

Bright
PRAYER IDEAS
for your church



A Creative resource pack for
churches and cathedrals



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The Archbishop's invitation is simply asking people to pray in whatever way they want, with whoever they want and wherever they can, that others might know Jesus Christ. Encourage people to sign up now and pledge to pray at www.thykingdomcome.global.

Resources:

Resources and information are available from www.thykingdomcome.global. This includes materials to download on prayer, liturgical resources, Novena booklets, a 'Kingdom Kit' helping families pray together, details of prayer events and tips on organising local events. Everyone who signs up to 'pledge2pray' will receive regular email updates as well as inspiration and encouragement about prayer.

Social media:

When praying in churches, groups, families or on their own we are encouraging people to use the hashtags #pledge2pray and #thykingdomcome as they join in and set up events, linking in to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We hope this will spark a viral prayer response to the Thy Kingdom Come.

Creative resources for you to use IN CHURCHES AND CATHEDRALS

Thy Kingdom come is an invitation for individuals, churches and families to pray.

This resource is full of *Bright Ideas for Families* to help churches and cathedrals join with others around the world in praying for their friends and families.

There are a variety of creative ideas and sessions that have been devised and generously contributed by individuals, many of whom provide ongoing resources for prayer whether you are praying with large or small groups, families or giving individuals of all ages more tools for praying on their own. Some of the resources are also designed to help those who are familiar with prayer whilst others are great for newcomers.

Whenever you are encouraging people to pray please send them to the website www.thykingdomcome/global and ask them to sign up to Pledge2Pray so that we can see how many people are getting involved and continue to support them with videos and updates. If your church is planning an event for *Thy Kingdom Come*, make sure you register it on the events section of the website

We hope that you will be blessed as you use them.

Have fun!



Talking with Jesus in interactive and creative ways can engage all generations and personality types in filling an hour with prayer. Embrace creativity when designing your prayer room to inspire and lead others in meeting with God.

If this doesn't come naturally to you then:

- Find artistic and creative people in your community and ask them to help you. Why not also involve young people in designing and building the space? This may increase their sense of ownership and therefore involvement in the prayer room.
- Think about why you're praying. The vision for the week of prayer is 'praying that people you know might know Jesus'. Design your prayer room around this vision.
- Keep it simple and bold. Creative doesn't mean cluttered. If in doubt make the room welcoming, colourful and include prayer guides or stations people can draw on if needed.
- Make room for other people's creativity. Leave large spaces for things like drawing, writing, painting or sculpting as an expression of prayer and allow your community to shape and fill the room as the week goes on.
- Engage all five senses. How could you use striking images and verses to catch the eye, music and sound to inspire or facilitate worship, things to touch or hold to focus the mind, or things to taste and smell to help people consider what they're praying about?

Prayer stations can be a great help to those who find praying for an hour challenging. Feel free to try these ideas for stations in your prayer room:

The family tree

Find a real tree that will fit into your prayer room, alternatively you could draw or make one. Invite people to think about the members of their families or their friends who are yet to discover the love of Jesus. Invite them to write their names on luggage labels if you're using a real tree, or a sticky note if not, and to hang or stick them as they pray for each in turn. Pray that they will come to know Jesus, but also for personal courage for yourself to talk about Jesus and to invite others to church activities.

The wailing wall

What are your most heartfelt requests to God for your family, the Church, your city and your nation? Make space on a wall, or on a large net or piece of fabric, for people to write or draw their requests to God. When they're finished with their own request, invite them to pray for someone else's. Watch it fill up as the week progresses.

The sorry bin

Gather a rubbish bin (or paper shredder), paper and pens, and invite people to reflect on and pray the words of **Psalm 139:23-24:**

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

As areas of sin are revealed to them in their own lives, invite them to write them down and ask the Lord for forgiveness. As a symbol of His grace and forgiveness finish by throwing the paper into the bin or shredding it.

Letting Go

Place a bowl of water next to some pens with ink that will wash off skin. Invite people to consider whom in their lives they might hold something against. Ask them to write the names of those they need to forgive on their hands, and as they wash the names off in the water, to ask Jesus to help them forgive them and to let go of any resentment they may feel.

Your kingdom come

Gather large maps of your area and this nation, as well as local and national newspapers. Encourage people to pray Your kingdom come, your will be done over the places and situations that stand out to them. If they are unsure how to pray then praying for the positive – healing, reconciliation, justice, love, forgiveness, salvation – is often a good place to begin.



Below are detailed a number of prayer stations that can be laid out in a prayer labyrinth. These stations are based on the words of the Lord's Prayer, helping all ages to dwell on and linger over the words of the prayer as they use them to connect to God.

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name'

An invitation to connect with God as the perfect father

You will need: a family portrait or a picture of a father and child.

- At this station, invite participants to sit before the portrait and consider what it means to them for God to be the perfect Father. The Lord's Prayer invites us to speak directly to God as Father, and we are invited to be a part of His family.

'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven'

An opportunity to reflect on what it means to acknowledge God as king

You will need: a throne; a crown; an inflatable globe.

- Set up the throne with the crown and globe positioned on the seat. Invite participants to pray this line, acknowledging that God is king over the whole world, and asking him to be at work in the world, perhaps in particular situations known to the participant.

'Give us today our daily bread'

An opportunity to thank God for his provision

You will need: a table laid with a table cloth; a chair; bread, bread sticks, biscuits or crackers.

- Invite participants to sit at the table and to eat the bread or biscuits. As they do so, encourage them to think about the things that God has provided for them, and to thank him for the things he has given them.

'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'

An invitation to accept God's forgiveness

You will need: small pieces of paper; pens; a large bin.

- Provide a space where participants can write their own 'sorry' prayers to God on a small piece of paper, before crumpling it in their hand and throwing it in the bin provided, to symbolise God getting rid of our sin when he forgives us.

'And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil'

An opportunity to reflect on God's leading us through life

You will need: arrows drawn or marked on the ground.

- Invite participants to slowly walk through this part of the labyrinth, following the arrows and thinking about what it means to allow God to order our steps, leading us along the pathways we should follow, rather than those that are easy or most appealing.

'For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever, Amen.'

An invitation to accept Jesus as king

You will need: a throne; a crown.

- Invite participants to symbolically take the crown and put it briefly on their own heads, before removing it and laying it on the throne, acknowledging these words in the prayer and Jesus' place as king in their own lives.



FAMILY PRAYER STATIONS AT CHURCH

This set of nine prayer stations can be set up in a church, cathedral or similar to encourage families to pray together in the name of the Trinitarian God for family members, friends, neighbours, the local community, the wider country and the world. The loose theme running through is that of the flames of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the related imagery of light.

This is a very active set of prayer activities: the mood is more likely to be upbeat than silent and solemn, which reflects the many different ways people pray in the Bible and in the modern world. The activities and shared experience will give families something to continue talking about and reflecting on into the rest of the week. The suggestion to 'take a photo' each time is to encourage families to share their prayer time on social media, so that their friends and family see prayer as something normal and fun. Depending on your budget and team, you could set up any number of these stations, between one and nine.

Here are some ideas to help you set up your space:

- Have candles in safe holders or lanterns lighting the way from one station to another. (This approach has been field-tested with a pyromaniac teenager and no fire engines needed to be called.)
- Have flame-shaped 'footprints' stuck to the floor or walls to show the way.
- Play background music.
- Have 'passports' with a stamp to indicate that each station has been achieved.
- Have a nightlight to take home to continue prayers there (as in station 9).
- Swap one station for a projected looped PowerPoint or locally-made film of either local scenes/people to inspire prayer, countries/situations from the news or different forms of light set to a meditative piece of music to sit and watch quietly.

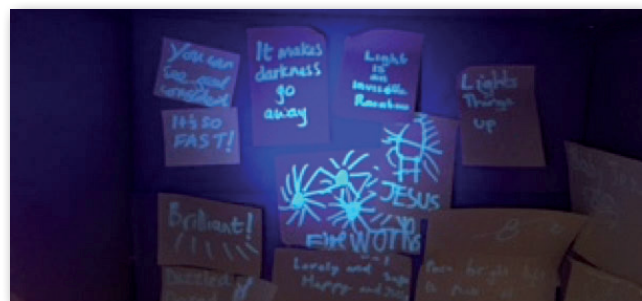
1 God of light

God of light: the light that shone at God's command at the start of creation is the same light that shines today, transforming lives. Reflect a moment on what you know or love about light.

You will need: large cardboard boxes on a table top or a dark space; UV pens and UV torches (both available very cheaply from online retailers); sticky notes; a few prepared ready-written notes in place in the boxes.

On instruction sheet:

- God of light
- 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' Genesis 1:3
- That same power of God is at work today.
- What's the most amazing thing you know about light? (Or for younger people: how does really bright light make you feel?) Write or draw it on a sticky note with a UV pen, then stick it at the back of one of the dark boxes with the others. Now try to read all the sticky notes with the help of the UV torch.
- Take a photo of your family.



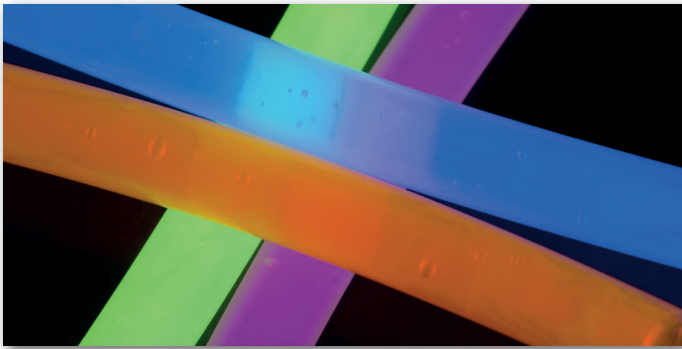
2 Shining Son

Jesus' light shone out from his death and resurrection. Take the light of the cross with you as you pray.

You will need: small rubber bands or pipe cleaners cut into 6cm lengths; glow sticks; a dark space or a large box.

On instruction sheet:

- Shining Son
- Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12
- Take two glow sticks and, using the rubber bands or pipe cleaners, fasten them together in the shape of Jesus' cross.
- Turn the cross shape sideways and diagonally and talk about what you see – what can the symbol of a cross mean?
- When you're ready, break the glow sticks and watch together as the cross lights up.
- Imagine that light spreading through your life and through the world around you.
- Take a photo of your family holding up their crosses and take the crosses with you to light your way.



3 Blazing Spirit

Blazing Spirit: God's Spirit lives in our hearts, lighting our lives.

You will need: olive oil in a small dish; cotton buds; paper cut into elongated heart/flame shapes; a window or a bright light such as a table lamp; a washing line with clothes pegs on.

On instruction sheet:

- Blazing Spirit
- "God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Romans 5:5
- Are these shapes hearts or flames?
- Use oil and a cotton bud to draw on the paper shape what you think happens when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Talk about what you know about the Holy Spirit: especially about why we've used oil, why flames and why hearts.
- Peg the shapes onto the line and see your design clear against the light.
- Take a photo of the shapes on the line.



4 Shine in my family

Shine on my family: praying for people in our families.

You will need: paper plates; felt-tip pens; hole punch; thread; scissors; something to tie the finished spiral on to.

On instruction sheet:

- Draw a spiral on a paper plate (the back of a plate works best).
- Talk and think together of people in your family who need the light of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to shine on them. Write their names or draw their faces in the spiral, taking care not to write over the lines you have drawn.
- Cut along the spiral line, make a hole at one end and attach a thread. Hang up your prayer spiral and spend a moment praying together for the names you can read or the faces you can see on it as it spins. Take a photo of your family around the spiral.
- Remember to collect your spiral when you've finished the trail.

