



Creative prayer ideas

Ideas for praying creatively with children, young people and families.

Compiled by the Go Team

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www.bathandwells.org.uk/children-young-people



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Living and telling the story of Jesus

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Introduction

This collection of prayer activities has been compiled to help you think of new and creative ways to engage children, young people and families in prayer. We have collated some of our favourite ideas into different age groups although most of them can be easily adapted for all ages.

As we seek to live and tell the story of Jesus, we hope and pray that these ideas will help you and inspire you in your work. Many of these ideas have been trialled and tested by ourselves and others. Many more creative prayer ideas are easily found online. Organisations such as the Kitchen Table Project, Focus on the Family, 24/7 Prayer, Youthscape, Prayer Spaces in Schools, and Flame have lots of ideas for engaging people of all ages in prayer.

For further help and support, you can contact your archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser- find our contact details on page 10.

If you use any of these ideas and have a story to share with us, please email us, goteam@bathwells.anglican.org, or tag us on Instagram or Facebook @GoTeamAdvisers.

Ideas for praying with under 5s

1. Bubble Prayers

Children love bubbles! They are a visual way for children to think about and imagine their prayers going 'up' to God. Give each child a small bottle of bubbles, or use a bubble machine, or you could blow bubbles yourself. Alternatively you could use a fan and a bottle of bubble mixture with a wand. You can buy individual bubble tubes, or refill bottles for relatively low prices at a range of shops such as B&M or The Range, or your local supermarket.

You may like to say that when a bubble falls to the ground, it is a moment for a 'help' prayer, and when a bubble rises up to the sky, they could say a 'thank you' prayer.

You can help the children think imaginatively by telling them that the bubble popping, is their prayer being heard by God. Be as creative and as imaginative as you like, and allow the children to use their imaginations to connect with God during this activity.



2. Finger prayers

For young children, the more visual you can make prayer, the better. Using their hands, they can assign a prayer for someone different to each finger. You may need to simplify the language further, depending on the ages and ability of the children you are working with. This could be a great activity to introduce to children in a Sunday group, and also teach to parents or share a handout with them, so they can continue the idea at home. This will help establish a routine for children, help them to remember what each finger stands for, and help them to pray by themselves.

Thumb: your thumb is closest to your heart, pray for those closest to you- family and friends

Pointer Finger: The pointer finger is used to give directions. Pray for teachers, coaches, therapists, doctors and emergency services.

Middle Finger: The middle finger is the tallest. Pray for leaders in government, in businesses and in the church.

Ring Finger: Your ring finger is normally the weakest finger. Pray for the sick, poor and those most in need.

Pinkie Finger: Your pinkie is the smallest, pray for yourself and your own needs.



3. Prayer balls

Find or buy some cheap coloured balls (ball pit balls or table tennis balls). Explain to the children that each ball colour represents a different type of prayer. You could either put one of each colour in a bag and pull them out one at a time, or you could spread a whole load of balls out and encourage the children to choose a different colour when you say so. You may want to encourage the children to stay still once they've got their colour ball to help them concentrate on praying, but running around in between might help them if they are feeling fidgety.

Here are some ideas for prayer topics, depending on what colour balls you might be able to get hold of.

Red: Sorry prayer

Blue: Pray for your family

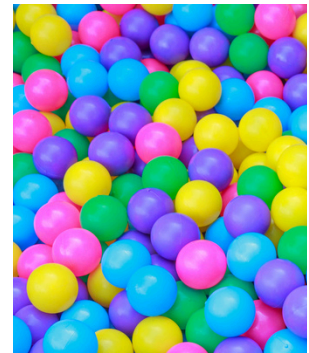
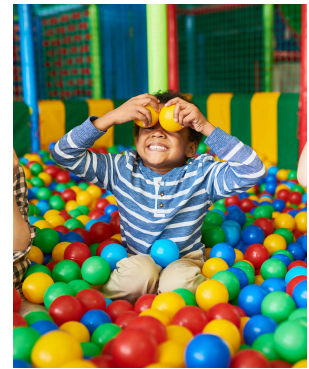
Green: Pray for the environment/natural world

Yellow: Pray for people who are poorly

Pink: Pray for your friends

Orange: Pray for other countries

Purple: Pray a thank you prayer



4. TSP prayers

Use the acronym for Teaspoon, to help children remember some essential things to pray for.

T: Thank you

S: Sorry

P: Please.

You might want to give the children a spoon to help them remember the pattern. If you give them a disposable type wooden spoon, they could write the letters or the words on the spoon to help them remember.

