



Diocese of Bristol

Creative prayer ideas *to use with younger generations*

Collated by Dan Jones, Youth & Children's Adviser | Diocese of Bristol



Creative prayers ideas to use with younger generations

Prayer is an amazing gift which strengthens our relationship with God; it has the power to change us and the world around us. When we pray at all times, in all circumstances and for all things, we see God's Kingdom come.

In the Church of England, we often pray with language which comes from the Bible and from the texts of our liturgy. However, the key is knitting together these words and images with the ideas that come from our own hearts and from the communities in which we pray. It is important to remember that the task of leading intercessions is not just offering our prayers, but also helping to encourage others in their own personal prayer time.

To help churches, church schools and households to promote and spend more time together in prayer, this booklet provides a range of prayers and creative ideas designed to encourage all ages to pray together during services, collective worship, church activities and at home.

Creative approaches to page 2
building a foundation of prayer

Creative prayers for page 3
church and school worship

Creative prayers for page 6
children & youth groups

Creative prayers for page 8
families to use at home

2

Creative approaches to *building a foundation of prayer*

National Prayer Weekend

The website has lots of ideas to encourage your church to pray for the local community www.national-prayer-weekend.com

Themed Sundays

To help your church pray for specific topics, global issues and current affairs e.g. education, Fairtrade, World Aids Day, there is a list of themed Sundays available on the diocesan website to encourage churches to pray during worship - www.bristol.anglican.org/documents/themed-sundays-2019/

Praying for and commissioning people

Praying and commissioning specific roles is an effective way of supporting volunteers and valuing their contribution within the life of your church. For example, if you are interested in commissioning children's/youth leaders on Education Sunday contact Dan Jones for the liturgy.

Thy Kingdom Come

The TKC website provides a variety of resources and ideas to pray as a church including guidance on leading prayers and intercessions - www.thykingdomcome.global/resources

24/7 Prayer

This global movement is a network that promotes and resources prayerful, missional communities. Their hub of creative resources for personal and communal prayer can be found here - www.24-7prayer.com/prayer

Prayer Spaces

Prayer Spaces enable all ages to explore life and faith in a safe and creative way. Could your church/school regularly set up a prayer space? For more information check out - <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com>

The 95 Campaign

Launched by Scripture Union to encourage churches to pray for children, young people and families not regularly in church. Signing up accesses resources and support - <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/95-campaign>

"Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances".

1 Thessalonians 5

Prayer is an amazing gift which strengthens our relationship with God. When we pray at all times, in all circumstances and for all things, we see God's Kingdom come.

Here are some simple and creative suggestions to help your church deepen its foundation of prayer...



Prayer walks

Prayer walking is about getting out into the communities where you live and praying for God's Kingdom to come. When you are out and about, you connect with the physical places where people spend their lives. Whether a prayer walk is for revealing God's heart for the community or more devotional in nature, the experience can be socially rewarding as well as spiritually enlightening.

Prayer guardians

A prayer guardian is someone who commits to praying for a child or young person. Setting up a prayer guardian network requires collaboration with the Parish Safeguarding Officer to establish a safe and supportive prayer network. An important aspect of the Prayer Guardian's role is that their only connection with the child/young person is through prayer. Names are then given confidentially to the Prayer Guardian to pray for the child. For more information contact Dan Jones.

Prayer triplets

A simple concept based on Jesus's words in Matthew 18: 'if two of you agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.' [Matthew 18:19-20. Three people connecting (even via phone) to pray with one another on a regular basis.

Prayer Testimonies

God answers prayer so why not feature prayer testimonies as a regular part of the service? Inviting people to share their story of how God has listened and answered their prayers can be inspirational and empowering!

Creative prayers for church and school worship

The following pages feature a variety of liturgy and prayers suitable for a church service or collective worship in a school. Incorporating actions or sign language into your time of worship can be a simple and effective way of making liturgy more interactive and inclusive for all ages:

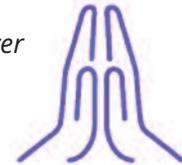
Opening prayers:

- can be led or split with the congregation saying words in bold:

- Leader: We have come together **in the name of Christ**
Nod or smile a greeting to all in the congregation
- Leader: To offer our praise **and thanksgiving**
Lift up hands high as an act of praise
- Leader: To hear and receive **God's holy word**
Put hands into a 'V' formation like an open book
- Leader: To pray **for the needs of the world**
Put hands together in a prayer position
- Leader: And to seek the forgiveness **of our sins**
Hold out hands in front of body palms up ready to receive
- Leader: That by the power **of the Holy Spirit**
Link thumbs & 'flap' fingers imitating a dove (Holy Spirit)
- Leader: We may give ourselves **to the service of God**
Move hands away from heart - a gesture of self-giving
Through Jesus Christ **our Lord. Amen.**
- Leader: God wants us to come together to worship him.
As always, he welcomes us.
- All: Thank you, God. It's good to be here!** (thumbs up in air)
- Leader: God welcomes us.
- All So, let's welcome each other!** (people greet each other.)

