

PRAYER RESOURCES
FOR WHEN YOU CANNOT GET TO CHURCH OR FOR USE AT HOME

MARCH 2020

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Perhaps you might find it hard to pray at home. You are not alone in this, but we hope this booklet will help.

Being stuck at home can be boring, frustrating or lonely, even if there are other people in the house with you. And if you are unwell, or worried you might become so, it can be frightening too. God is with us in these situations, whether we are conscious of his present or not. Remembering this and relying on him in prayer can help you to keep going.

In normal circumstances we are pleased to arrange for sick and housebound people to have communion at home, but now quarantine and self-isolation guidance and rules are in place, this sadly is not possible at present. But our Common Worship Prayer Book reminds us in its liturgy for the sick that “Believers who cannot physically receive the sacrament are to be assured that they are partakers by faith of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them”. Illness or self-isolation cannot separate us from Jesus’ love.

We hope that this booklet will give you some ideas about how to maintain and deepen your faith and your prayers. God wants us to turn to him in all our troubles and perplexities, even if we can’t always find the “right words”. And be assured that the rest of the church is praying for you.

Father Peter

Readers Richard and Michael

Simple forms of Prayer

- Lighting a candle before you pray can help you to focus and listen. (But please be sure you have a safe location to do so and do not forget to extinguish it when you have finished your prayers).
- Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer, so that we would always have the right words to say. Make use of it!
- St Ignatius Loyola recommended to us a simple form of daily prayer looking back over the day and thanking God for all the blessing we have received. He called it the "Examen Prayer". It has five steps:
 1. Become aware of God's presence or ask him to help you remember that he is there.
 2. Review the day with gratitude as best you can.
 3. Pay attention to how you are feeling about it.
 4. Choose one particular feature of the day and pray about it.
 5. Look toward tomorrow and what you expect the day to bring. Ask God to help you to remember that he will be with you.
- Read the Bible prayerfully. Pick a short passage of Scripture (it can be a passage that is dear to you for some reason, or perhaps the parables of Jesus or one of the shorter Psalms to start with.) Read the passage through slowly two or three times. Notice what jumps out at you and ask what message God is trying to say to you there. Reflect on this for a few minutes and then reread the passage again. Ask yourself what you want to say to God and say it. Then sit quietly and know that God is with you.

Some collects and other Prayers to say

Sovereign God, the defence of those who trust in you
and the strength of those who suffer:
look with mercy on our affliction
and deliver us through our might Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

O God our sovereign and our shepherd,
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ from the valley of death,
comfort us with your protecting presence
and your angels or goodness and love,
that we may also come home
and dwell with him in your house for ever. Amen

Lord God, whose Son, Jesus Christ,
understood people's fear and pain
before they spoke of them,
we pray for those in hospital or sick at home;
surround the frightened with your tenderness;
give strength to those in pain;
hold the weak in your arms of love,
and give hope and patience
to those who are recovering;
we ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

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Almighty God,
You see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, And inwardly in our souls;
That we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body,
And from all evil thoughts which may hurt the soul;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen

A prayer of confession:

Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
We have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
In what we have thought,
In what we have said and done,
Through ignorance, through weakness,
Through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love
And marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed
And repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, Who died for us,
Forgive us all that is past And lead us out from darkness
To walk as children of light. Amen

The Collect for Purity (Prayer of preparation):

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open, all desires know,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts

by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name:
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at my end, and at my departing.

Prayers before sleeping:

Be present, O merciful God,
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,
so that we who are wearied by the changes of this fleeting world,
may rest upon your eternal changelessness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Abide with us, Lord, for it is evening,
and day is drawing to a close.
Abide with us and your whole Church,
in the evening of the day,
in the evening of life,
in the evening of the world;
abide with us and your faithful ones, O Lord,
in time and in eternity.
Amen

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,
who at this evening hour lay in the tomb
and so hallowed the grave
to be a bed of hope for all who put their trust in you;
Give us such sorrow for our sins,
which were the cause of your passion,
that when our bodies lie in the dust,
our souls may live with you forever.
Amen

Sometimes sitting in silence can itself be a powerful way to pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you.

A form of Prayer during the day

This is a form of prayer, sometimes called an “office”, which you can use on its own, or use to expand your daily “quiet time” with the Bible. If you are already using Bible notes or a plan, then you might replace the reading suggested with those in your notes or plan. You might also choose to use the “Daily Eucharistic Lectionary” readings or the readings from Morning or Evening Prayer, which are available on line (<http://almanac.oremus.org>). You should always say a Psalm, but you could use another scheme if this suits you better. The simplest is to work through the Book of Psalms using a Psalm a day (perhaps splitting some of them).