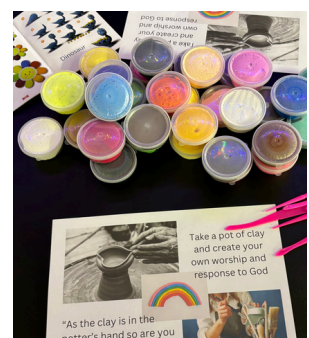
You can start by praying with the children to model how to pray, just one letter at a time, before building up to encouraging them to pray alone using each letter to help them talk to God and build a relationship with him.



5. Playdough prayers

Playdough is such a great tool for activities with under 5s as it can be handmade in bulk, bought at low cost, and isn't harmful or overly messy. (If you are worried about it getting trodden into carpets, buy a plastic splash mat to put on the floor!) You can easily find recipes for making playdough on the internet.

For a creative prayer session, you may like to ask your group to make something they want to thank God for, someone who looks after them, or an animal. Then you can gather them all together and say a big 'Thank you!' to God for all the things you have made. You could also give children a bit of playdough to mold and play with as you pray, to give them something to concentrate on. and keep their hands busy while they pray or listen.



Ideas for praying with 5-11s



1. Circle of Friends

Purchase, or make (out of clay) a circle of friends candle holder. This is a great way of offering children something to look at and focus on as they pray. As the candle flickers, it becomes a centring focus, especially as the light from the candle shines on the clay faces. You could also use the sculpture to spark thoughts or conversations with questions about people or friendships, which could in turn lead to praying for others.

2. Globe Prayers

This activity will encourage children to think about others around the world. You could pair this with one of the brilliant resources from Open Doors, which are specifically focussed on praying for the persecuted church.



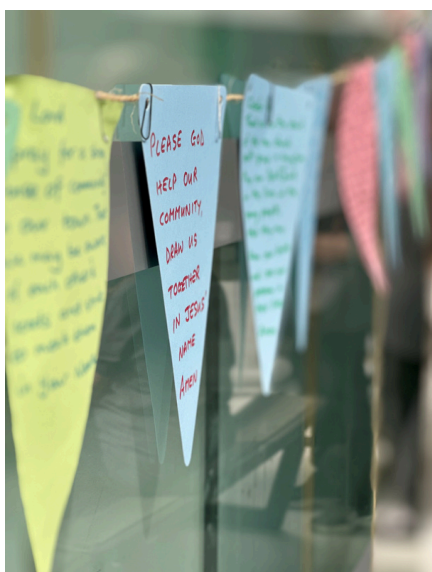
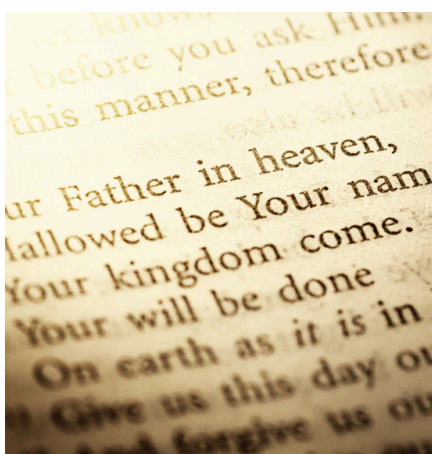
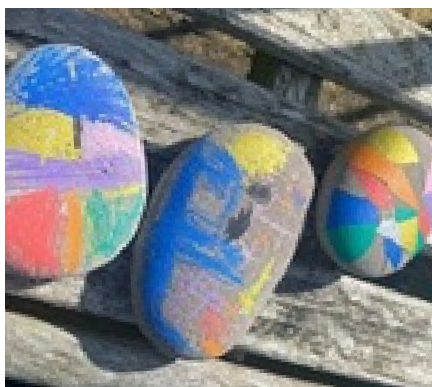
You will need an inflatable globe with the countries clearly marked on them, preferably around large beach ball size. Invite the children to sit or stand in a circle, and pass the ball across or around the circle. As a child catches it, they should find the name of the country that they caught. They can then say a prayer out loud for the people of that country, before passing it to the next person. If they catch it with their hand on a bit of ocean or sea, they could pray for fishermen, lifeboat crews or other sailors.



If your church has mission partners in other countries, you may want to pray specifically for them, and if any of the children know anything about any countries or have connections to them, you could ask them to share what they know with the group, to help inform prayers.



During this activity, one of your group leaders might like to write down the countries you have prayed for, and make a log of who you have prayed for over a series of sessions. This could also give you a chance to find out more about the countries, so next time you pray for them you can pray more specifically.



3. Prayer Pebbles

Buy or collect a large amount of pebbles, and using paints or permanent pens (you may need a coat of white paint to stop the paint absorbing the ink or paint) invite the children to decorate a pebble. This will be their own pebble for future sessions.