Praying is more than putting your hands together and closing your eyes, it's about communicating with God. Therefore, explaining and encouraging children, teenagers and adults to connect with God in deep and meaningful ways is important.

The following ideas adopt different learning styles, character types and senses, to draw people into prayer and to encourage a foundation of prayer within the life of your church.



The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven (*hands joined and raised high*)
Hallowed be your name (*heads bowed*)
Your kingdom come (*release hands and point upward to heaven*)
Your will be done (*a salute*)
On earth as it is in heaven (*draw large circle with hands*)
Give us this day our daily bread (*pretend to eat bread*)
Forgive us our sins (*shake head saying 'no'*)
As we forgive those who sin against us (*look at people either side*)
Lead us not into temptation (*stop sign with hand*)
but deliver us from evil (*hands together in front of the face*)
For the kingdom, the power and the glory (*one hand pointing up high*)
Are Yours now and forever (*both hands point high and turn on the spot*)
Amen (*thumb up placing hand on the open palm of other hand*)

The Lord's Prayer (adapted from The Message)

Our Father in heaven - reveal who you are! (*wave both hands*)
Set the world right - do what's best above and below (*point up / down*)
Keep us forgiven - with you and with others (*thumbs up*)
You're in charge - You can do anything you want! (*salute*)
You're ablaze in beauty - Yes. Yes. Yes! (*yes's get louder each time*)

We gather to worship

If moving around is difficult for some people turning to face the focal points works well as an alternative...

(Gather at the Font)

Lord God, as we reflect on our call to follow you, we think of you and your baptism, and remember the moments of your journey that act as road markers within our own journey.

**Lord, we pray for our journey together
Lead us into Your service.**

(Move to the Lectern)

Lord God, our world often seems to be filled with darkness. We pray that our leaders would follow the Christ of the scriptures, who is the light of the world.

**Lord, we pray for our journey together
Lead us into Your service.**

(Move to, or near the altar)

Lord God, we trust in Your undeserved grace, which we remember whenever we gather at Christ's table. We think now of those we know and love who need you in their lives today.

**Lord, we pray for our journey together
Lead us into Your service.**

(Move to the Door)

Lord God, we may come and go through this door, but there are many who do not. We believe that Your love reaches out to all. Encourage and empower us to be messengers of that love wherever we go.

**Lord, we pray for our journey together
Lead us into Your service.
for the sake of your son,
our saviour, Jesus Christ.
Amen**

Hand Signs Confession

(Make a fist)

We are sorry for the times we have got angry with other people.

(Point away from yourself with your index finger_

We are sorry for the times we have blamed others and seen things wrong in others without recognising how much is also wrong in us.

(Close up your hand and hold it close to your chest)

We are sorry for the times we have kept things selfishly to ourselves and not been prepared to give to those who need our help.

(Put your hand over your mouth)

We are sorry for the foolish words we have spoken which have hurt other people.

(Put your hand over your eyes)

We are sorry that we have deliberately chosen not to see the good things we could have done to help other people.

(Put your hand over one ear)

We are sorry for the times we have not listened to the cries of those who are poor or who suffer injustice.

After a pause ask everyone to hold out their hands open palms facing upward, as if they are waiting to receive something. Use words such as:

Leader: Jesus said, 'if you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest'. So we bring all our sins and our failure to love to Jesus.

To remember that it is through the cross that our sins are forgiven, everyone traces the shape of a cross with an index finger across the palm of the other hand they are holding out.

Leader: Thank you Jesus that you died for us so that we can start a new life in the power of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Action 'Blessings':

Adding actions or sign language to amplify certain words can add a new dimension to led prayers...



All: **The power of God, displayed in creation**
(both arms flexing muscles out to the side)

Leader: Fill you with grace to serve God in his world;

All: **The 'peace' of God breathing in every living thing**
(V sign of peace with both hands)

Leader: Enable you to spread God's peace wherever you go;

All: **The love of God which fills the universe**
(cross forearms across the chest)

Leader: Flow through you that you might reflect his image,

Leader: And the blessing of God almighty
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Be among you and remain with you always.