5 Shine on my Friends

Shine on my friends: praying for our friends.

You will need: a large piece of paper with a tangled black line drawn on it; black pens; inkpads or sponges soaked in paint (use very bright colours); a string of fairy lights (optional).

On instruction sheet:

- Shine on my friends
- Here is a string of Christmas lights... but it needs more lights!
- Talk about your friends and pray for each of them to know Jesus, the God who came at Christmastime: for each friend you want to pray for, put a thumbprint like a lightbulb on the wire, and write their name next to it.
- How many friends can you pray for?
- Take a photo of your family at work on the string of lights.





6 Shine on my neighbours

Shine on my neighbours: praying for our neighbours.

You will need: coffee filter paper; biro; red felt-tip pens; spray bottle of water; waterproof tablecloth.

On instruction sheet:

- Shine on my neighbours
- Think about the people who live next door to you or above you or below you.
- Draw their houses or flats in biro on the coffee filter paper.
- Now, around the edge of the filter paper, draw flowing patterns in red, which is the colour used by many churches at this time of year – the Holy Spirit season.
- Spray on water and, as the patterns spread gently cover your neighbours in the warmth of God's love, pray for them. It will take a while, so enjoy the peace and quiet and don't rush it.
- Take a photo of your family watching the patterns diffuse.

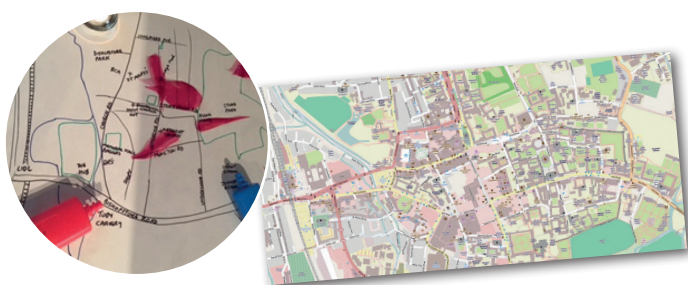
7 Shine in my neighbourhood

Shine in my neighbourhood: praying for the place we live.

You will need: a large easy-to-read map of the neighbourhood; pens; craft or real feathers; balloon pumps or paper fans.

On instruction sheet:

- First, add any extra buildings or places you can think of to the map.
- One symbol for the Holy Spirit is a dove, so imagine the feathers here represent the Holy Spirit.
- Take a feather and place it at the edge of the map.
- Flap the fan or pump air at it until the feather moves on to the map.
- Say a prayer for the place, building or people living or working where it lands.
- Challenge each other to make the feather land in a particular place that you particularly want to pray for.
- Take a photo of your family at prayer.



8 Shine on my country

Shine in my country: praying for a country that is special to you.

You will need: a world map; a large sheet of transparent plastic film that fits over the top of it when taped down (stationers sell a long roll of cellophane which works very well); yellow, red and orange paints slightly watered down and with glitter added if you like; drinking straws; teaspoons; cloths or wipes; a bin.

On instruction sheet:

- Pray for God's Holy Spirit to move across your country.
- Another word for 'Spirit' is 'breath'. Use your breath to pray now without words.
- Put a spoonful of paint at the edge of the country you come from or a country that is precious to you.
- Using the straw, blow the flame-colour across the country as far as it will go.
- With each breath you take, imagine God's breath transforming the people in the places your paint touches.
- Take a photo of the transformed map. If it gets too painty, you may want to wipe away your paint and leave the map clear for the next family.

9 Shine in the world

Shine in the world: praying for other countries.

You will need: You will need: a directional torch (such as a Maglite); old CDs, mirrors of all shapes and sizes or mirrored card cut into small shapes (you can find packets of small mirrors for craft in shops like Hobbycraft); sticky notes; names of countries clearly written on sticky notes and stuck to a wall; nightlights.

On instruction sheet:

- "Let the light of your face shine on us" Psalm 4:6
- Work together as a family, with one person holding the torch and the others using the mirrors to bounce a beam of light on to a particular country that needs the light of Christ. Challenge each other to make your mirror-beam touch different countries before everyone else.
- As a family, choose which of these countries you most want to pray for and take that sticky note down from the wall. Take it home, together with a nightlight to help you remember to pray that Jesus' light will shine in that country.
- Take a photo of your family working together.



All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

(Acts 1:14)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place... All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit... and that day about three thousand persons were added.

(Acts 2:1)

24-7 prayer is not a new idea; in fact it's as ancient as the church. 24-7 Prayer Rooms are creative spaces, hosting continual prayer for a week or more. It only takes 24 people, praying an hour a day, to create a chain of night and day prayer. See the needs, priorities, hopes and hurts of your community poured out to God. Experience how the Holy Spirit makes his presence felt in a people and place. Ignite fresh faith, unity and a passion for mission through taking on this extreme challenge to seek God together.

All you need:

A community willing to take on the challenge;
a church building or room that can be safely accessed night and day;
time to prepare practically and spiritually;
ideas for creative prayer stations to engage and inspire even the most inexperienced at prayer.

Seven steps to setting up your prayer room:

1. Gather People

Who do you want to pray with? Your church, youth group, students, neighbourhood, or others? It only takes 24 people, praying an hour a day each day, to fill a week with prayer. The strength of the community, and your commitment to God and each other, is even more important than the size of the group. Gather them together and get their support.

2. Book your week: 25 May - 4 June 2017

We invite you to join with the Church across the nation and the world and host a 24-7 Prayer Room in the week approaching Pentecost Sunday. Give your community lots of notice so they can make room in their diaries to take part. Think about how you can use your services and gatherings in the month preceding the prayer week, to prepare people to pray. Most groups find a week of 24-7 Prayer long enough to be a challenge but short enough to be achievable. Share the vision that this week is to strengthen the Church's relationship with Jesus and encourage sharing of the gospel with others.

3. Sign up online

Register your prayer room on our Contact page and gain free access to an online prayer room sign up tool, further resources for planning your prayer room and advice from an experienced team.

4. Find your space

Find somewhere that's accessible 24 hours a day that can fit however many people you anticipate will want to pray at once. You don't want a large space for one person at a time, or a cupboard for ten! 24-7 Prayer Rooms have been hosted in Church buildings, tents, caravans, shops, planes, basements, homes and more. Where in your church building or community is accessible and relatively safe to travel to in the middle of the night?



5. Get Creative

When designing your prayer room include inspirational images, verses and suggestions for prayer, as well as materials for art, music, activities and more. The aim is to engage the heart and mind of all ages and personality types in prayer. If you are hosting your prayer room in a Church already filled with art or stained glass windows, why not include them in your prayer activities? For examples, ideas and further inspiration read the 'Ideas for Prayer Stations' resource on the website.

7. Start Praying

Invite a few people in your community to pray weekly for the practical and spiritual prayer room preparations. Begin your week of prayer with a service or prayer meeting, and end the week with another meeting sharing stories and worshipping together. You may also want to encourage your Church to be part of one of the Beacon events that will be taking place across the country. For further details, see the Thy Kingdom Come website.

6. Mobilise people to Pray

Use the online prayer room tool or a printed sign-up sheet at all of your meetings in the two or three weeks preceding the prayer room. If your church has a website, social media channels or email, use them to communicate the vision, start date of the prayer room and how to get involved. Don't be afraid to remind people to sign up for an hour of prayer every time you gather. We would also suggest teaching on prayer and sharing testimonies of answered prayer. Aim to help people consider their own prayer lives, and encourage even the youngest or most inexperienced to try praying for an hour. Encourage a wide variety of people from your community to be champions of your prayer week — look for those in roles of leadership or those who are good at enthusing and mobilising different age or social groups.



Praying for others to know Jesus is one of the most powerful things we can do. Persistent prayer for others brings transformation to their lives.

Consistently praying for others takes discipline, and there are many ways that we can build up habits that will help us to pray for our friends and family.

Choose five people you would regularly like to pray for and write their names down onto a list. If you're not sure who to pray for, ask God to guide you as you choose. Once you have settled on 5 names, commit to praying for them regularly by praying the following:

**Loving Father,
in the face of Jesus Christ
your light and glory have blazed forth.
Send your Holy Spirit that I may share with my friends
[here, name your friends]
the life of your Son and your love for all.
Strengthen me as a witness to that love
as I pledge to pray for them,
for your name's sake. Amen.**

Here are five easy ways to pray for five people regularly. Choose the one that suits you best.

1. Piece of string

Take a piece of string or cord, and tie five knots in it to represent each of the five people you have committed to pray for. You could carry the knotted string in your pocket, tie it round your wrist or place it somewhere that you'll see it regularly. Use the knots to remind you to pray for each person on your list of five.

2. Small stones

Find five small stones (light coloured ones are best) and write each of the people on your list onto each of the stones. Place them on your desk, bedside table or fireplace as a reminder to pray. Alternatively, you could place each stone in a different room of your home and pray for each person as you enter or leave the room.

3. Business prayer card or bookmark

Grab a piece of card that will easily fit inside your wallet, purse or book. Write your list of five names onto the card before putting it in your wallet or book. Use this card as a daily reminder to pray for them.

4. Prayer Alerts

Add your list of five people to the alerts section of your phone and set reminders to pray for them. You could choose one name per day, or pray for all five across your day. Remember to set alerts for a suitable time where you can stop to pray for your list.

5. Post-it Notes

Use five post-it notes and write one name onto each. Stick them onto your mirror, above your bed or somewhere that you'll see them regularly and will be reminded to pray.

PRAYING FOR FIVE FRIENDS (CONTINUED)



You might like to use the following prayers as you pray for others:

Loving Lord,
Please work in me so I can share your love, life and message with...
Reveal your love to them, that they might know, follow and witness to
you,
for Your glory.
Amen.

.....

Loving Father,
Send your Holy Spirit so I can share your love, life and message with...
Reveal Jesus to them, that they might know, follow and love him,
for Your glory.
Amen.

.....

You build your church through the power of your Spirit.
By the same Spirit enable me to witness to... your love, beauty and
grace,
that they may come to the fellowship of the faithful
for Your glory.
Amen.

.....

Lord,
I pray that you will lead... to you.
Thank you that you love them. I pray that you would break into their life
and show them your love, grace and peace,
for Your glory.
Amen.

.....

Using the BLESS acrostic can help us to focus on all of the felt needs of those we are praying for:

Body – health, protection, energy

Labour – employment/
unemployment, retirement,
adequate income

Emotional – inner peace, joy,
wisdom, insight, patience

Social – healthy relationships
between spouses, parents, children,
friends, reconciliation; love

Spiritual – repentance, salvation,
obedience, faith



All you need: a national newspaper, a pair of scissors, glue or tape, a window and/or a torch, a map or drawing of your nation.

What Is Your Nation Like?

15 Minutes

In every country there are things to thank God for and things to ask for His help with.

Look through a recent newspaper and cut out words that describe good and bad things about your nation. Stick them to a piece of paper and look at the image they create. Thank God for the good things you read. Ask for His help with the bad.

Praying through the Newspaper

10 Minutes

Now look through the articles in the newspaper you've been using. Choose two things happening in or affecting your nation today. Stick the articles to a window and if there's daylight ask God to shine His wisdom on these situations. If it's night, use a torch to illuminate the stories to represent God's truth and wisdom illuminating our world. Ask Jesus to move and for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done.

