

Guidance For Prayer In Church Schools



What is Prayer?

Prayer lies at the heart of life for most people of faith. Within Christianity, life is lived in relationship with God and prayer is a way of seeking to deepen that relationship and to follow the way that Jesus taught. Church schools attempt to give children an invitational experience of faith and prayer is therefore an important aspect of this. Children in Church schools are invited to pray as a way of encountering God and coming to a greater sense of purpose in their lives.

It is important that children do not see prayer simply as a time when they can ask for something they want or for things to happen.

Children who do not wish to pray should be taught to show respect for those who do, and similarly those children's own wishes should be respected by others. Despite this sensitivity, it remains important for Church schools to reflect and promote their Christian foundation through prayer. Prayer in this context may become:

- A time where we encounter the Christian story and perhaps be transformed by it
- A celebration of what is of ultimate worth in our lives (for some Christians this is God)
- A time where people can develop an understanding of Jesus and the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- A time to reflect

Prayer can mean many things to many people but for Christians in Church schools prayer can perhaps be defined as in some sense joining our hopes to those of God. As our schools welcome those of all faiths and none, opportunities for prayer and reflection should be sensitive to a huge variety of needs and attitudes. As praying is usually



an integral part of collective worship, good practice in schools is to introduce prayer using a form of non-coercive language. This respects the personal beliefs and integrity of both

staff and the pupils present. Put simply, **prayer must always be invitational**. This can be achieved by using words such as, 'If you agree with my prayer maybe you would join me by saying Amen at the end,' ' You may like to join me in reflecting on the story we have just heard and what you could do if you ever find yourself in that situation.' In this way the Christian teacher, or the teacher without a faith, is faced with an opportunity to facilitate prayer in the knowledge that they are not imposing anything on those present.

What is the Purpose of Prayer?

Prayer in a Church school context is an opportunity to encourage children and young people to explore questions about God, faith and life in a safe environment and have opportunities to reflect and respond. As such, a time for prayer can:

- Develop spirituality
- Promote respect and tolerance
- Develop children's character through promotion of Christian values
- Put the Christian ethos at the heart of the school – it can become a celebration of the school's identity

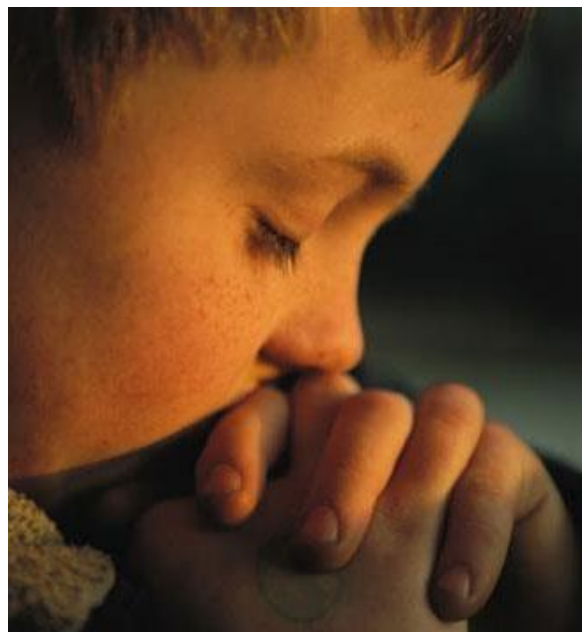
Prayer during Collective Worship

Opportunities for prayer and reflection are central to acts of collective worship in Church schools. Prayer in worship can take many forms. It can be collective, personal, formal, created by the children themselves, silent, meditational, sung or spoken.

Children in Church schools and academies should have the opportunity to learn and offer the Lord's Prayer on a regular basis.

The Lord's Prayer

Christians believe that the **Lord's Prayer** is the prayer Jesus gave his disciples in response to their request to teach them to pray. It is the most famous of Christian prayers and recited by many Christians in their individual prayers on a daily basis and the majority of church services. The words provide a **framework** for prayer and can be used a structure for other prayers and reflections.



