Prayer Walking in Colchester -

Over the years we’ve prayed for, and encouraged prayer for, schools and colleges around Colchester. We’ve done this in many ways including termly prayer gatherings, a week of online resources to get people praying for schools and, this year, prayer meetings via Zoom. From time to time we have also prayer walked. I’m not sure that God necessarily hears our prayers more clearly when we prayer walk, but I do believe that we hear God’s heart more clearly and there’s something powerful about recognising that God is already at work in the place where we’re praying and is inviting us to join him in His mission among those people.

On one occasion we had approached a school about starting chaplaincy. We had worked with them for many years, and we had the right person lined up for the role. But to move from being visitors to having someone who was clearly identified as chaplain working in the school each week was a big step up and would need to be approved by the governors. We asked a few people to pray and for a few weeks prior to the decision I decided to go and prayer walk around the school, asking God to open the door wider. I was delighted when the Governors approved the idea and after a year one of the deputy heads declared himself to have moved from being a sceptic to being a convert about having a chaplain in the school.

Several years ago CYO undertook a sponsored walk around all ten of the secondary schools and the two FE colleges of our town. We invited people from local churches to join us at each school to pray with us for that school. There was patchy take up but where people turned out to pray or walk with us it was fun, affirming and inspiring.

We had hoped to repeat the idea as a prayer walk last year but in the planning realised that not many people feel able to walk 19 miles in a day, no matter how prayerful they are. It also felt as though the scale of the activity, all the secondary schools and colleges in a day, seriously overwhelmed the purpose - to encourage people to pray for their local schools. So the idea was re-invented as a series of shorter, slower walks in different parts of the town that could take in more schools including local primaries. This would make it more achievable for more people, and the smaller area covered each time has the potential to engage local Christians more meaningfully.

We’ll be doing this over the week 16th to 23rd May, joining with thousands of people around the country who will be praying for schools at about the same time. I’m excited about getting out to walk with others and to pray for our schools. And I’m excited to hear and see what God might do in revealing his blessing, grace and peace among these communities, their staff and children.

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