Praying for your Nation:

15 Minutes

Think about the role that government plays in our lives today. Lay the map of your nation on the floor and point out the place where your government meets. Pray that Jesus' Kingdom would be the foundation of law and leadership in your nation.

The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Saviour God wants us to live.

1 Timothy 2:1-3 (MSG)

Look around you at the different parts of your country. Ask the Holy Spirit to move in your nation and speak out His fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Ask God to give national leaders wisdom.

Pray for a friend and for an enemy:

10 Minutes

Every nation has allies and enemies. Jesus teaches us to love our neighbour (Matthew 22:38) and to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). This can be difficult when war or oppression is at the root of dislike.

Choose a nation that is closely allied to your own, and then choose a nation that is historically or currently an adversary. Write their names in your prayer room and pray for God's kingdom and blessing to come in both. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you pray into their strengths and weaknesses.

The Lord's Prayer:

10 Minutes

Before you leave pray The Lord's Prayer over your nation. Take some time on each line, thinking particularly about your nation and its needs. Finish by praising God.

60 MINUTES OF PRAYER -THE LORD'S PRAYER



All you need: a Bible, some paper, a pen, a bin or paper shredder.

Ask God to help you pray and read the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15.

Approach 15 Minutes

- Read **Matthew 6:9:**
Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
- Think of all the names for God you've heard. If you need inspiration why not read: Genesis 21:33, Exodus 3:14, Judges 6:24, Deuteronomy 7:9, Deuteronomy 10:17, Isaiah 5:16, Psalm 136:26, Isaiah 7:14 & John 8:58.
- Which name do you most use when speaking to God?
- 'What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us' (A.W. Tozer). How often do you use the name 'Father'?
- Read **Matthew 7:9-11:**
Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
- How does your identity as God's child affect the way you approach Him now?



Ask 15 Minutes

- Read **Matthew 6:10-11:**
Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.
- Write your name in the centre of a sheet of paper.
- Surround it with the people, situations and places that you want God to move in. Include anything that has been worrying you.
- Ask God to teach you to pray in His will for His kingdom in each of these situations.
- Make a paper aeroplane out of what you've written and as you throw it across the room thank God that He has your whole life and all your requests in His hands.



Reflect 15 Minutes

- Read **Matthew 6:12:**
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- Think back through your last 24 hours, the things you've done, the people you've met...
- Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight things you've done wrong.
- Next ask the Holy Spirit to show you times you should have acted and did not.
- Write everything that has come to mind on a piece of paper.
- As you say sorry, tear up the sheet of paper and throw it into the bin or feed it through the shredder. Thank God for forgiving you.
- Is there someone you need to forgive today? Ask God to show you who.



Praise 15 Minutes

- Read **Revelation 1:5-6:**
To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
- Stand and speak the names of God aloud adding after each one why this is true in your life (i.e. I know you're my Provider because you provided for the debts I needed to pay).
- Write a song or poem that expresses your love to the Father. If you need to, find inspiration from the book of Psalms and modern day worship songs.

End by praying St Patrick's prayer:
*I arise today through the strength of heaven...
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ
on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise. Christ in
the heart of every man who thinks of me. Christ in the
mouth of everyone who speaks of me. Christ in every
eye that sees me. Christ in every ear that hears me.*



So I say to you: ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

(Luke 11:9-10)

Our Father in heaven...

Sing 1 or 2 songs or hymns, or read a selection of Bible verses.

.....

Hallowed be your name...

- Give thanks for who God is and what He gives us.
- Invite sharing of testimony to God's faithfulness.

Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- Pray for God's love to direct all of our relationships and conversations where we live and work so that many will encounter Jesus.
- Ask for our homes and churches to become places where more people of all ages discover God's love and mercy.

.....

Give us today our daily bread.

- Pray for those who are vulnerable in the parish/community to be reached by God's love.
 - Ask for God's provision for all those working to bring in His kingdom in the parish/community.
-

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

- Invite confession for the times when we have not reached out with love; when our hearts have been fearful.
 - Ask for new boldness to talk about the difference Jesus has made in our lives.
-

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

- Pray for some of the needs of the parish/community.
 - Ask God to show you 5 people to pray for so they may encounter Jesus.
-

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

- Pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit on His church this Pentecost season.
- Pray that many people will discover the truth about Jesus across our nation.
- Pray for God's blessing on each other, and on every church and every household in your parish/community:

May the Lord bless you and keep you, The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

(Numbers 6:24-26)

PRAYER WALKING

Prayer walking is as simple as it sounds - praying as you walk. When we prayer walk we are stepping into our authority as God's children to bless people and places in Jesus' name. This simple task is a great way to bring transformation to your local community by asking God to break in.

Here's how to get started:

Know your local area

Know the places and people that make up your local community. What jobs do people do? What ethnicities and social classes live in your area? How many sacred buildings are there?

Know local people

Find out what the needs are in your local community by speaking to those in your area.

Know local needs

Are there problems with unemployment, crime or poverty in your area? You could put all of this information onto a physical map of your community, or write it down in one place. This will help inform your prayers, and you can add to it the more you prayer walk.

Get Prayer Walking

The core of prayer walking is conversing with God; ask Him to show you what He sees; to know His heart for your community.

Here are some practical suggestions on how to prayer walk effectively:

Start and end together

Agree a place and time to start prayer walking and talking to God together. Begin by explaining why you've gathered to pray, and share specific prayer points, if relevant. If splitting into smaller groups, then agree a place and time to end together.

Try going in pairs

Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs. It's not as intimidating as a large group, and is safer than people going on their own. If you have a larger group, breaking into pairs can help you to pray for different parts of your area.

Choose whether or not to plan your route

You can plan ahead to ensure that you pray for specific places, or simply ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time - just make sure you don't get lost!

Use your natural and supernatural senses

As you prayer walk, be aware of your surroundings: what you see, smell, hear and touch. But also be aware of what God is saying to you as you move around your community; if any Bible verses pop into your head or if you have any pictures, visions or words of knowledge. Turn these natural and supernatural senses into prayer.



Choose whether to pray silently or out loud

The point of prayer walking isn't about being seen praying; it's about seeing and praying. You can pray quietly together or in silence if it makes you feel more comfortable. However, don't be afraid to speak out prayers if you feel compelled to.

Pray for others

As you prayer walk, the focus is on those who are living in your community so be intentional about praying for God's blessings on what you see and feel. Even in difficult areas, try to pray positively. Focus on God's plans and purposes for the place and people that live there. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done..." is an excellent start.

Ending well

If you've prayed in different places, meet up at the end to share what you've prayed and heard from God. Write down what you share so that you can keep track of how to pray for your area.

Keep going

After your prayer walk, keep praying for your community. You might like to arrange specific prayer meetings or further prayer walks for your area. Prayer walking is also a way of claiming a specific area for God. When Joshua and the army were claiming Jericho, God instructed them to walk around the city for six days, and seven times on the seventh day. Why not make your walk a physical prayer by repeating it for a week?

As you keep praying, continue to ask for God's blessing in your area; praying for God's kingdom to come and His Will to be done in your area. If you feel that God is highlighting specific needs or challenges, think about how to take action; how could you and your Church be part of God's solution practically, as well as prayerfully?

COMMUNITY ICHTHUS TRAIL

A fun trail to lead to an event or service to explore the ichthus fish symbol, prayer and Jesus.

You will need: 10 large ichthus fish made from air drying clay, knitted or as a bright painting for example. Be creative with colours, texture and design. Give each fish a name tag e.g. Shark, Nemo, Dory, Trout, Jaws, Moby Dick.

- Place each fish in the window of different buildings of your community.
 - Families and children's groups, schools and uniformed organisations can hunt for the fish and write their names on a trail sheet. The sheet could include church information (website, Facebook page), event information, names of shops/venues taking part in the trail.
 - Invite families and children's groups to bring completed sheets to an ichthus event or church service. This could be activity-based (suggestions below). It can be centred around the great catch of fish in John 21:1–14 and could encourage participants to use each fish as a reminder to pray, for friends and family to come to know Jesus.
- ### Ichthus activities - suggestions:
- **Beads and chenille sticks:**
Thread pony beads on to a chenille stick and bend and twist the tail to make an ichthus fish shape.
 - **Cardboard tube ichthus fish:**
Flatten kitchen roll cardboard tubes and cut into strips/rings. Cut apart at one fold and cut a slit half way through, from the bottom of the edge, 3cm from the cut end. Repeat a slit from the top edge, 3cm from the cut end, so that you can slot together to form the shape of the Ichthus fish. Write prayers on the inside of the fish. Decorate with paint or glitter and glue. Talk about how Christians used to be persecuted and had to hide their faith.
 - **Glow stick fish:**
Create ichthus fish shapes with glow sticks. Talk about how two arc shapes make the symbol and the symbol was used as a password among Christians in Roman times.
 - **Painted stones (stone fish!):**
Use acrylic paints and unpolished rocks and stones.
 - **Shaving foam fish marbling:**
Squirt some shaving foam on to a tray. Add small spots of acrylic paint (any mix of colours). Drag a straw through the paint and foam to create patterns. Lay card fish shapes over the paint and foam and press down lightly. Lift the fish shape, peeling it off the foam and lay upright. Wait for ten seconds, then firmly scrape off all the foam with a squeegee. Talk about how unique we all are and how God wants to love us just as we are.
 - **Porcelain plates/bowls fish decorating:**
Decorate ichthus fish symbols on white porcelain plates or bowls (Baker Ross) with porcelain paints or permanent markers. Talk about how Christians painted the ichthus symbol at Christian meeting places.
 - **Bubble wrap printing:**
Cut out fish shapes from bubble wrap, paint the bubble side and print on to paper.
 - **Pyrography necklaces/key fobs:**
Burn ichthus fish symbols on to wood pieces with a special tool. <http://www.hobbycraft.co.uk/kirstie-all-sopp-pyrography-kit/601704-1000>
 - **Ichthus nails:**
Create an ichthus fish template and draw on to a piece of wood. Hammer flat headed nails spaced equally along the outline, leaving enough height on the nail to wrap wool around. Wrap wool or string around the nails, pulling the wool over to other nails, to create a design.
 - **Edible fish craft:**
Have a range of supermarket-value fairy cakes or biscuits, writing icing and edible decorations. Mix some icing sugar and water to create a coating for the top of the cake or biscuit. Draw an ichthus shape with writing icing and decorate.
 - **Clay ichthus fish:**
Using air-drying clay and sequins, create a clay ichthus shape and decorate with sequin scales.





- **Ichthus candle prayers:**
Draw an Ichthus fish symbol on to paper with a candle. It will look invisible. Continue by writing a prayer. Invite someone to paint over the paper with a paint wash to reveal the prayer.
- **Wooden Ichthus symbols:**
<http://www.craftshapes.co.uk/shape/wooden-jesus-fish-105cm-x-2>
- **All age wall painting:**
Create a wall of paper using wallpaper lining and masking tape. All ages can use any mediums to draw or paint ichthus symbols. For example: paint, charcoal, chalk, etc.
- **Ichthus weaving:**
Arrange some chicken wire on a wooden frame, with strips of blue materials to represent the sea, and hang prayers written on fish shapes on it.

On the way out, have trays of sand. As people leave, they draw a crescent shape in the sand and the next person finishes the symbol with their crescent shape, creating the simple ichthus symbol. Shake the sand tray to start afresh for the next family.

After the event/service, create an ichthus Facebook page to share photos of where families place their fish crafts at home. Offer prayers and Faith in Homes prayer links/ideas. Advertise church services and events.