Sit in a circle and invite the children to find their pebble and hold it in their hand. Then suggest a topic of prayer, for example family, school or the environment. Invite the children to hold their pebble and pray in their heads about the chosen topic. If they would like to pray out loud, they can place their pebble on the floor in front of them, say a prayer, and then as everyone says amen, pick their pebble up again.

This can give the children something to signify a time of quiet reflection and prayer, and help them to build up the confidence to pray out loud in a group setting.

4. DIY Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer that most children will learn at school or in church, and will probably say regularly in services at church or in collective worship.

You can explain to the children that it's not just a prayer we pray, but it is a model for how we should pray. Then you can invite them to write their own prayers based on the structure of The Lord's Prayer, or make their own version of the Lord's Prayer to help them pray on their own.

Children of different ages and abilities will need help, depending on their writing and comprehension skills. You could provide a template for them to write their own version, or you could give them a piece of blank paper if they want to do it independently.

5. Prayer Bunting

Cut out some fabric or paper in the shape of triangles, and give one or two to each child. Encourage them to decorate it, and write a prayer or draw something they would like to pray for. You can then staple or clip each triangle onto a piece of thread or string and display it in your space, as a visual reminder of all the prayers of your group. You could revisit the bunting and see if prayers have been answered, or you could add to it regularly.

Ideas for praying with 11-17s

1. Praying at the cross

This simple prayer idea could be used as part of a time of sung worship, or quiet reflection. You'll need a large wooden cross, paper or post-it notes, blu tack and pens.

The cross doesn't need to be elaborate- the more simple/rougher the better. (be careful of splinters!).

Hand out paper/post it notes to your group, and in a moment of quiet, invite them to come before God in prayer. Suggest that they write a prayer (about anything they want, for themselves, or someone they know) it could be a single word, a name or a note to God. When they are ready, they can take it to the cross and use some blue tack to stick it on. If they don't want anyone to read it, they can fold it in half.

You could remind your group of the significance of the cross for Christians: Jesus made a way for us to come to God. In 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul says 'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.'



2. Building a fairer world

This prayer activity could be used as part of a session on social justice or thinking about injustice around the world.

As part of the response, your group can build a wall of prayers for a fairer world.

Give each person in your group either a block of wood (you could use a jenga set, paper/card, lego, or your own blocks of some kind). Invite everyone to design their brick to represent a prayer for a fairer world on it. It could be a word, slogan, image or longer prayer. Then bring them all together to create an image to look like a wall if you have used card or paper, or use the blocks to build a wall. Find somewhere to display your wall to remind your group to pray for justice.



3. Prayer Labyrinth

Prayer labyrinths can be a useful tool for reflective prayer, and come in many types and sizes. A labyrinth can be drawn on a piece of paper, pegged in the ground with stakes and string, painted onto the ground with spray paint, or marked out in dirt or sand.

A quick internet search will show you instructions on how to make your own labyrinth. Alternatively the Diocese of Bath and Wells own two different sized fabric labyrinths which can be borrowed, the largest of which is pictured here. There are also simple guided reflections for people to use as they navigate the labyrinth. Ask the Go Team for more info.

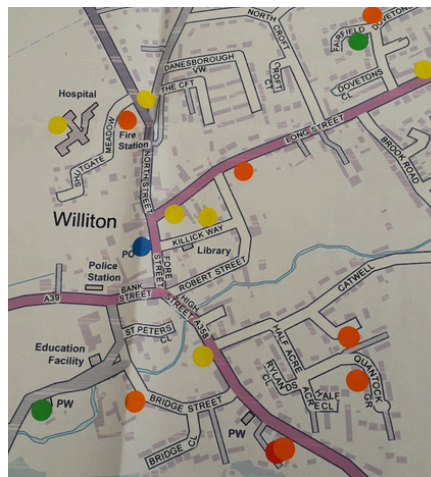


4. Prayers on a map

A great way to inspire and focus prayers is to use a local map. You can invite your group to stick a coloured spot on the map and pray for someone or something in that location.

Enlarge a copy of a street map of your town or village, find your location on Google Maps, or get an OS map with your location on it.

Alternatively you could invite your group to draw your location, and then add places to create a map as you pray.



5. The Journey

This prayer station is great to use with young people who have big decisions and changes coming up. You will need to create a journey along a flat surface such as the floor or table, with images of future events, cross roads, signposts and destinations.

Hand out post-it notes to your group and invite them to write their names and things they want prayer for. Stick them somewhere along the journey, and then take some time to pray for each other.