All: **Amen.**

May the **LIGHT** that is Jesus illuminate our lives;
www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/l/light?v=79cba1185463

May the **LOVE** in our hearts shine for those around us.
www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/h/heart?v=79cba1185463

May our **HEARTS** reach out to help those in need
www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/h/heart?v=79cba1185463

And may our lives be faithful as we **GO** as followers of Jesus
www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/g/god?v=79cba1185463

For the glory of **GOD**. Amen.
www.babysignlanguage.com/dictionary/g/god?v=79cba1185463

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (hands reaching out ready to receive)
and the love of God (hands crossed over one's heart)
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (hands out ready to receive)
be with us all now and for evermore (holding hands with those around us)
Amen (thumb up placing hand on the open palm of other hand)

Action 'Closing prayers':

All: **We thank you for keeping us in the love of God our Father**
(hands reaching up to the sky)

All: **We praise you for teaching us in the name of Jesus Christ**
(hands reaching out to each other)

All: **We go out to serve the world, in the power of the Holy Spirit**
(Point forwards moving around to finish pointing at the door)

Leader: And all God's people said...

All: **Amen.**

Leader: Let us pause and take 3 deep breaths...
God, you are above (everyone reaches towards the sky)
below (touches their toes)
inside (places hands on their hearts)
and all around (makes big arm circles).

All: **I worship you and give my life to you**
And I love you with all that I am (3 deep breaths)

Leader: May the God of hope,
fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit,
you may abound in hope (Romans 15:13)

All: **Amen.**

All: **Heavenly Father,**
You are our "light" our "salvation" and our "strength."

All: **The 'breath' of Your Spirit blows through us,**
www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=254
The 'brightness' of Your light shines around us,
www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=258
The fire of Your love lives within us,
www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=799
To the glory of Your name we shout 'hallelujah!'
www.handspeak.com/word/search/index.php?id=799

Creative prayers for children & youth groups

Prayer Square

For this prayer you will need a free-standing cross, some pebbles and four A4 cards that can be prepared beforehand or during the session. Each card has a word (e.g. Friends, Family, School, Home, World, Sorry) and can be decorated with pictures to make them more interactive. Make a square on the floor using the templates with the cross placed in the middle of the square. Invite the group to sit around the prayer square and then spread the pebbles out on the floor in front of the group.

Ask the young people to choose a pebble they would most like to use as their prayer pebble. Invite the young people to place their pebble in the square they want to silently say / do a prayer for in their own heart / mind (for approximately 10 seconds). At the end of the 10 seconds the whole group says 'Amen'. This is repeated three more times (each time moving the pebble). At the end the group can say a collective Amen to join all their prayers together.

Noughts and Crosses

This game provides a framework in which to pray together, build confidence sharing, and have fun. You'll need a noughts and crosses grid, big enough for everyone to see and six cards with P on and six with T on. For younger children you could make the cards different colours so they can tell at a glance, which is which. Divide the group into two teams and play the game like a normal game of noughts and crosses, placing the cards on the grid in turn to try to make a line. But before you can put a card down, you say a Please prayer if you're on the P team or a Thank you prayer if you're on the T team. Swap over at the end of a game to have a return match.

Birthday blessings

Put up a wall calendar and ask the everyone to write their names beside their date of birth. Include other members from the church if you wish and any significant dates from the church and youth group calendar. Each week use this visual prompt to stimulate small group prayer for individuals and activities.

Planning a prayer time in your children and youth groups is a great way to introduce and immerse children and young people into the habit of meaningful prayer.

However, this will need as much, if not more imagination and energy as the other parts of your programme.

Here are some creative ideas for refreshing your prayer times with children and young people.



Bowl-full

Give everyone a piece of paper and a pen and ask them to write down something/someone they would like to thank God for. They then fold this up and put it into a bowl. When everyone has done this, mix the papers up in the bowl and then ask people to take one out at random. Invite the group one at a time to tell God what is written on the paper using a structure such as, 'Thank you God for... Amen'. Short and sweet, it builds up confidence that prayers don't have to be long and it can be normal to talk to God together.

Popcorn Prayer

Come together as a group. Let the children/young people know that you are going to open up with a prayer and then anyone can jump in and share their prayer. This prayer often feels just like popcorn. It will start off very slow as children/young people feel shy speaking up at first. However, it will usually have a good "pop" throughout the middle as people jump in and voice their prayer requests. As the prayers begin to die down and eventually seem to be wrapping up, come in as the leader and close the prayer. Afterwards, enjoy some popcorn together.

Three envelopes

If the group is rather shy about praying out loud, pin up three envelopes labelled 'Thank you' 'Sorry' and 'Please' and let group write their prayers on slips of paper and put them in the appropriate envelope. Check the envelopes from time to time to so that everyone hear the prayers and find out if any prayers have been answered.