Ideas are available on the Messy Church Pinterest.

INSPIRING IDEAS FOR PRAYER MEETINGS

Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, I am there among them.

(Matthew 18:19-20)

Praying with others has power, yet prayer meetings can sometimes be a struggle. As you gather your church community to pray together in the build up to Pentecost Sunday, try some of these simple ideas to engage and motivate the whole group.

Start by Praying

It might sound obvious, but prayer is the best way to prepare. Pray for wisdom as you plan your time together and for the members of your church community whom you hope will be there. Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you.

Be clear about why you've gathered to pray

If you're meeting together to pray for your local community, for your church or for those with whom you would like to share the faith, make this the starting point of your meeting. Help everyone to understand what they're here to pray for and why it's important. You could share a relevant testimony to build faith, a Bible passage, or use photos and videos to inform the mind and inspire the heart. If you have a large theme, such as community transformation, split the meeting into clear sections to help people pray towards that goal.

Use different models of prayer

Everyone communicates or connects with the Lord differently. Use a variety of styles to ensure that everyone in your prayer meeting is able to pray in a way that suits their preference, and in a way that stretches them a little. If you only pray using one model or style, it is likely that some may struggle to focus or fully engage. Here are a few suggestions you can try:

- **Worship:** Plan musical worship for your meeting as a way to welcome the Holy Spirit, and as reminder of how great the Lord God is. Weaving worship throughout your time of prayer is a great way to build faith.
- **Involve others:** If you're leading prayer on a particular issue, involve people with knowledge and experience in that area. For example, if you're praying for education, invite a Christian teacher to come and share their experience and the needs they see.
- **The ABC Model:** Split the group into threes, and allocate letters 'A', 'B' or 'C' to each member. Break down a prayer focus by giving a specific prayer point to each letter, and then invite the threes to pray together. This is a great way to ensure that different areas of a topic are prayed for.
- **Pray out loud:** People in the early Church raised their voices together in prayer. Even if it feels uncomfortable, challenge your group to pray out loud and all at once together in passionate intercession. If this is challenging then play music whilst the group prays so people don't feel exposed.
- **50/50:** Split your group in half, ask one half to pray for an issue and the other half to worship. After a few minutes swap the groups over. This can help to build confidence in praying out loud.
- **Zones:** Split the room up into different zones and allocate each a topic. Encourage your group to move around the room and pray for the different issues.
- **Get Creative:** Use the 5 senses; give people something to hold, taste, watch, listen or do as you pray through a topic.
- **Short sections:** Most people find long periods of prayer challenging, so split the time into shorter intervals, each focusing on a different topic and using a different style of prayer.

- **Petitioning the King:** Place a chair at the front of your space and encourage your group to imagine the chair as a throne of God that they are invited to approach with their petition. Allow time for each member to come, one at a time, to kneel and pray.

Make time for listening

As well as taking time to talk to the Lord together, make space to hear from Him during your prayer time.

Share how God speaks

Use examples from the Bible to show how the Lord speaks to us today. Share a few examples of how He communicates, e.g. through the Bible, our thoughts, in pictures or visions and through each other. It might be useful if you, or someone else, can share a time that you have heard God.

Invite the Holy Spirit to speak

This is a really practical way to start your listening time. Give space for silence and a set time for people to hear from God.

Share Together

Invite the members of your group to share anything they heard, felt or saw. If you have a larger group you could split into smaller groups first. Record what each person shares and highlight any themes emerging. Alternatively you could ask those who feel they have heard something they want to share to write it down and pass it to a particular person who can decide what to share within the meeting.

Pray for the things you feel God is saying

Split into groups and pray for the themes, words, pictures or Bible passages shared. It's often helpful to finish with a time of musical worship or thanksgiving.

Finish well

Finish your meeting by concluding together and giving thanks to God for the time. Ensure that everyone has had enough time to pray for your topic and theme and that anyone who has heard from God has had an opportunity to share. Arrange to meet and pray together in the future, perhaps using different topics or prayer models.



The majority of Christians come to know Jesus as young people; this is something to be celebrated and excited about. However, there are less young people in the Church than ever before. Young people living in the UK today need our prayer.

Here are five ways to pray for young people:

1. Pray for Jesus to be known

Pray for the Gospel to reach young people across the UK, and for churches working with young people and organisations who support young people. Pray that Jesus would be known and for God's love to be understood by young people across our nation. Pray specifically for young people you know in your community.

2. Pray that the Bible will be shared

Engaging with young people is a challenge that many churches struggle with. Pray that entire churches will be equipped to reach young people, and that God would bless the work of vicars, youth and school workers. Pray that each church in your area will see sharing the message of the Bible with the next generation as an essential part of their work.

3. Pray God would call young leaders

Jesus' disciples were probably teenagers or in their early twenties when they were called by Him. Pray that God would raise up young leaders who can reach their peers; that they will build the future church in our nation.

4. Pray for the pressures young people face

Today, young people are crippled by the pressures of our increasingly digital culture, where pornography, cyber-bullying, and online relationships are increasing. Huge numbers of young people come from broken families; there has been a rise in anxiety, depression, and eating disorders among young people. Pray against these pressures, and for spiritual guidance from older Christians who can communicate God's love to them.

5. Pray for one young person you know

Committing to pray for one person by name can bring transformation. Take a moment to ask God to bring one young person to mind. Commit to praying for them for the next three months. You might like to use the following prayer:

Loving Father,
in the face of Jesus Christ
your light and glory have blazed forth.
Send your Holy Spirit that I may share with [name your friends]
the life of your Son and your love for all.
Strengthen me as a witness to that love
as I pledge to pray for them,
for your name's sake. Amen.



Pray with stone

Think of five people (friends, family or neighbours) you want to come to know Jesus. Write their names on smooth stones using a Sharpie. Place the stones where you will see them every day – in a basket in the bathroom, in a bowl on the dining table or on a shelf by the front door. Take a stone and as you hold it in your hand, use this prayer: Lord Jesus, we pray that ... may know how much you love him/her. May s/he come to love you and follow you. Amen.

Pray with scrabble letters

Use Scrabble letters to create a name puzzle of the people you want to pray for. As each name is formed, pray 'Lord Jesus, we pray that ... may come to know you. Amen.' When all the names have been used, jumble up the letters and start again.

Pray with lego

On the side of a piece of Lego, write the name of someone you want to pray for. Each time you pray for that person, put another piece of Lego on top of the name to create a prayer tower.

Paper chain prayer

Cut out several strips of coloured paper. On each strip, write the name of someone to pray for. Either tape or staple the strips together to form a chain. Each time you pray for the person, put a tick beside the name.

PRAYER GAMES

A collection of physical ways to pray for people to come to know Jesus as a group.

You might organise these ideas as a session of active prayer fun for families at your church or in the park, maybe bringing in a bouncy castle to collapse on at the end and with lots of healthy snacks to keep everyone going.

Alternatively, you might pick out one or two activities to use in groups or services during the week.

Rope prayers

Prayer ropes are not uncommon as an aid to intercession in Orthodox Christianity, and of course prayer beads (a rosary) are well known in the Catholic tradition. A prayer rope is basically a way to focus our prayers for others, or to become still before God. Here the tying and untying of the prayer knots makes concrete an opportunity to pray for different people and situations.

You will need: a long, fairly thick three-stranded piece of rope – enough to create a circle on to which each person in the group can hold. You will also need a number of shorter pieces of rope of different colours, at least one for everyone in the group.

- Sit in a circle and then pass around the large, thick rope. The leader should then tie the two ends together firmly.
- Explain that many Christians around the world use a rope with knots to help them pray. The central knot is often in the shape of a cross.
- The circle is a symbol of God's love that goes on for ever and ever and which holds all things together.
- The cross is the guarantee of that love and the way we know that God's love is for each one of us. The rope is made of three cords intertwined and this is symbolic of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the three ways in which we experience God who is nevertheless One.
- Now hand out the smaller, coloured pieces of rope. Invite everyone to knot these on to the larger rope. These represent prayers for someone they know to come to know Jesus for themselves.
- Once all the coloured robes have been tied on, invite everyone to talk about why they've chosen to pray for this person. Explain that you are all now going to pass the rope around so that everyone holds on to a different knot for a very short time. The time spent with each knot will depend on the size of the group, but this should be no more than half a minute. As people

hold on to the different knots, invite them to pray for the people who have been mentioned, either silently or out loud. Assure them it doesn't mean they have to remember exactly who said what about each knot.

- It will help to have some simple words to say as a signal for the knots to be passed on for the next pause for prayer, for example: Thank you God that you love us all.
- Once all the knots been passed around, or when you think the time has been long enough, invite everyone to untie the knot in front of them – apart from the knot in the larger rope – as a way of showing that you trust that God has heard your prayer.
- You could make the prayer rope available in subsequent sessions at church and encourage people to go up and tie on a piece of rope whenever they want to, as an expression of committing a particular person to God's love.

Cross prayers

The cross is central to our Christian faith and it is the way we can come close to God in prayer. In this active prayer exercise, a group can explore a range of ways that a cross can be made and expressed with the body.

Practise them together, then, for the actual prayer. The leader can invite everyone to make the cross shape and pray for a different person to know Jesus until the next shape is called. Keep it fast-moving.

- Cross arms out in front of the body in an X shape.
- Cross fingers in front of the face in an X shape.
- Cross over the right hand to touch the left elbow and then the left hand to touch the right elbow.
- Cross over the right hand to the left hip and then the left hand to the right hip.
- Cross over the left hand to the right knee and then the right hand to the left knee.
- Touch the left earlobe with the right hand and then cross the left hand to the right ear lobe.
- Repeat these movements fairly briskly.
- Repeat them in a sitting position, including a new one of crossing over the right elbow to touch the left knee and then the left elbow to touch the right knee.
- Repeat some of these movements sitting cross-legged on the floor.
- Repeat some of these movements lying on your back with your hands crossed behind your head and from this position touch different parts of the body with your elbows, making sure it is always opposite-to-opposite.
- Repeat with your eyes closed!



God's eternal love

Another recommended crossover movement is to make use of the mathematical symbol for eternity which is an eight on its side... sometimes called a 'lazy eight'. You could accompany the making of this sign in the ways described below, saying the words, "God's love lasts forever". This is the amazing love that we want to share with our friends and neighbours.

- Extend your right hand and with your index finger trace the eternity symbol in a large circuit out in front of your body. Follow it with your eyes, but do not move your head.
- Repeat this but using the left hand.
- Repeat this shape making it larger or smaller.
- Follow an imaginary eternity symbol that you 'see', first close, then far away, but without moving your head. Do this again with your eyes shut.
- Swing both arms together in this eternity shape in front of the body, making it as big as possible.
- Trace the shape with your fingers in the air in various places within your field of vision.
- Lean your head on to your left shoulder, extend your right arm out and make the shape.
- Repeat this, leaning your head on your right shoulder.
- As you repeat the action, hold a friend or neighbour before God in prayer.

Breathing prayer

Good breathing can help you to focus and centre on God.

Ideally you should always breathe from your belly; this allows your lungs to inflate to their maximum. Practise doing this:

- Breathe in through the nose, counting 1, 2, 3, hold the breath in, counting 1, 2, 3, and then let the air out through your mouth, counting 1, 2, 3.
- Many Christians use such breathing techniques in conjunction with a simple prayer in order to still and centre themselves. Add these words for a repeated simple prayer for someone to know Jesus:
 - God... of... love
 - Help... [X]... know
 - Your... great... love

The Lord's Prayer

Finally, why not bring some of these actions and a few new ones together by linking them up to the words of the Lord's Prayer? By doing this, you also slow the prayer down and make each line more meaningful.