6. Prayer space/stations

A great way to get young people praying together or individually is to set up a series of prayer stations where they can be creative, reflective and use visuals to help them connect with God in prayer. There are many great prayer station ideas, and these can be adapted for different ages and different faith stages. Some ideas are below:

- Create a gratitude wall- write thank you prayers onto cardboard and pin them onto vertical pieces of string to form a curtain.
- Drop a pebble into water and ask God to forgive you as the water ripples out across a bowl.
- Confession prayers: write your prayer saying sorry to God for something you have thought, said or done, then screw it up and throw it in the bin. Leave it there knowing that God has forgiven you.

Make sure each station has clear instructions on what to do, but leave space for young people to be creative and not feel the need to take part in every activity. Use a range of activities, some creative, some reflective. You could include Bible passages with activities to give your group something to reflect on as they pray.

Think about risk assessment for activities using things such as scissors or candles. More prayer station ideas are available at prayerspacesinschools.org



Ideas for praying with families



1. Reflection Bottles

A great activity for all ages, and parents can help younger children to make reflection bottles.

This idea, borrowed from the Flame Creative website works well with people who are visual, giving them something to focus on while they are reflecting or listening to God.



Pour some glitter or glitter glue into a plastic bottle and fill the bottle with water. You can use as many or few colours of glitter as you want! You can now buy eco-friendly glitter (biodegradable or made without plastic) with a quick internet search. You can also add food colouring to change the colour of the water!

Make sure the bottle is well sealed before shaking it up. Once you've shaken it and mixed the glitter, water and colour all together, watch as it all swirls and begins to settle.

In family groups, you can sit and reflect on the nature of God or things you want to pray about as the elements in the bottle settle. What might God be saying to you today?



2. The Prayer Square

This simple activity can be used with people of all ages and faith stages.

This is a silent prayer activity, where no one except the leader needs to speak, apart from occasionally saying Amen if you want to.

You will need a large flat cross, four prayer square images (downloadable on our website or you can make your own), and some pebbles.

Lay the prayer square out as in the image, using four images and the cross in the gap between them in the middle. Spread the pebbles out on the floor around the square.

Invite the group to sit around the square and choose a pebble which will be theirs for the whole activity.

Invite everyone to place their pebble on something they'd like to pray for, and silently say a prayer. Then say amen all together. Repeat this three more times, then all say amen again at the end together to wrap the prayers up.





3. Prayer walk

A great way to pray for your school or community is to go for a walk in your local area, and pray over it. You could encourage families to do this in the summer holidays as they walk around the places they live, gather to worship, go to school or work. You could also organise a group of families to get together and prayer walk somewhere together. You could pause at specific locations along the walk to pray together for people and activities that happen nearby.

Alternatively, you could gather families together and go for a simple walk in nature, encouraging people to notice the world around them and think of all the things in creation they can thank God for. Take time to pause and notice what you can hear, see, and smell as you walk.

This is a great way to get outside, slow down and enjoy God's amazing creation together.



4. Praying with babies

You could introduce this activity at a toddler/baby group, or encourage parents to pray at home with their babies.

Here are some ideas for praying with babies/non-verbal children:

- Simply model prayer by talking to God out loud as you go about your daily activities, or pray out loud for your children as you wait for them to go to sleep at night.
- Use the tunes of well known nursery rhymes to help you sing truths about God over your children. There's some good examples of this on Instagram.
- Use sensory play with lights, objects and colours to attract a baby's attention, and speak Biblical truths over them.
- Try memorising Bible verses or passages, Psalms or Proverbs as you speak them over your children. You could do this at bedtime as they are falling asleep.



5. Lego Prayers

Lego is a great toy for nearly all ages! (and you can use bigger blocks such as Duplo or Mega Blox for those under 4)

You could use this activity in a holiday club or all-age service, or as a family activity around the dinner table.

What to do:

Gather enough Lego or Duplo blocks for everyone to have one. Make sure they are all just blocks, but a range of colours and sizes. Now choose a characteristic (size, colour etc) of the block and invite everyone to find someone with a matching characteristic of their block, and pray about something together.

This is a great way to get people of all ages praying together, out loud, and encouraging your congregations/groups to mingle together.



Go Team contact information

Tony Cook
Head of Go Team
Bath Archdeaconry
T: 07922576757
E: tony.cook@bathwells.anglican.org



Andy Levett
Go Team Training Lead
Taunton Archdeaconry
T: 07922576756
E: andy.levett@bathwells.anglican.org



Ruth Slade
Go Team Digital Media Lead
Wells Archdeaconry
T: 07483623142
E: ruth.slade@bathwells.anglican.org



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