

In Aftermath of School Shootings, Church Now Prayer Walking Local Schools

National Day of Prayer President Ronnie Floyd has started prayer walking around his local schools. In this Q&A, Floyd shares his heart behind this spiritual warfare initiative.

What made you start prayer walking at local schools?

One of our callings as a church is to pray for our local community. We've been doing this for years. We want broken families to be restored, relationships to be healed and walls of hostility and division to be torn down. More than anything, we want our community to know Jesus. The start of a new school year is another opportunity for us to engage our community in prayer. We all remember vividly the recent tragic school shootings our nation has been through. Many students—and their parents—are heading to school wondering if they'll be safe in their classrooms. As a church, we want to cover our local schools from the very beginning of the year with prayers of protection for our students, our teachers and our emergency responders.

Why prayer?

I've said this before: prayer is not inaction; it is our greatest action. As Christians, we must recognize prayer as an integral part of our faith. We cannot wait until tragedy to strike for us to then decide to pray. We are living in a time when our schools, churches and public places of gathering are increasingly becoming the targets of people who wish to do us evil. This is not the time for passivity! Moreover, Scripture tells us that our struggle is not against physical enemies but against spiritual forces of evil (Eph. 6:12). This is key. When we pray, we are not simply asking God to protect us from

violent attacks—we are actually battling the evil forces behind these attacks. Prayer is our greatest weapon against evil.

What are you praying for?

First and foremost, we are praying for the security of our students. We are asking God to protect them from harm and evil. We also pray for the teachers, principals and school administrators that they may have wisdom and be able to set the right security protocols to prevent as much as possible tragedy from occurring. And we pray for our local law enforcement and first responders, that they may be alert against potential threats and that God may place them at the right place and time to stop them.

Who is praying?

This is a church-led initiative, with parents and students leading charge, but other church members are also involved. Everyone is praying for his or her specific school. So, we are covering the school district in prayer.

What differences are you seeing in the schools as a result of prayer? How are prayers affecting students? What about teachers?

Though the school year has barely started, we have noticed that prayer is already having an impact on schools—though not in ways some people might have expected. The differences we are seeing are spiritual. Some of our students are walking into their schools already with a mission and purpose to be light and salt among their classmates. In an environment filled with fear of the uncertain, their faith and trust in God sets them apart. They have eternal hope in Jesus. Teachers notice how these students change the environment in their classrooms through their faith and service. And even parents who might not be believers are grateful that someone has been and is praying for the safety of their children. Sometimes we

don't see immediate, dramatic changes because of our prayers, but God is listening to us and at work in our hearts and in the hearts of those around us.

How long have you been doing this? How long will it continue?

The school prayer walking initiative began in the summer and continued up to the start of the school year. Each week, we prayed for a different school in our district.

How can someone start this at their local school?

Anyone can start a school prayer walking initiative. We found that parents, as well as students, are very passionate about this. A great place to start is with the church's youth ministry and let students lead the prayer initiative. It's also really important to work with school administrations to explain the goal of the initiative and get proper permissions. One of the wonderful side products of doing prayer walking at schools is stronger relationships with the schools in our community.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Today, more than ever, we need to intercede in prayer for our schools, churches, communities and nation. This is why in a few weeks on the 17th anniversary of 9/11 we are having a nationwide prayer initiative for the security and protection of the United States of America. We all need God to be, as King David said, "a shield around" us (Ps. 3:3). I hope you will join us on Tuesday, Sept. 11, and pray personally or participate in a planned prayer gathering. Whether you spend 3 minutes or 30 minutes, please join us in spending a focused time of prayer on Sept. 11 for the security and protection of our nation.