Our Father... in heaven

Belly breathe in, counting 1, 2, 3 for the first two words; then pause and count silently 1, 2, 3; before saying the next two words, as you breathe out 1, 2, 3.

Hallowed be your name

As you say these words, sit or kneel crossing your ankles in front or behind you. In addition, stretch out each arm in front of you, crossing hands at the wrist. Now link up the fingers and then bring the clasped hands back underneath towards your chin. Hold this for a while.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

Reach out both arms in front of you and, with your index fingers, simultaneously trace the shape of a circle in the air either side of the centre of your body ("Your will be done on earth") and then trace the shape of a triangle ("as it is in heaven").

Give us this day our daily bread

Imitate the slow and deliberate eating bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us

Stand with feet apart and swing both arms linked together to touch first your left and then your right knees, several times.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

Stand upright and still again. Hold your left shoulder with your right hand, while you then slowly move your head from one side to the other. Repeat this action, but this time holding your right shoulder with your left hand.

For yours is the kingdom

Lift your right arm upwards above your head and hold on to it with your left arm folded around the back of your head.

The power and the glory

Repeat this action but with your left arm held high and your right arm holding on to it around the back of your head.

For ever and ever

With one arm extended out in front, trace with your index finger the mathematical shape for eternity (a lazy eight) across the front of your body, following it with your eyes but not moving your head.

Amen

Bring both hands together in front of your face with all fingertips and thumbs touching those on the opposite hand, to create a structure like an open, upturned basket. Hold this for a few moments.

This activity can be scaled down to work for a local church or scaled up to work across the whole diocese or district.

It's half term so many families will be on holiday and have more time than usual. Most areas have beautiful or interesting places to visit with churches nearby: this idea entails providing a safari route around selected churches in places families would conceivably be keen to go to (for example: near the sea, near a nice churchyard in which to picnic, close to a Wetherspoons, by a play park, with lovely views, near a National Trust property, near an airport, near a McDonald's, a museum, a green space to run around in, a train station with open access platforms, a pond...). You might even persuade the churches to exercise their gift of hospitality and open up for the duration, providing refreshments and toilets.

- At its simplest, you might provide a map of the nine (one per day of the holiday) suggested places to visit, with postcodes for those using Satnav, and invite people by public transport, cycle, car or foot to

explore all of them during half term. On the map, provide a prayer for the families to pray for the area when they arrive at the place in question.

- Or you might organise a single day during the half term holiday when a set of nine or more churches commit to being open and offering hospitality, perhaps refreshments and small Thy Kingdom Come prizes for every visitor, so that a family might have an adventure day going from one to another. The welcoming church could suggest a prayer for people to say there, or a prayer station at which to do an action, so that the prayer is different at each venue.
- You could have a 'passport' to collect stamps or a treasure hunt letter or prayer token to collect at each venue, or a challenge to take a photo of your family in a particular spot, so the diocese or district could offer a prize to anyone completing the whole safari and submitting their completed passport or answer.
- The final venue could be a cathedral or similar central venue with a party to join in with.



If you have an outdoor space that's free of overhead powerlines, a kite festival is a great way of getting people out in the fresh air, looking up, thinking about God and enjoying being family together. Kites are fun for people of all ages.

You could invite people to bring along ready-made kites or have kite-making workshops with the following instructions:

You will need: a piece of paper 30cm x 45cm or A3 size; string; orange, yellow and red tissue paper; a length of wool; gold curling ribbons; scissors; ruler; bamboo canes (two small and one large per kite); glue; tape; hole punch.

This activity is based on Acts 2:3 when the Holy Spirit came and it looked like flames of fire were reaching out and touching people.

- Take the large piece of paper and fold it in half lengthways.
- Using the ruler, measure 15cm down the fold and make a mark **A**.
- Draw a line from mark **A** on the fold to the outside edge of the paper and mark this **B**.
- Draw a line from the outside edge of the paper **B** to the top of the fold and mark this **C** to make a triangle shape.

- Draw another line from the outside edge of the paper at mark **B** to the bottom of the fold and mark it **D** to make a longer triangle shape. Cut along the line from mark **B** to **C** and then from **B** to **D**. Unfold the paper and you should have a kite shape.
- Using the coloured tissue paper, cut out flame shapes in different sizes and stick them on to the kite.
- Turn the kite over and stick two small bamboo canes on to the kite in a cross shape with tape to strengthen the kite.
- Using the hole punch, make a hole in the bottom of the kite and tie a length of wool to the bottom of the kite, threading it through the hole.
- Cut some of the tissue paper into strips and tie a few strips on to the wool for kite tails. You may also want to tie some gold curling ribbon on to the bottom of the kite.
- Tie a length of string to the centre of the bamboo cross on the back of the kite and then tie the other end of the string to the top of one of the larger bamboo canes and use this to lift the kite (similar to a fishing rod) and move the kite through the air.
- As you fly your kite, stand in a line with the other kite makers and fly your kites together as a kite festival. Pray that the Holy Spirit will rest on the people around you as you fly your kites, and fill them with courage and enthusiasm.



PENTECOST PAPER PRAYEROPLANE PARTY



A paper plane-making afternoon to tie in with the theme of Jesus going 'up' at his Ascension and the Holy Spirit coming 'down' on the disciples at Pentecost.

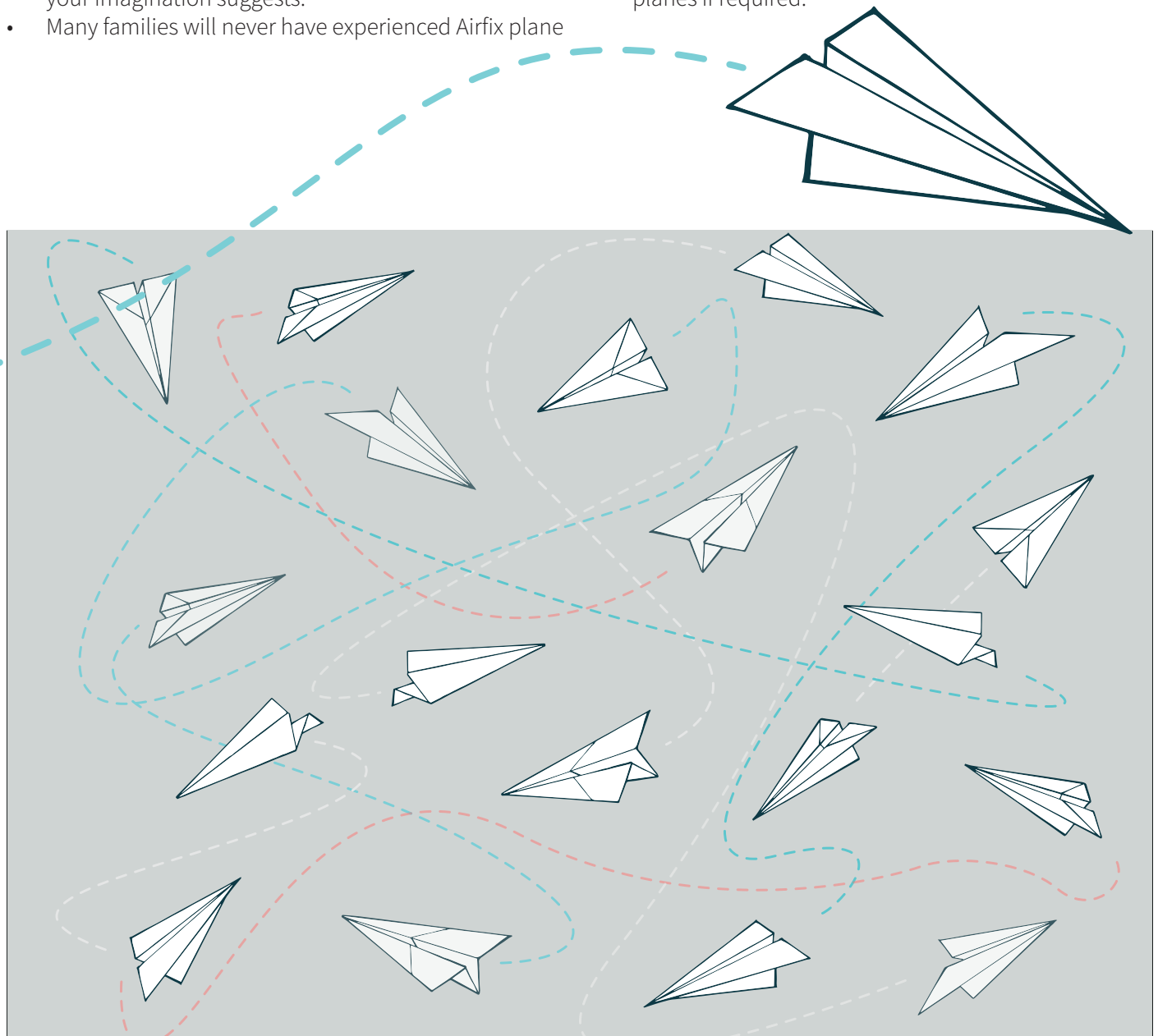
You will need: lots of paper of different sizes; pens; paper plane designs; people to help make them.

Some will want to simply learn how to make a new model of plane; some will want to show off their own.

- Have a few targets set up to practise aiming at.
- Have some competitions for the furthest flight... highest flight... most erratic flight... who can get their plane to the top of the rood screen and whatever else your imagination suggests.
- Many families will never have experienced Airfix plane

modelling so a few of these could be undertaken as joint projects under the aegis of an expert.

- For the final flourish, invite everyone to write or draw a prayer for someone they know on a sheet of red, yellow or orange paper (Pentecost colours) and launch them simultaneously with a shout of "alleluia". Everybody then picks up someone else's plane and takes that prayer home to pray at bedtime.
- A few drones or remote control, model planes will add to the sense of occasion and might even be used for filming the event. If a flight simulator can be obtained, that could be fun too.
- Your local Messy Church Regional Coordinator or Scout leaders will probably be able to suggest more 'flight'-themed activities that go beyond paper planes if required.



You will need: a central venue; four large cutouts of a teddy bear; numerous cutouts of smaller teddy bears (enough for four per family); sticky tac; tape; pens.

On the large teddies – one should have the letter **P** on its tummy, one the letter **R**, **A** and **Y**.

You need smaller versions of the teddies, without a letter on, as families collect one of each to make a teddy prayer chain at the end.

- Bringing teddies from home is optional but fun!
- Families move around the venue to find the large teddy with the letter **P** on its tummy. They take a small teddy from a nearby table and on the front, write a **P**. On the back, write the name of a person they want to pray for. They use this to remind them to pray when they get home.
- They move on to find the large teddy who has the letter **R** on its tummy. They take a small teddy from a nearby table and on the front, write an **R**. On the back, write the name of a friend to remind them to give thanks for them when they get home.
- They move on to find the large teddy who has the

letter **A** on its tummy. They take a small teddy. On the front, write an **A**. On the back, they write the name of someone who does a job in their community – it could be the local shop staff, the school crossing supervisor, the refuse collector etc. This reminds them to pray for them when they get home.