People Cross

This idea is a simpler version of the Prayer Square and only requires some card (index cards work well) and pens. Ask each young person and leader to write the name of a friend, work colleague or family member they wish to pray for, on a piece of paper or card. The young people then place the papers on the floor in the shape of a large cross. The group then stands in a circle around the cross and pray for the person they named. Invite them to softly speak out their individual prayers together. Encourage them to pray;

- For any needs that each friend may have
- That each friend will become more open to God
- That each friend will become a follower of Jesus
- That God would use you to reach your friends

Prayer Walk

Organising a prayer walk will be dependant on ages and safety, and will require some forward planning (requesting consent etc.) especially if you plan on venturing beyond the church boundaries. As you walk around make notes of the things that you see i.e. particular homes, schools, shops, people. Consider and discuss possible prayer needs for each of these situations, and make a note. You could pray right there and then, or return to church to pray for the various people, locations and topics.

News prayers

Collect together some of the TV news headlines (local, national, global) from the previous week as a short video or PowerPoint presentation. Alternatively, select 3-4 headlines from newspapers and stick them to a piece of card. Ask the members of the group to write a prayer about one of the subjects, and then in turn, to read them out. Or, give out copies of the day's newspapers and ask the young people to cut out or highlight stories they wish to pray for.

Prayer Maps

Place a large map or globe of the world in the centre of the room. Around the map place photographs and newspaper articles of situations around the world which need prayer and intercession. Highlight nations where you know missionaries and Christian ministries working to reach people with the Gospel. If you wish, ask members of the group to research certain nations and bring prayer requests from the information they have gathered.

God's Splendor (a reflective prayer using Psalm 8)

Read Psalm 8 below which has been adapted from a modern translation. Move the group outdoors and ask each person to thank God for a specific aspect of nature. Invite the children/young people to look around at the world they live made by God and humans (buildings etc.). Now, ask the group to look up to the heavens and then at each other

Lord, your name is so great and powerful!
People everywhere see your splendor.
Your glorious majesty streams from the heavens,
filling the earth with the fame of your name!

Look at the splendor of your skies,
your creative genius glowing in the heavens.
When I gaze at your moon and your stars,
mounted like jewels in their settings,
I know you are the fascinating artist who fashioned it all!

All of creation, every living thing of the earth, sky and sea
the wildest beasts and all the sea creatures -
everything bows down in worship to you.

Lord, your name is so great and powerful.
People everywhere see your majesty!
What glory streams from the heavens,
filling the earth with the fame of your name!

Skittles / Starbursts / Jelly Baby Prayer

Open the packet of Skittles/Starbursts and take it in turns to pick one. (You could do this eyes open or closed to make it more tricky.) Before eating the sweet, a prayer is said asking God to help or do something for someone or something in the category below or come up with your own:

Red: family / Purple: friends / Green: school / Yellow: you / Orange: world

Prayers in a hat

Ask everyone in the group to put their name on a piece of paper. Place the pieces of paper into a hat or another convenient container. Then pass the hat around the group and ask each young person to take out a piece of paper. Encourage them to pray for that person during the coming week.

Creative prayers for families to use at home

Prayer rocks

Wrap a special rock in fabric or find a rather large stone and have the child paint the word "pray" on it. The child places the rock on their pillow. When they see the rock at bedtime, it reminds them to pray. After praying the rock is placed on the floor somewhere where they will notice it in the morning. Pray again in the morning, and the rock goes back on the pillow as the reminder to pray at bedtime.

To make prayer rocks even more interesting, make one for every member of the family with their name on the rock. Each day, a different person is the "reminder" and they can place family members' prayer rocks anywhere that person will see it easily. Once the person sees it they pray. At the end of the day, share what happened. Where did people find their prayer rocks? Was it hard or easy for them to pray when they found them? What did they pray about? Did anything interesting happen during the day? You don't necessarily need to do it every day, but a fun thing to do, particularly on a rainy weekend, and remember to switch "reminders".

The Grace Cube

Praying before a meal is a popular ritual in many Christian households. Spicing up this prayer time with a prayer cube is a simple way to engage with God. Various prayer cubes are available online including one from the United Church in Australia that you can make yourself. Just type 'the grace cube' or 'prayer cubes' into your search engine of choice and find one you like amongst the multitude of options.