Why should children learn it?

As some of the most famous words in the world, it is natural that the Lord's Prayer should form part of Religious Education for all pupils in schools. Children will meet the words in church weddings and funerals, in civic services and in a variety of other places as they grow up. In Church of England schools, the Lord's Prayer should be incorporated regularly in collective worship as part of its Anglican nature. The Lord's Prayer is included in all Anglican services. The traditional version would have been said daily in Church schools when they were first founded.

Introducing the Lord's Prayer

It makes sense to introduce the Lord's Prayer afresh each school year even when it has been a regular part of daily worship.

In church the Lord's Prayer may be prefaced by liturgical or non-liturgical words e.g.

- We now say the prayer that Jesus taught us and many have prayed since...
- As our Saviour has taught us, so we pray...
- Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us ...

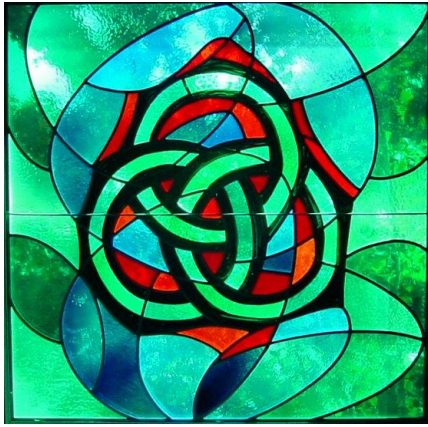
Choosing the right version

Several different English versions are commonly used. Your chosen version can be displayed in school. Children may also have their own versions e.g. on bookmarks, laminated and maybe decorated.



The Trinity

To remind children of the Trinity schools may consider the regular use of the words of the Grace in worship as one of the formal prayers/responses. Of all prayers the Grace is particularly Trinitarian in its content.



'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all'

The words should be explained to pupils not just recited so they have a sense of the work of each member of the Trinity. Perhaps as follows.....

- An awareness what it means to have God as Father – celebrating his love and his creation
- An awareness of how God shows his grace (kindness and generosity) through Jesus His Son – the One who demonstrates God's love to the world and who is God's way of bringing us forgiveness
- An awareness of how God works in our lives through the Holy Spirit e.g. as 'the One who comes alongside us'

Making Space for Prayer

A major difference between Church schools and other state schools might be seen in how and when prayers are used outside the school hall. It is common place in some Church schools to say grace before meals or to have prayers before staff meetings and governing body meetings.

Time and space need to be given to facilitate and support prayer in Church schools. Prayer spaces work best when they become part of the daily spiritual and pastoral life of a school, part of an ongoing rhythm of involvement in worship, lessons and school activities. Prayer spaces can be specially created for a particular event or time, although schools are encouraged to create them as permanent areas of the school that change in content and focus.



In each school, within the building and grounds there are often many opportunities to create prayer and/or reflective spaces:

1. The main collective worship area (usually the hall). This will generally be the focal point when the whole school community gathers for collective worship.
2. The school entrance hall and corridors are thoroughfares where people can use interactive areas to pause and reflect.
3. Classroom spaces can have specific areas for prayer, reflection and quiet thought.
4. Outdoor prayer spaces work well. Having a special space outside can add to the spiritual aspect of the space.

The space should be easy for children to use; most prayer spaces benefit from being visible to passers-by, from adjacent corridors and from outside. Being visible keeps the prayer space in children's minds, and increases the chances that they and others might drop in for a visit.

Prayer or reflection areas work best when they contain something for the children to do, for example, placing prayer pebbles in a pot, tying a ribbon to a tree.



Prayer can be more than just words. The best prayer activities combine something to reflect on and something to do that symbolises a response. Children should be able to access the prayer or reflection area whatever their ability, religious or cultural background, and learning style.