- They move on to find the large teddy who has the letter **Y** on its tummy. They take a small teddy. On the front, they write the letter **Y** and on the back, they write something they want to pray for themselves or their family.
- When they have all four teddies, it will spell the word **PRAY**. Take them to a central point where they can attach them together in a chain by joining the hands using sticky tac, tape, a wing paper fastener or another suitable fixing.
- Families gather together at the end for a teddy bears' picnic – simple food and time to be together.
- If you wanted to do more of a teddy theme, you could use cookie cutters to make teddy-shaped sandwiches and biscuits!
- Families take home their prayer bears to remind them to pray.



A PRAYER 'POSADA': ROUND THE WORLD IN NINE DAYS!



Organise this activity among the families in your church, and encourage each group to include at least one family they are friends with who aren't members of the church.

You will need: a 'posada box' (a nicely decorated shoebox or similar); a globe (a real one or a printed picture).

- Choose a country. Draw or print the flag from this country. On the back, write the name of the country, the word for 'hello' in the language of this country and your prayer for this country.
- You and your family pray for this country and put the flag in the box before passing it on to the next family on the list. This family will also pray for that country and then add another flag for a country they have

chosen. They then take it to the next family, who pray for the countries in the box and their own before taking it to the next family.

- So that everyone can have a chance to pray for more than one country, once you have got to the end of your list, you could send it around again, perhaps in reverse order.
- After nine days, all the families can meet up. Take some food to share from the countries your family chose. It doesn't need to be a big cooked meal, though it could be if you wanted it to be! It could be as simple as French bread, Italian pizza, Indian poppadoms or pakora, or Mexican tortilla chips and salsa. Spend time together enjoying the food and fellowship. Each family takes home some of the prayer flags to continue praying.



A REFLECTIVE STORY ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD



You might use this at an all-age service or in a home group.

The story is in the style of Godly Play storytelling. It loosely uses the symbol of light to represent the kingdom of God. Perhaps equally importantly is the idea of the kingdom, for us in a post-resurrection era, being all around us already, but still to come in the future. This idea is shown by the box in which all your visuals are held – you can see some things from it already, but there will always be more to come out of it, even after the end of this story. So make sure there are some spare nightlights left in at the end, in case anyone peers in.

You will need: a circular background cloth; matches; at least 15 nightlights (real ones if you have plenty of time to practise and a disciplined audience, otherwise battery-operated ones are fine); symbols for parables as below; small figures of people; a cross.

- Jesus told everyone he met the secret of the kingdom of God. It was a kingdom that was all around *(Place four, unlit nightlights around the edge of the circle)* and still to come.
- *(Look inside the box and show in your face that you can see there's so much more to come out.)*
- He told his friends what this kingdom is like. He said it's a different sort of kingdom from anywhere they knew. He said it's like a net full of different fish, or seeds sown in a field, or a mustard seed that grows enormous, or a tiny piece of yeast in dough. He said it's like finding treasure in a field, or a precious pearl. He said it's like a great party.
- *(For each parable, bring something from the box and place in the circle as a visual reminder of that parable. Suggestions: a fruit net filled with cardboard fish, a packet of seeds, one tiny seed, a bread roll, a picture of a treasure chest or better, a wooden box full of craft jewels, a pearl bead, a party popper.)*
- He told them to search for it
- *(Lift up one or two of the items and puzzle over them in turn, not knowing the full meaning of each one.)*
- And he told them to pray for this kingdom to come.
- *(Look in the box again and notice how much more there is to come out.)*
- Even after he'd risen from the dead, he talked about it: this kingdom that was all around and still to come.
- *(Gesture with your hand towards the parable things you can already see and towards the box of what is still to come.)*
- He showed people with his life what this kingdom is like. He noticed people, he healed people, he fed people and set them free from what was holding them back.

(Place four wooden figures or small play figures down, one each to represent the sort of people Jesus met.)

- And he told them who this kingdom is for. He said it belongs to the little people, like children, like people who are poor, like people who suffer for what they believe, and that the only way in is to be born again.
- *(Again, place a representative figure down for each sort of person.)*
- He died on the cross and rose again
- *(Place a cross down.)*
- So everyone can enter the kingdom, this kingdom that was all around and is still to come.
- *(Gesture with your hand towards the things you can already see and towards the box of what is still to come.)*
- And it grew and grew, this kingdom that is all around and still to come.
- *(Light the four nightlights.)*
- And his friends saw for themselves how great this kingdom is and wanted everyone to know that they could belong. So, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they prayed Jesus' prayer: "Your kingdom come". And they told everyone they met about the kingdom, and lived lives that showed what this kingdom was like. And the kingdom grew all around and is still to come.
- *(Add four more lit nightlights to the ones already around the circle. Move the people figures towards the edge of the circle.)*
- And even today, people who follow Jesus still pray for that kingdom to keep coming. They love living in that kingdom. They show in their lives what the kingdom is like. They can't stop telling people about it.
- *(Add four more lit nightlights and more figures to the circle.)*
- And the kingdom is growing and growing. Like a mustard seed. Like rising bread dough. Like a field of wheat. This kingdom that is all around and still to come.
- *(Gesture with your hand towards the parable things you can already see and towards the box of what is still to come.)*



Questions

- I wonder what you like best about this kingdom?
- I wonder what puzzles you most about it?
- I wonder what is already here?
- I wonder what is still to come?



Send a tweet and/or Facebook post every day of the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost to encourage your families to pray.



- Use these suggested encouragements to pray, one a day. Remember people are much more likely to take notice of them if they go out with a picture, so we've provided a selection of fun pictures from the characterful cat of photographer Ben Mizen to include with your posts. You could also use the hashtag **#pledge2pray**.



Invitation to join in:



 Dotty: cat of many moods. Check out her daily prayer challenges this week at **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 



Nine tweets



 Pray for someone who lives next door to you to know Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 



 Pray for someone on the other side of the next fence you see to meet Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 



 If you go into a shop today, pray for the person who serves you to want to serve Jesus too **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 



 Pray for someone in any sort of corner to know Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

 (Dotty's friend, Billy) Pray for one of your friends to know Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

 Every time you turn on a tap today, pray for someone you know to know the living water Jesus gives. **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

 Every time someone yawns today, pray for someone to wake up to the love of Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

 Pray for one person for each of your toes you can reach with your mouth **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

 Every time you use a computer or tablet today, pray for someone you know to know Jesus **#pledge2pray** **#DottyPussCat** 

Famous Friends

An icebreaker to introduce the theme of friendship

You will need: sticky labels, each with the name of one half of a famous friendship written on it.

- As you begin the session, stick a sticky label on the back of each child, each one bearing the name of one half of a famous pairing that the children will know, such as Buzz Lightyear and Woody, Batman and Robin, Ant and Dec, etc.
- On the signal to begin, children should try to find their partner by first asking 'yes/no' questions to establish their own identity, before searching for their partner. Names selected will depend upon the age range of the children in the group; for very young children, you could distribute picture cards and simply ask them to find their best friend.

Share the story

A Bible story which explores the theme of sharing Jesus with our friends

You will need: a children's Bible; an assortment of props or costumes to use as appropriate.

- Share the story of the man who was helped to meet Jesus by being lowered down through the roof, by his friends, as told in Luke 5:17–26. This could be done in a number of ways, as appropriate to your group and own storytelling skills. For example, you may choose to read the story from a familiar children's Bible, act out the story together with the children, or use small play people to play through the story in the centre of the room, with the children seated around in a group.
- Talk about the way that the friends of the man brought their friend to meet Jesus. You could use
- 'I wonder' questions to open this discussion:



I wonder why the man's friends brought him to see Jesus?

I wonder what they thought Jesus could do for their friend?

I wonder what Jesus thought when he saw this group of friends?

I wonder how we can bring our friends to Jesus?

Concertina People Prayers

An activity to help children to pray for their friends

You will need: A4 paper; scissors; pencils; felt-tip pens or colouring pencils.

- Cut the A4 paper lengthways in half to form paper strips and give one strip to each child. Help the children to concertina fold their paper into four segments and draw a simple person template on the top square. Arms (and possibly legs) will need to extend to the edge of the paper to ensure that you achieve a concertina piece with four linked people 'holding hands.'
- Carefully cut out the people, before unfolding the strip to see all four people.
- Encourage children to think about their own friends; who would they like to introduce to Jesus? Invite the children to decorate and label the four people accordingly. As you do so, talk about what things you can do to introduce your friends to Jesus: telling them about what it means for them to follow Jesus, inviting them to a church event etc.
- Once complete, lay the concertina people out together and pray for each of the people represented here, that the children in the group would find ways of introducing their friends to Jesus. You could either send the children home with their own strips to continue to pray for their friends, or you could invite the children to swap with one another so that they pray for each other in the coming days, that they would find moments to talk to their friends about Jesus.



40 Minutes

Prep

All you need: Meet the Parents DVD and DVD player, Emoji sheet, Post it notes, Pens, Flip chart/wipe board

Intro Video

2 Minutes

Show the scene in the movie 'Meet the Parents' where Jack asks Greg to pray at the dinner table. The scene shows Greg visiting the house of his girlfriends parents for the first time and Jack, his girlfriends dad, asks him to pray. Greg is clearly uncomfortable and tries to string together a prayer he thinks will be acceptable

Icebreaker

5 Minutes

Prep: Print off a list of all of the available emojis. A full list can be found at <http://www.wordstream.com/images/emojis-in-ad-text-list.jpg>

Ask the group which emoji do you associate with praying? (Don't know what emojis are? They are used on phones to enhance written communication, the young people should know what they are) Perhaps get them to discuss this in groups and then feedback which emoji and why.

Activity

8 Minutes

In groups, give them some post it notes and ask them to write down as many things as they can think of that are good about prayer and also all the things they can think of that are difficult about prayer

Ask – what would help to make prayer less difficult, and more 'good'?

Discussion

10 Minutes

Ask the group to list as many different ways they can think of that you can pray. As the young people offer answers, write them up on a flipchart or wipe board. Answers may include; In your head, out loud, in groups, in church, writing prayers down, using candles, prayer journals, prayer walks, praying using the bible, being quiet and listening to God etc

Ask the group how many of their list they have tried (eg, have you only every tried praying in your head?). Ask any young people who say they have tried a style of prayer to tell the group how they found it

Repeat the exercise but this time ask them, what they pray for. Again, write the answers shared up on the flipchart or wipe board. Answers may include: Friends, family, school, the world, the news etc

Explain

5 Minutes

Explain to the group that over the next 11 days you are going to commit to praying as part of Thy Kingdom Come. Explain that Thy Kingdom come is an international prayer movement and that thousands of other people will be praying over the 11 days too.

Explain that each day there will be something to pray for and a different way to try praying for it.

Explain that as part of the 11 days, they need to pick 5 people they know who they want to pray for, people who are not Christians and don't know Jesus. This could be family members, friends from school or people at youth group. Explain that each day they will be praying for them to know more about God and that they would come to have a relationship with him. Explain that some of the activities require them to speak to the people so to try and make sure they pick people who they will see or at least have regular contact with.

Activity

5 Minutes

You may want to suggest that each person takes a post it note, finds a quiet corner of the room and thinks about who might be on their list of 5 people.

Activity

5 Minutes

Gather the group together and explain that you are going to pray together.

Explain you are going to go round the group and say one thing they would like prayer for. It could be for themselves or for one of the people on their list. Then the person on their left is going to pray for them in a 1 sentence prayer “ Dear God, I pray for Susan’s aunt, I pray she feels better soon, Amen’

.....