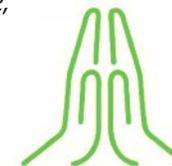
"Alexa, say Grace"

If you have a home assistant like Amazon's 'Echo' or Google 'Home', why not have some fun and ask them to pray - it might create a fun conversation starter at the dinner table! For example, The Church of England's Alexa skill offers a prayer for the day, as well as morning, evening and night-time prayers and a grace before meals. The 'Echo' also answers questions such as: what is the Bible? Who is God? What is a Christian?

Encouraging families to pray together regularly will help children understand the importance of prayer to Christians, outside of a church environment, and will also nurture their faith in the home.

Whether families are sat on the sofa, at the dining table, or in the car on the way to school, prayer can become the life-breath and heartbeat of a Christian home

Here are some creative ideas for embedding prayer time as a spiritual discipline within the home.



Fridge prayers

A fun way to engage all ages in prayer using the prayer magnets from Youthscape - www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/magnets - The resource contains over 200 words that can be rearranged into lots of combinations and your fridge door could even become an interesting conversation starter when friends pop over for a cup of tea and a chat!

Emoji prayer

Going through the face emoji's on a smartphone talk about the things that have made you happy, sad, angry, upset etc. that day. Once everyone has shared, create a one-line thank you prayer for each emoji. For example:

- Thank you Lord for the times when we feel on top of the world!
- Forgive us when we or get angry
- Help us when we are confused and don't know what
- Draw near to us when are sad and upset
- Sorry Lord for the times I have said the wrong thing
- Speak to us when we need courage

In the bin

Everyone writes on a small slip of paper a short prayer saying sorry to God for anything which is on their mind. Have a few moments of silence to quietly offer their prayers to God and then tear up the prayer and put the pieces in the bin. Explain that when we say sorry to God, God takes away all our wrongdoing and gives us the chance to make a fresh start.

Teaspoon prayer

This is a great prayer idea that can be used whilst pudding is being eaten with a spoon (or making a cup of tea). Recipe books abbreviate a teaspoon as TSP and these letters can be helpful reminder for structuring a prayer as they stand for 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please'. Have a short time chatting about what the each family member might like to say to God using these three words. Finally have a short time of open prayer weaving together all the topics mentioned, in a closing prayer.

Car prayers

Sometimes it's hard to get everyone together in one place ... and still! Praying in the car is a great way to connect with God and each other. Why not use what you can see outside for inspiration or use the teaspoon prayer to spark ideas – 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please'.

The Alphabet game

There are many variations of this popular car game which involves players taking it in turns to name items, objects etc. Why not play the game during prayer time thanking, asking help for and praising God. The first player begins with A. The next player says the previous players first before naming something with 'B' the next player something with 'C' and so on. The Alphabet game is great fun and an amazing memory test too!

40 Acts

40acts is a generosity challenge which invites Christians to do Lent a bit differently through generous acts. As well as the 40 reflections and 40 challenges a family wallchart has been developed to challenge families to engage and participate in Lent together - <https://40acts.org.uk/resources/>

Prayer boxes

A number of organisations are producing fun and creative resources that enable families to explore Bible stories and pray together in the comfort of their own home. Check out 'The Treasure Box People', 'Hello Firefly' and 'Thy Kingdom Come':

- www.thetreasureboxpeople.co.uk
- www.cheerfullygiven.com/shop/hellofirefly
- www.thykingdomcome.global/prayerresources

Prayer pot

All you need are some lolly sticks, a sharpie marker and a pot to hold the sticks in. Write on the sticks themes such as; family, friends, school, church, thank you, love, tomorrow, sorry, week ahead, healing, help, newflash etc. Be creative and ask the family to come up with ideas. After food, each family member pulls a stick from the pot and take turns praying for whatever is on your stick.

Skittles / Starbursts / Jelly Baby Prayer

Open the packet of sweets and take it in turns to pick one - you could do this eyes open or closed to make it more tricky. Before eating the sweet, a prayer is said asking God to help or do something for someone or something in the category below or come up with your own:
Red: family / Purple: friends / Green: school / Yellow: you / Orange: world

WhatsApp Prayer

WhatsApp allows you to connect via text message alerts, send images or video or audio message embedded into your message. If your children are older and own smartphones, why not set up a prayer group for the family - include grandparents so that the entire family feel connected in a deeper way and will help remind them pray as well.

Pass the prayer cross

Plain wooden crosses can be purchased relatively cheaply (worth doing a search on www.eden.co.uk). How about a family craft activity decorating a cross that can be passed around during family prayer time The symbol keeps the focus on Jesus, while giving everyone something tangible to remind them of when it is their turn and when they should listen.

For further advice and support to help you and your church build a foundation of prayer with younger generations, contact Dan Jones on:

0117 906 0100 | daniel.jones@bristoldiocese.org

