

# WALKING MEDIATION FOR OLDER ADULTS

By Rev. June Begany

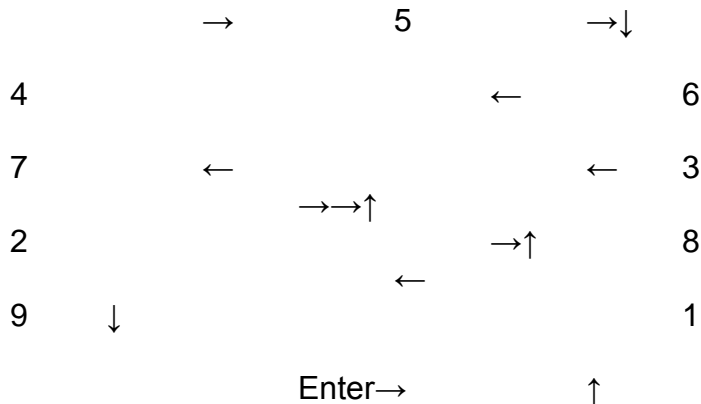
Walking the labyrinth or walking prayer or meditation has become one of the means of prayer people have been using more frequently in recent years. However, for many this becomes a challenge. Not only may there not be a labyrinth nearby they can walk but the walking itself may be a problem. One way to give people a feel for this type of meditation is to use your church sanctuary for the walk. You could also set up rows of chairs in a fellowship hall or dining room. Using the pews or chairs provides a way for people to sit, or stop their wheelchair at each prayer station.

What is important is that like a labyrinth, the path should lead to a center, such as a communion table or table set up with cross, candles or other pointers to God. A person walking or using their wheelchairs should be able to start at station 1 and move back and forth along the rows going from station to station until they reach they center. The center is a place of rest, of listening to, waiting for God. The person only rests a while. Then they move back out into the world.

To set up the stations you need an odd number, somewhere between 5 and 15 stations. Each station should have a focus verse, 2 or 3 prayer suggestions and possibly a question for further reflection. It is helpful to create a packet with all the stations listed so people can take that with them for further prayer and reflection. When you place the reflections at the particular stations (a pew or a chair) be sure that the type is large enough for those with sight issues to read.

It is helpful to start at the back of the sanctuary or row of chairs and weave back and forth, a bit like stringing lights or garlands on a Christmas tree. The middle number should be at your center – your communion table or cross on a table. As you guide people back out from the center have your stations (numbers) at the opposite ends of the pew or row from the numbers that lead in to the center.

## Example



There are any number of subjects or passages one might choose for your meditation: the 7 days of creation; verses from a psalm text; a number of proverbs on a subject; the beatitudes; verses from the Presbyterian Bible study of the year; verses from texts on various subjects of a sermon series. Included here is one meditation series, created as a Lenten experience of looking at how the Bible encourages to treat “the other.”

### **Station 1**

Ruth and Naomi     *Book of Ruth*

When Naomi and family traveled to Moab Naomi was a stranger. She and Ruth, her daughter-in-law became friends. When they traveled back to Israel, Ruth was a stranger in a new culture.

When have you been helped by someone from another culture or ethnic group? What is your experience of becoming friends with someone from another culture?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Give thanks for people you know who come from a different background than yours. Celebrate the specific gifts they bring to your life.
- 2) Think of a specific area where friendships across cultural or ethnic lines would increase peace in our world: Israel/ Palestine; Mexicans and US citizens on our southern border.

### **Station 2**

Abraham (Abram) and Sara (Sarai)     *Genesis 12:1-4*

Abraham and Sara left their home in Haran and journeyed to a new place, unfamiliar to them. When have you moved, or even traveled to someplace that was unfamiliar? What was hardest to get used to in the new place? What did you miss?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for yourself to stay open to the new opportunities in new places.
- 2) Pray for all people who are moving and facing new challenges.
- 3) Pray for all refugees who have to start over.

### **Station 3**

God's instruction to the Israelites after the Exodus and years in the desert.

*Deuteronomy chapter 6 and 10:19*

God commands the Israelites to love the stranger for they were once strangers. Who is a stranger in your neighborhood? Your church? Your place of work? What would you need to do to get to know them? To welcome them? What gets in your way of extending welcome? What is the difference about this stranger that challenges you?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for particular strangers – for their needs and for your situation.
- 2) Pray for all strangers who might come to your church in the next week or month – that they may encounter God there and may find a welcome.

#### **Station 4**

Elisha and Naaman *II Kings 5:1-15*

Naaman of Syria needs to seek help and healing from Elisha of Israel. Asking help from someone of another race or cultural background is often a challenge for us. When have you had to seek such help? What was the outcome? What did you learn about yourself and the other person? Why are we reluctant to seek help from someone who is “different” from ourselves?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray that the gifts and talents of people from all cultures and groups may be recognized and any prejudice there might be removed so healing (whatever that might mean) can happen.
- 2) Pray for a specific situation in your own experience.
- 3) Pray for someone who needs to seek healing and is afraid or unwilling to do that.

#### **Station 5**

Jesus and the children *Luke 18:15-17*

Often people dismiss others who are younger or older. Age divisions create barriers for learning, for hospitality, for friendship. Jesus welcomed those excluded by his society.

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for one or two people who are either much older or younger than yourself. What might God be wanting you to learn from these relationships?
- 2) Pray for groups excluded in our society by age.

#### **Station 6**

Jesus and the Syro-Phoenician woman *Mark 7:25-30*

Jesus tells the woman that she is not worthy to receive help and appears to call her a dog. We know that words and names matter. Such words can hurt. When have you been called a name that really hurt you? How does name calling lead to bullying?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for specific people who have been hurt by name calling or bullying.
- 2) Pray for people tempted to use violence to strike back at people who have hurt them through their words.

#### **Station 7**

The loving Father and 2 sons *Luke 15:11-16*

Sometimes our divisions come from within our own households. We disagree with siblings or parents. We want things to be different. What is the most difficult thing you have to deal with in your family? Is there one member in particular with whom you have disagreements? What are the possibilities in this situation?

#### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for that member(s) with whom you disagree. Ask God to show you a new path.
- 2) Pray for all families, especially those where disagreements have led to violence or estrangement.
- 3) Pray for groups or individuals who try to bring reconciliation.

## **Station 8**

The Good Samaritan

*Luke 10:29-37*

Often there are situations which need attention but from a stranger – a stranger who is different. When have you been helped by a stranger? How were they different from yourself? What did they do? Why do you think they acted as they did? What would have happened to you if the stranger had not stepped in to help?

### Prayer Opportunity:

- 1) Give thanks for specific strangers who have helped you.
- 2) Pray for those waiting for help when no one comes.
- 3) Pray for those hesitating to give help when they could.

## **Station 9**

The woman at the well *John 4*

Jesus often encountered people who came from a different religious tradition as well as a different cultural tradition. What religious differences have you encountered in your life? Were there any similarities you saw? Why did these religious differences matter?

### Prayer opportunity:

- 1) Pray for someone you know who is of a different religion.
- 2) Pray for God's spirit to come into the world to heal these differences.
- 3) Celebrate that so many people of faith are praying for peace.

**Rev. June Begany** served as an Associate Pastor for 24 years at a downtown Cleveland church, as an interim pastor for 2 years and is now retired. She is also a licensed social worker, has taught history in the Cleveland school district, and is certified to administer the Myers Briggs Type Indicator. She completed her capstone project for certification in the Older Adult Ministry program in 2014. She has recently served as secretary to the POAMN Executive Committee.