Additional thoughts and reading

You may want to drop the group a text each day or suggest setting up a whatsapp group so as to encourage the group to try and do the prayer activity each day. If you have any regular meeting over the 11 days (eg, your normal weekly youth group), perhaps you could set aside 20 minutes to talk about how everyone in the group is finding it

Below is some books and websites worth looking at if you wanted to do some wider sessions around prayer

Prayer Spaces in Schools -

<http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>

24/7 Prayer Youth Resources -

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/youthandschools>

The Teenage Prayer Experiment by Miranda Threfall-Holmes and Noah Threfall-Holmes (written by a mum and teenage son)

Be Live Pray - Becca Dean

A Primary School ASSEMBLY FOR THY KINGDOM COME

Every language under the Sun Background Notes

- 2000 years ago, on a hillside above the Sea of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth was asked by his followers for instructions on how to pray. In response, Jesus recited a short prayer in his native Aramaic. The original form of the Lord's Prayer was succinct, fewer than two dozen words.
- Some fifty years later this prayer was recorded in Greek in Luke's Gospel in the Bible (11:2-4) and also by Matthew (6:9-13); his longer version became the standard prayer. At the time Greek was the Western vernacular, the language of commerce.
- Before long the Western churches were centred on Rome and Latin became almost exclusively the language of worship and study. From c400 to 1500 AD, the Vulgate (St Jerome's Latin translation of the original Hebrew / Greek Bible) was the most influential text in European society and the only Bible most Christians ever met.
- The Lord's Prayer was learnt for centuries, even by the most ordinary Christians, in Latin and the prayer was referred to by its first two Latin words: Pater noster.
- Today tourists and pilgrims on a trip to Israel visit the Church of the Pater Noster which stands on the traditional site in Jerusalem where Jesus taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer. It is particularly famous for a series of wall plaques made out of ceramic tiles. Each of these is decorated, according to the local Armenian tradition of painting on tiles, with the Lord's Prayer in a different language.
- The present church and its cloister were completed in 1874 by an Italian woman, Aurélie de Bossi, who was the widow of a French prince. Later she added a convent for Carmelite Sisters alongside the church. The princess had a particular devotion to the Lord's Prayer and erected translations of the prayer in 39 different languages.
- Among dozens of languages on view in the vaulted cloister are Icelandic, Hebrew, Spanish, Guarani, Maltese, Tagalog and Ojibway. Many panels can be seen on the internet and make a good focus for this assembly.

- www.christusrex.org collects copies of the Lord's Prayer written, said and sung in hundreds of languages. At the time of writing, the website holds the prayer in more than 1600 languages and dialects.
- The Lord's Prayer Project CD (see Resources) contains recordings of parents and school children in Ipswich singing the Lord's Prayer in many versions and examples of the Lord's Prayer said in their home languages. See Resources. You may have local families who can help say the prayer in their own home or heart language.
- 'Amen' is a Hebrew word meaning 'so be it' or 'I agree'. It is usually used without translation and many Christians may be unaware of its origins, simply by using it as the closing word to their prayers. It is a word also used by the Jewish and Muslim communities.

Preparing For your Assembly

Collecting what you need

This will vary according to what you select for your assembly:

- Large firm piece of card, at least 130cm x 75cm – rough sizing of Lord's Prayers at Church of the Pater Noster, Jerusalem
- Pictures to project of tiles at Paternoster Church – source from the internet – show at least one which gives an indication of size.
- A large globe
- A pupil dressed up as a princess and a posh chair to sit on! The child to be the princess can be chosen as pupils arrive or briefed earlier. Costume can be a simple shiny head-dress or the full gear!
- Bible and a pupil to read. Put book marker in at Luke 11:1-4.
- Examples of the Lord's Prayer spoken in different languages – on CD – or spoken by visitors, children, members of staff
- A4 paper to give out at end of assembly
- A version of the Lord's Prayer in song to project / music to play
- Lord's Prayer words in version you use, or intend to use, in school
- Reflection / prayer candle and matches

Assembly / Act of Worship

Preparing the space

- To one side, balance the large piece of card. When they arrive, invite two children to sit with it and hold the card up at the right time.
- To the other side, place a posh chair and invite your princess to sit somewhere at the back or in the ‘wings’, ready to come in later.
- Set up worship table or place candle and matches in safe place. Add the globe and a copy of the Lord’s Prayer.
- Organise other resources as best suits the space.
- Decide where choir will sit or organise pupils to work projector and music.

Gathering

Choose what is appropriate:

- Play a Lord’s Prayer song – see Resources. Encourage children to sing / listen as they arrive.
- Invite on older class to sing a Lord’s Prayer song as other children arrive and encourage other children to join in or to hum along.
- Greet everyone in your normal fashion e.g. Peace be with you / and also with you.

Engaging

- Ask the children with the card to hold it up. Say thank you in as many languages as you can manage. See if anyone can add more ways of saying thank you.
- Introduce ‘Princess Aurelie’. Over 150 years ago, this French princess, who’d been born in Italy, moved to Israel. She started her own collection of special words in different languages. She had a good start with French and Italian. (Princess to come to the front to a throne-like chair).
- The princess had her favourite words painted onto beautiful ceramic tiles with flowers around the edge – an Armenian style. She had 39 copies of her favourite words made, 39 different languages. Each copy was as big as this piece of card. Point to the card again. (Princess to wander over and admire!)
- See if you can work out what the words are. (Show some copies of the tiles but not an English version.) They are the words Jesus taught his disciples when they asked him how to pray. (Ask Princess to sit on posh chair and invite another child to stand behind her and read from a Bible: Luke 11:1-4.)

- Tourists from all over the world visit the tiles today; at the spot where Jesus taught the prayer to his disciples. And today there are even more languages. The princess believed these were the words of God’s Son, Jesus. She repeated them many times every day. She wanted everyone to know the words and she wanted everyone to know about Jesus.
- Beginning today (Ascension Day) and ending in ten days at Pentecost, lots of Christians just like the Princess Aurelie, are beginning ten days of special prayers for people to come to know Jesus. It is a project called *Thy Kingdom Come*, which are words from the Lord’s Prayer.

Tell pupils about any local events, or anything the school is putting on e.g. a special prayer station, or prayer space.

- Maybe you can say the whole prayer yourself in English, maybe not yet, but you can probably all say a bit of it in another language. Amen – it’s Hebrew and it means ‘I agree’.

Responding

Light a candle by a copy of the Lord’s Prayer and a globe. Say: *There are nearly 7000 languages in the world. Christians across the globe will be praying for other people during ‘Thy Kingdom come’.*

Reflect: Christians believe God understands every language and every prayer. Who would you like to pray for?

Prayer: Ask the ‘princess’ to read the Lord’s Prayer in English. *Invite children / adults who can say the prayer in another language to say it too.*

Sending

- Offer pieces of A4 paper for children to find and write out different language Lord’s Prayers and create a display in school.
- Sing a version of the Lord’s Prayer that children know or that they can simply join in e.g. the Caribbean version.
- Say the grace or other appropriate prayer and then blow candle out. Put a Lord’s Prayer song back on as children leave.

Sessions for family service
FROM MESSY CHURCH



ASCENSION TO PENTECOST



WHAT IS MESSY CHURCH?

Messy Church enables people of all ages to belong to Christ together through their local church. It is a way of being church which is particularly suited to families, but welcoming to all. It meets at a time and on a day convenient for local families and is aimed at people who have never belonged to a church before.

YOU CAN EXPECT:

- A warm welcome
- An hour of different hands-on activities with a Bible theme
- A short celebration with a story, songs and prayers
- A meal together
- A new session each month

FACTS: MESSY CHURCH:

- gets 500,000 people involved each month
- takes place in more than 30 countries worldwide
- is found in a variety of Christian denominations
- is for people of all ages, from 0–100 years old

MESSY CHURCH VALUES:

- Christ-centred
- Creativity
- Hospitality
- Celebration
- All-age

WANT TO START A MESSY CHURCH?

messychurch.org.uk/starting

WHO IS THE BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP?

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is the home of Messy Church; it supports, resources and enables its work. BRF is passionate about making a difference through the Christian faith. We want to see lives and communities transformed through our creative programmes and resources for individuals, churches and schools. For more information on the work of BRF, visit brf.org.uk



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The Bible Reading Fellowship is a Registered Charity (233280)

SESSION THEME

The theme is the Ascension to Pentecost story, inspiring us to pray together and tell everyone about Jesus (Acts 1:3–2:4).

1. BOTTLE ROCKET LIFT OFF

Jesus said a final goodbye to his disciples on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem. He needed to go so that the Holy Spirit could come and be with anybody, anywhere, anytime.

You will need: paper; duct tape; a plastic water bottle; Play-Doh; thin card; a cork; a bicycle valve and pump; water (optional). (www.wikihow.com/Build-a-Bottle-Rocket)

Roll a piece of paper into a cone. Wrap the nose of the cone with duct tape and attach this to the base of a plastic bottle. Take thin cardboard and cut out three to four triangles. These will be the fins of your rocket. Tape these around the open end of the bottle so they help the rocket stand straight. Add a Play-Doh ballast around the open end to give the rocket weight. Cover the whole thing with duct tape to keep it secure.

Fill up the bottle with water (optional – if you do use water you will need to launch this outside or within a paddling pool to contain the water expelled on lift off!)

Make a very small hole through a cork. Make sure the hole is the same size as the valve of your bicycle pump valve. Stuff the cork into the bottle opening.

Place the needle-like valve of a bicycle pump into the opening of the cork, making sure it fits into the cork tightly. Turn the rocket right-side up, holding it by its neck, and ensure it is aimed away from your face.

Launch the bottle rocket by pumping the bicycle pump. The rocket will go off when the cork can no longer withstand the pressure building up in the bottle. Do not approach the rocket once you start pumping, even if it appears that nothing is happening with the launch, as this can lead to injury. When it does launch, the rocket will shoot up quite fast and high so remove any obstructions and warn anyone around you first.

Talk about how the disciples must have felt when they saw Jesus disappear back into heaven. How could this be good news?



ASCENSION TO PENTECOST



2. TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Before Jesus left, he gave his followers instructions about what to do next. These included waiting in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit and what Christians call 'the Great Commission' (Acts 1:4–8).

You will need: a cereal box; black paint; coloured cellophane; glue; a cardboard tube; scissors.

Cut out three equal-sized circular holes on one side of the cereal box, and then paint the box black. While the paint dries, cut out three circles of cellophane slightly larger than the holes in the box and in three colours, red, yellow and green. Glue the cellophane circles behind the holes from inside the box – from top to bottom: red, yellow and green. Seal up the base of the box and make a hole for the cardboard tube to be inserted.

Talk about the meaning of the 'stop, get ready and go' instructions that Jesus gave his disciples. Would you say you are ready, nearly ready or not ready to share the good news of Jesus with people you meet?

3. THE GREAT COMMISSION SPIRAL

Jesus told the disciples that they should share the good news of God's love in Jerusalem first, and then move outward to Judea, on into Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth.

You will need: paper plates; felt-tip pens; pencils; glitter pens; scissors.

Decorate your paper plate with names of countries, cities, towns and villages that you know, starting with those closest to you at the centre, working outwards to those furthest away.

On the other side of your paper plate, draw a spiral in pencil from the centre outwards with roughly the same width between the lines. Using a glitter pen, write the sentence from Acts 1:8, 'Tell everyone about me', in the space between the pencil lines, repeating it as many times as you need to reach the end of the spiral.

Cut along the pencil lines to create your spiral.

Talk about how sharing the love of God and the story of Jesus starts at home first and only then are we ready to move outward to new places. How about telling each other your favourite story about Jesus?