The best prayer spaces provide opportunities for a shared spiritual experience as well as a personal one.

Top Ten Prayer Spaces

Schools planning their first prayer space are recommended to look at and use some of the top ten prayer themes and activities found at www.prayerspacesinschools.com. (There is an example below).

It is good practice to select a combination of prayer activities that are directed 'upwards' (i.e towards God, e.g. Big Questions, Prayer Wall), 'outwards' (i.e towards the world

around us, e.g. Pray The News, Stop The Traffik), and 'inwards' (i.e reflective, towards the self, e.g. Who Am I?, Fizzy Forgiveness).

Prayer Wall

Every day at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem thousands of people push paper prayers into tiny cracks. After terrorist attacks prayer walls have appeared in lots of towns and cities across the world with people wanting to express their hopes, fears, gratitude and requests to God. This activity provides an open space for children to write or draw their prayers and add it to a



'prayer wall'. There are lots of alternative ways to set up a 'prayer wall' style prayer activity. Children could write or draw their prayers onto sheets of lining paper that can be pinned on to a wall, making it more of a graffiti-style prayer wall. Or, instead of a wall, students could attach their prayers to some kind of prayer tree. With post-it notes, you can use almost any object or location and turn it into a 'prayer wall'.

Prayer spaces offer real opportunities for spiritual development and, within a Christian context, a greater understanding of what prayer means for believers i.e. prayer is more than just saying 'amen'.

An advisory note about the facilitation of Muslim prayer space is available on the diocesan website.

Resources

Sample prayer station cards

For sample prayer station cards for use with primary school aged children, see below:

[Prayer_cards_Sept_2013.pdf](#)

Online support materials

[Barnabas in Schools](#) use the search facility for The Lord's Prayer. Ideas for collective worship, and lessons.

[Flame: Creative Children's Ministry](#) use the search box to look for Lord's Prayer and there are lots of ideas for crafts and games linked to The Lord's Prayer.

Sung version of The Lord's Prayer [Our Father, Who is in Heaven - Worship Workshop](#)
This is the website to type in your browser www.worshipworkshop.org.uk then search for 'Our Father'.

[The Lord's Prayer Unplugged](#) – Lucy Moore BRF 2004 for primary age range
[Living the Lord's Prayer](#) - Ian Terry Grove books eD23 2015 . Schools wanting to buy a children's book for The Lord's prayer could look at www.eden.co.uk

Some Example School Prayers

Dear God,
Every day is new
With exciting experiences ahead. Every day is new
With yesterday's hurts forgiven. Every day is new
With disappointment fading away. Every day is new
Because you cause the sun to rise And our hopes to soar
As your light floods into our hearts
And gives new life. Amen

Dear God,
Thank you for looking after our school.
Thank you that you love each and every one of us here.
Help us to learn, play and share together,
So that the wonderful world you have made
Becomes more beautiful every day.
Amen

Almighty God
We give you our school.
We give you all the teachers and staff who work here,
We give you all the children who study here.

We pray our school would be place of great discovery, adventure and creativity.
May it be a place where we love to learn and where we learn to love,
A place where everyone is respected and all are deeply valued.
We ask all this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Father in heaven,
We thank you for the amazing, beautiful world you created. Help us to care for it.
We thank you for the wonderful, unique people you have made us to be. Help us to care
for one another.
We thank you for the incredible, tasty foods you have invented. Help us remember and
care for those who are hungry.
We thank you for the inspiring stories and teaching in the bible. Help us to share this good
news with people everywhere.
Amen.

For a first day at work or school

Loving God, let me be strong today
as I meet new people in new places.
Make me brave when I am worried,
show me how to learn from everyone around me,
and help me to do my very best. Amen.

For a birthday

Loving God, bless your servant N
whose birthday is today;
give him/her a joyful heart as he/she celebrates
and remembers all who have brought riches to
his/her life;
and be with him/her,
over the coming year and forever. Amen