

IGNITE PRAYER WALK

LEG 5 ~ North Dakota and Montana

Sept. 8-22, 2021

September 8-

We began our journey at Harrisburg Int'l Airport. Our plane had some mechanical problems and so we took off an hour behind schedule. We were due to arrive in Charlotte, NC at 1:15 PM and our connecting flight was scheduled to leave at 1:15. The pilot said he would make up time in the air and he sure did! We landed in Charlotte at 12:30 at the terminal on the other side of the airport. 15 minutes of jogging across the airport found us at our departure gate as the passengers were boarding. Ten minutes later we were seated on the 737 bound for Minneapolis and trying to catch our breath!

Some new friends, George and Cheryl, 40-year missionaries to Alaska, met us at the busy airport and took us back to where they had parked Calvin's car in an underground garage, protected from the elements over the past 2 ½ weeks. What a precious couple who served us in such a tangible way.

After a quick stop for a few groceries, we made our way to our first hotel in Maple Grove, MN. We found a Chick-fil-a and enjoyed a late supper and then an early lights out after a 16-hour travel day and a quick adjustment to Central Time.

September 9-

Calvin wanted to reconnect with Paul who runs a ministry outreach to a large Somalian population in Minneapolis. He and a group of 35 others spend significant time in prayer and outreach as these Muslims have no Christian Church presence within their population. He passionately shared his heart for this people group and explained the Disciple Making Movement, an evangelistic model that has seen miraculous results around the world. He and his wife have adopted 3 Somalian children and are fostering 2 others. He prayed a blessing over us before we left Minneapolis and drive onto our first destination, Fargo, North Dakota.

We arrived in Fargo late afternoon and quickly settled into our hotel room. Calvin walked for about an hour getting a quick feel for this up-and-coming area. After dinner, we spent some time pouring over the downtown Fargo map and plotting where he would spend his first full day of prayer walking in the city.

September 10-

Calvin walked about 15 miles in the downtown area today – winding through the many dead-end streets of the city. He saw very few churches in Fargo and those he did see were traditional denominational churches. Four college campuses call Fargo their home: North Dakota State, Concordia, a satellite of Minnesota State and NW Technical College. Numerous

breweries and coffee shops pepper the city streets and there are lots of young people wherever you go.

September 11-

This year was the 20th anniversary of 9/11 and every year we take some time to remember that infamous day by recalling our reactions to the fateful event as well as watching a documentary on TV. Calvin spent the morning prayer walking in Fargo in the downtown area and along the Red River. After packing up the car, I met him, and we enjoyed a stroll through the Saturday morning Red River Market and had lunch by the Wildflower Garden.

After a 3-hour car ride we arrived in Bismarck, the capitol of North Dakota. As I searched for a church body to fellowship with Sunday morning, we realized there was much more of a church presence in this city. After checking in at our hotel we took a quick scouting drive around the city and ended up along the Missouri River. Lewis and Clark journeyed along the river in both 1804 and 1806 as they made their famous trek plotting a western water route from St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean. We ended our day watching a new documentary about 9/11 and praying that God would lead us Sunday morning to the body of believers who were destined to receive the ND shepherd's staff.

September 12-

After much prayer and discussion, we decided to attend New Song Church, a Four-Square church located close to our hotel in Bismarck. Calvin walked there in time to attend their first service at 9 AM. This church was birthed in the 1980's and is still going strong with an intentional outreach to the greater Bismarck area. Calvin was received well, and the shepherd's staff was the center of much conversation. I attended the second service, and it was there that the staff was presented after Calvin shared for a few minutes about our Ignite mission. Interestingly, the Pastor had been challenged the week before while attending a wedding in Big Sky, MT. There another Pastor had challenged him by saying, "I think you're the type of Pastor that if God brought someone into your service on a Sunday morning, you would just change the service on a moment's notice." Low and behold, Calvin and I showed up the following week with the shepherd's staff in tow and yes, he was quick to receive us and to allow Calvin to present the ND Shepherd's Staff. "God set me up!" he exclaimed with a laugh. We felt right at home and made many new friends there.

September 13-

After a short time of prayer walking in the morning, Calvin was able to help a man who had a flat tire in front of our hotel. We then packed up the car and started our 6+ hour to Billings, MT. After driving through some initial rain, we drove out of the weather with the beautiful western sky as our backdrop. We made a quick stop at the Theodore Roosevelt

National Park where we enjoyed the painted canyon spread out before us like a divine canvas, sprinkled with God's handiwork.

September 14-

Calvin began his prayer walk of Billings early in the morning and was able to spend 7 hours traversing this western city of 109,000. While Calvin was prayer walking the city, he met Pastor Caleb from Word of Life Church. He shared his vision for the walk and prayed with him for an outpouring in the city.

September 15-16-

Calvin continued to prayer walk the eastern, western and northern parts of the city. The southern section was below a large train transfer station and was difficult to get to and walk. That day, while I (Steph) was at a local store, a man walked out with an armful of merchandise and was not confronted or stopped. It was a shocking scene to watch such lawlessness. In the afternoon 2 local police showed up at our hotel but we never did find out what was behind that call. We had been warned that Billings is known for its crime, so we were prepared for that aspect of our stay there.

September 17-

We left Friday morning with much anticipation as we drove southwest to Big Sky, MT. After arriving around 1:30, we settled into the apartment where we were staying, and Calvin was able to begin his prayer walking around town for the rest of the afternoon. What a joy to reunite with our oldest son, Nielsen, who has lived here for 5 years. We spent the evening eating at a lovely BBQ restaurant down by the Gallatin River and catching up on life.

September 18-

Today Calvin spent the morning prayer walking Big Sky and walked the Ousel Trail up to Ousel Falls. I (Steph) spent the morning with Nielsen walking around this resort town that is enjoying a break from its busy summer season. Beginning in November the winter crowd will descend on this mountain town to enjoy the excellent skiing and snow boarding on Lone Mountain which stands at over 11,000 feet. As the western winds kicked up a cold front we hiked Porcupine Trail in the late afternoon and watched the sun slowly begin to slip behind the Spanish Peaks. Our evening was spent watching the Penn State game and enjoying pizza with Nielsen.

September 19-

We woke up to rain, although the peaks of the surrounding mountains were showing off their second white caps of the season. We drove up to Lone Mountain and stood in awe at the sheer size and scope of the famous mountain. In the winter people travel there from around the

country to enjoy some of the best ski conditions in the lower 48 states. Nielsen's church meets at 4 PM every Sunday so we attended with him and met many of his church friends. After the service Calvin was able to share some of his prayer walking stories with some of the young adults. They have a hunger to know God more fully as they walk out their faith in a very affluent and independent area of the country.

September 20-

After making breakfast for Nielsen, we packed up and drove to Bozeman, an hour from Big Sky and the 4th largest city in Montana. We could hardly believe the growth we saw in the city since we had been there 4 years earlier. Calvin spent the afternoon prayer walking the city until we were able to check into our Air BnB in Belgrade. From our third-floor apartment we overlooked a beautiful lake with the majestic Gallatin mountain range in the distance.

September 21-

Calvin made a full day of prayer walking on our final day in Montana by walking north to south and east to west in Bozeman. Although he was not able to connect with any local pastors, he felt satisfied that he had fulfilled his assignment for this leg of our journey.

September 22-

We happily returned home to our 2 cats in residence after 2 uneventful flights and a late arrival home that evening. We thanked God for his grace and protection throughout our 2-week trip. We had much catching up to do and jumped right back into life in PA.