4. HIDDEN ANGELS

When Jesus finished speaking with his disciples, he was taken up into a cloud and then two angels appeared to reassure them that one day Jesus would come back again. Most Christians believe that this will happen when the good news has been taken to everybody everywhere.

You will need: a white candle; grey paint; crayons; a picture of Jesus to colour in, printed in the centre of a piece of A4 paper (landscape).

On the paper, draw with a white candle the outline of an angel either side of the outline picture of Jesus. (If you like, you could prepare the candle angels first and leave them invisible while families are invited to colour in the outline of Jesus.)

When Jesus is coloured in, paint over the whole sheet with grey paint, obscuring Jesus (like the cloud) but revealing the two angels.

This could be a big mural activity that everyone contributes too. The painting over with grey paint could then be part of the celebration, when the angels are revealed.

Talk about what Jesus said as he left and then about the message of the angels. Could you be one of God's messengers too? Who might he want you to tell good news to?

5. ALL TOGETHER NOW

The disciples returned to Jerusalem and most likely gathered regularly in the upstairs room where, weeks earlier, Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper with them. Acts 1:15 records that there were 120 of them; it must have been crowded!

You will need: a box, possibly a large shoebox, that will become the upstairs room in Jerusalem; plenty of salt dough or clay; paints; brushes.

This is an ongoing activity as all who come are invited to shape, paint and add a salt dough or clay person (about 6–8 cm high) to the room. Depending on the numbers at this event, there may need either to be two 'rooms' or perhaps each family can make more than one person. The people added should represent a cross section of men and women, young and old. In many ways, this was the first 'church' waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit before they went out to witness to the world.



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Talk about who was there (see Acts 1:12–14). Can you be too old or too young or not clever enough or not beautiful enough to share the good news of Jesus with your friends?

6. THE LORD'S PRAYER SPINNER

The story in Acts tells us that the disciples in the upstairs room 'prayed with a single purpose of mind' (Acts 1:14 CEV). All evangelism must start (and continue!) with prayer. It is likely that they would have used the special prayer that Jesus taught them to unite their voices as one.

You will need: pre-cut circles of card divided into eight sections; felt-tip pens; coloured pencils; scissors; a pencil to insert in the centre to make it all spin.

Cut out the circle of the spinner. Have eight key words of the Lord's Prayer written out ready to be copied, one into each of the eight spaces on the spinner: Father, Holy, Kingdom, Will, Bread, Forgiveness, Temptation, Rescue. Invite people to illustrate each of the words in each section as you talk about what they mean.

Insert the pencil through the middle and spin the disc on the sharpened end. Wherever the spinner lands, pray that part of the prayer for yourself, your family, your community and the world.

7. TEAM BUILDING

During the days between the Ascension and Pentecost, the original eleven disciples decided they needed to find a replacement for Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. They wanted a full core team again before they set out on God's mission. Working together in teams is vital for sharing the Gospel with the wider world.

You will need: a copy of these words in large print; yoghurt pots; tape; sharpies; scissors; rice or lentils.

Here's song about the twelve apostles, including the name of the new disciple they elected in Acts 1:26 and also the name of Saul, who became Paul and who many think is the one who made up the important original number of twelve. Author unknown; can be sung to the tune of 'Jesus loves me, this I know' (Anna Bartlett Warner 1827–1915).

**Jesus called them one by one,
Peter, Andrew, James and John,
Next, came Philip, Thomas too,
Matthew and Bartholomew.**

Chorus:

**Yes, Jesus called them,
Yes, Jesus called them,
Yes, Jesus called them,
He called them one by one.**

**James, the one they called the less,
Simon, also Thaddeus,
Twelfth apostle Judas made,
Jesus was by him betrayed.**

Repeat Chorus.

**So they added on Matthias
Twelve disciples still known by us.
They were joined by one called Paul
They said 'YES' to Jesus' call.**

Repeat Chorus.

Decorate the yogurt pots with sharpies. Half fill them with the rice or lentils and then seal two pots together with tape.

Learn the song, accompanying it with your new shaker percussion. You may like to consider providing or making other instruments. You could use this song in the celebration.

Talk about the way Jesus wanted his disciples to share the good news together, not just on their own. Who could you be in a team with to share the good news about Jesus with other people? What could you do together?

8. MANNEQUIN CHALLENGE

The disciples didn't know how long they had to wait in Jerusalem, nor did they know what it was they were waiting for! However, they obeyed Jesus. It must have seemed like a long wait. Waiting for God's time to do his mission his way is a vital part of how we share the good news about Jesus.

You will need: stopwatch; paper; pen.

Standing still as mannequins is a popular group game. Gather a family group or groups and set out the scenario that they are in the upper room waiting for the promise of Jesus, like the disciples in Acts 1. They must all choose to be doing something (praying/writing/reading/eating a meal etc) in different positions around the floor space.

Count them down to the word 'waiting' at which everybody becomes as still as a mannequin. Start the



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stopwatch. Have an upper limit of time in your mind but don't tell the group. Who can stay still the longest? You might like to film this on your smart phone and use this as part of the celebration later.

Talk about how the waiting must have felt for the disciples. Has anyone had to wait for God's time like this? How do you know when to wait and when to talk to someone about Jesus?

9. BREAD OF LIFE

It is clear that the disciples used the Old Testament to encourage themselves as they waited and also to help them know what to do next—see Acts 1:20. The Bible was their daily bread that kept them going. God's rescue plan—his good news—is sometimes called 'salvation'.

You will need: loaves of sliced white bread; milk; cups; food colouring; thin paint brushes or cotton buds; toaster (optional).

Print off a range of short Bible verses from the Old Testament about God's rescue (do a search on 'salvation'). See www.biblegateway.com

Fill cups a quarter full of milk then add a few drops of food colouring to each one—have as many colours as you can. Paint the verses on to the bread and also decorate the verse.

Learn and eat the bread verse! You might want to toast the bread before you eat it.

Talk about which Bible encouragement might have helped the disciples and also why each chose the verse they did? How might it be good news for their friends?

10. SETTING OUT WITH GOOD NEWS

Finally the day of Pentecost arrived. The way the Holy Spirit came took them by surprise as the wind blew, the room shook, the flames appeared over their heads and they received the gift of speaking in other languages. They were quite literally blown away and blown out on to the streets to share the good news about Jesus. The church was born and began to spread around the world.

This activity involves constructing and playing a game that is a simple version of what happened at Pentecost. It is a game for two players and could therefore be constructed in twos or as a family group.

You will need: the lid of a large shoe box (link with activity 5 which uses the bottom part of the shoe box); a landscape map of the world the same size as the lid; four wooden blocks; 13 chickpeas; paints; an apple corer/screwdriver; straws.

Cut the landscape world map to fit inside the shoebox lid. Using the apple corer or screwdriver to make twelve neat holes in the map and lid on the land masses of the map, spacing them out evenly but leaving the area of the Middle East free. Mount the lid on four wooden blocks, one at each of the four corners of the lid.

Paint the chickpeas: six green, six yellow and one red. When they are dry, arrange the green and yellow chickpeas in the centre of the map over the Middle East. These represent the core twelve of the disciples on the day of Pentecost.

The game starts as you drop the red chickpea (the Holy Spirit) on to the group of disciples, which will scatter them. Each player picks a colour. The aim for each of the two players is to use the straws to blow their colour of chickpea into the holes, taking turns with one blow each and not touching the chickpeas. The winner is the first who has all six chickpeas of their colour in the holes.

Talk about how the good news is still spreading around the world and about how we too are part of God's unchanged mission today. Sharing the good news is a wonderful gift to give people!

CELEBRATION

Gather everyone with some music.

Celebrate what everyone has been making and doing during the activities and begin to link it up to the story of the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost.

Sing the song that they have learned in Activity 7.

Now tell the story of Ascension to Pentecost. Here's a possible outline.

Introduction: keep this speedy.

Christians have just celebrated a special day. It was SAMTSIRHC day. Show everyone this word written large on a big piece of card. Has anyone any idea what this special festival anniversary is about? Maybe tease out some silly answers but also slowly move towards the fact that it is CHRISTMAS written backwards. It is 'Christmas



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backwards' day. That explains everything, doesn't it!?

What happened at Christmas?

God sent Jesus to earth as a baby for us. Now on this 'Christmas backwards' day, God takes Jesus back to heaven from earth as a resurrected man. Because we often think of heaven as 'up there' and earth as 'down here', Christmas is seen as a descent, or going down, whereas 'Christmas backwards' day is a going up, or an ascent. Its proper name is Ascension Day.

Let's explore what happened that day.

Story

It was 40 days since that amazing Easter morning. Jesus had kept appearing to his friends: on the road, in a room, one to one, one to 500 and by a lake. He really was alive again. But gradually they began to realise that it was time to say goodbye. I wonder how they felt?

Briefly explore with the whole group how the disciples might have been feeling.

Jesus walked with the disciples to a place outside Jerusalem called Olive Hill (the Mount of Olives).

Act out 'climbing' to the top.

Then Jesus said: God has it all organised. I will come back as a king but not the sort of king you are expecting. I will be a king in people's hearts. So here's what you must do.

Now teach the following version of 'the Great Commission' with the suggested actions:

Go (point forward with one arm and finger outstretched)

Into all the world (draw a tiny circle with your outstretched finger and then make that circle bigger and bigger)

And share the good news (cup hands together and offer 'the contents' around to people left and right)

With everybody, everywhere (rapidly point to everyone in the whole group and beyond)

And I will be with you.

Just wait; stop in Jerusalem until you receive the promise.

Talk with the person you've come with about who you could share the good news of Jesus with. Maybe you could share with them your favourite story about Jesus, or invite them to your church, or ask them what they think about Jesus.

A song

Sing this song to the tune of London's burning. Try singing it as a round!

**Spirit burning, Spirit burning
Fell upon them, Fell upon them
Good news! Good news!
Jesus is Lord, Jesus is Lord.**

**Spirit burning, Spirit burning
Falls upon us, Falls upon us
Good news! Good news!
Jesus our Lord, Jesus our Lord.**

Pray the Lord's Prayer together. You may like to teach and include some simple actions. See www.pinterest.com/MessyChurchBRF under 'prayer'

Extra idea

You could bring the whole story together using the following simple poem to the tune of 'Two little dickie birds sitting on a wall...'. Maybe the congregation can learn the chorus.

**Eleven amazed disciples, sitting very still,
Listening to Jesus, up on Olive Hill.
'Time to go', says Jesus and then a cloud came down.
'I'll send the power that you need, just wait inside the town.'**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

**Jesus was in one place, in Israel where he came
But soon he will be everywhere, with all who call His name.**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

**Jesus had begun his work and showed us what is true
He went... but comes with power again. Over to me and you.**

**Fade away Jesus, walk home friends
Come soon Spirit, the promise that he sends.**

THE MEAL

Whatever style of meal you go for—high tea, buffet or hot food—try to include dishes from around the world as a reminder of the Christians family all over the globe.

These activities have been devised and generously contributed by individuals, many of whom provide ongoing resources for prayer with families. Their details and other useful family/ faith resources and websites are given below.

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Other useful websites resourcing or informing family faith include:

brf.org.uk/updates/introducing-parenting-faith
careforthefamily.org.uk
cgmcontheweb.com/?page_id=543
faithinhomes.org.uk
messychurch.org.uk
barnabasinchurches.org.uk
thetreasureboxpeople.co.uk
flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk

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