain or our anger.

Pray: *Drop Thy still dews of quietness, till all our strivings cease; Take from our souls the strain and stress, And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of Thy peace. Breathe through the heats of our desire thy coolness and Thy balm; Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire; Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire, O still, small voice of calm. (Garrett Horder 1884) 'I am a feather on the breath of God'*

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SMELL

As you walk: Our sense of smell is located in an area of the brain that deals with our emotions and is strongly linked to our memories. The delight of our sense of smell is that it can call up memories and powerful associations. As you walk, take special notice of the different scents which you can detect. What is the atmosphere like? Is it dry and hot – can you sense the temperature of the air you breathe in? Is it damp or rainy – are you aware of humidity in the atmosphere? Notice the smells of different landscapes – not just the obvious ones such as the scent of the gum trees, but the occasional drifts of scent which are carried on the wind – the heavy scent of mushrooms and fungus or the smell of small animals.

Reflect: Find five different objects from the natural world. They do not need to be ones with a traditionally strong scent such as flowers or grass. Find a stick or a handful of soil, dead leaves as well as green ones. Hold each object to your nose and breathe in the

scent of it, focussing all your concentration upon it. Does the smell remind you of anything? Are these memories good or painful? Rejoice in the good ones and ask God for his healing love for those which bring back less joyful occasions.

Pray: *'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these....Strive first for the kingdom of God[l] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'* (Matthew 6:28,29,33)

Record: Take notes of what God may be saying to you

TASTE

As you walk: It may not be easy to find things to taste during your journey – and it would be very unwise to experiment with eating anything which you are not absolutely certain about! If you are unable to find anything safe to eat yourself, try looking for food which might be suitable for animals or birds – clusters of bright berries hanging from trees and bushes; stalks of wheat, oats and rye ripening in fields; insects scuttling rapidly across the path in front of you.

Reflect: Settle yourself so that you can be comfortable and still for several minutes, relaxed but alert, ready to focus. *Optional – take part in sensory activity below.*

Sensory activity - Take a snack from your bag – eg, dried fruit, nuts, dark chocolate, etc. Hold it close to your nose, taking in some slow, deep breaths, allowing its fragrance to reach to the back of your throat. Notice the reaction of your mouth and the rest of your body to the smell of food. Carefully and thoughtfully place the snack on your tongue, holding it in your mouth for a few moments, feeling the difference in your mouth as opposed to what you felt previously with your fingers. Bite into it, sensing it against your teeth, noticing its taste in various parts of your mouth. When you have finished chewing, swallow carefully, being aware of the many different muscles in your mouth and throat that make up the swallowing action. When you have swallowed, notice

how the after taste lingers on your tongue and in your mouth.

Pray: *Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him. (Psalm 34:8) Take time to reflect on your journey.*

Record: Take notes of what God may be saying to you

AFTER YOUR WALK

- Thank God for all you have experienced of his creation today – all you have heard, seen, tasted, smelt and felt.
- Thank God for his sovereignty, creativity, power and reign over creation.
- Reflect on what you heard God say to you today and the notes you wrote as you walked
- Commit these things to God
- Make a plan for anything you want to do as a result of your walk today