When saying this office alone, say both the parts on plain and in bold:

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

My heart tells of your word, “Seek my face”

Your face, Lord will I seek.

Praise – you could sing a hymn, listen to music, or simply say:

We praise you, O God, we acclaim you as the Lord;

All creation worships you, the Father everlasting.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven, the cherubim and seraphim,
sing in endless praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory.

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Read a Psalm (see table on page 11) and end the Psalm with:

Glory to the Father and to the Son

and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning is now

and shall be for ever. Amen

Read a Bible passage, eg.

Sunday: Revelation 21 v 1-4, Monday: Isaiah 49 V 1b-4, Tuesday: Deuteronomy 28 v 1-6,
Wednesday: Matthew 9 v 35 – end, Thursday: John 17 v 18 -23, Friday: Luke 9 v 22-25,
Saturday: John 11 v 17-26a

Intercessions: pray for the Church and the World and for individuals.

This or another collect is then said:

O Lord our God, grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart;
that so desiring, we may seek and find you;
and so finding, may love you;
and so loving, may hate those sins from which you have delivered us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

The finish by praying:

May God, who made both heaven and earth bless us. Amen

Common Worship: Daily Prayer – Prayer during the day (adapted)

Appendix – a fortnight’s cycle of Psalms

| | |
|-----------|-----------------|
| Sunday | 119 v 1-32 |
| Monday | 119 v 33-56 |
| Tuesday | 119 v 57 - 80 |
| Wednesday | 119 v 81 -104 |
| Thursday | 119 v 105 - 128 |
| Friday | 119 v 129 – 152 |
| Saturday | 119 v 153 – end |

| | |
|-----------|----------|
| Sunday | 121, 122 |
| Monday | 123, 124 |
| Tuesday | 125, 126 |
| Wednesday | 127 |
| Thursday | 128 |
| Friday | 129, 130 |
| Saturday | 131, 133 |

Some more Bible passages to read:

Psalm 23 Jeremiah 29 v 11 - 13 Psalm 27 Psalm 139 Isaiah 43 v 1- 21
Habbakuk 3 v 17 - 19 Matthew 6 v 25 - 34 Matthew 11 v 25 - 29 John 14 v 1 - 7
John 17 v 1 - 26 Romans 8 v 18 - 38 Colossians 3 v 12 – 17 Philippians 4 v 1 - 13
1 Corinthians 13

A Prayer for Assurance of Christ’s Presence (An Act of Spiritual Communion)

Begin with the Collect for Purity and then read the Gospel for that Sunday (see the Lectionary) or another appropriate passage of scripture (eg John 14 v 1-7)

Examine your heart and confess your sins to God, using your own words or the Prayer of Confession, and then say:

The Almighty and merciful Lord, grant me pardon and absolution of all my sins. Amen.

Then say:

In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, I desire to offer you praise and thanksgiving. I present to you my soul and body with the earnest wish that I may always be united to you. And, since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. I unite myself to you, and embrace you with all the affections of my soul. Let nothing ever separate you from me. May I live and die in your love. Amen.

You might like to sit in silence for a while and then finish your time of prayer by saying the Lord's Prayer.

(The Armed Forces Prayer book of the Episcopal Church of the USA, 1951 adapted)

Creative ways of Praying

- You might find it useful to listen to favourite hymns or worship songs, or other pieces of music that have a special meaning for you.
- Pictures can help prompt our prayers – for instance photos of loved ones, maps or pictures of the local community or wider world.
- If the news is getting you down, try praying for the people and situations that are mentioned, including World leaders.
- Why not try drawing, doodling or painting as you pray?

On line resources

- You can find services of Morning, Midday, evening and Night Prayer for the Church of England arranged for you with the readings of the day on line at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>

- There is also an app you can download to your smartphone or table. Follow the link on the webpage or search for “daily prayer” in your app store and look for the blue and white logo. You can choose whether to pray in modern language or to use the Book of Common Prayer. “Prayer during the Day” is the shortest and simplest of the services. Morning and Evening Prayer have the longest portions of Scripture.

- An Ordinary Office: This is designed to be very accessible (you can follow it through text, symbol, audio or video). Easy to pray if you are unwell or feeling tired. Morning, midday and evening prayer, plus “nocturnes” for those who cannot sleep.
<http://anordinaryoffice.org.uk/>
- The Northumbria Community website gives short but poetic forms of daily prayer in the Celtic style
<http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/>
- Pray as you go is a short (11/12 minutes) daily act of prayer and worship, available on line or as a tablet and smartphone app (search for “Pray as you go” in your app store and look for the headphone logo.) This easy to use, beautifully produced site uses music and pictures to help you to pray and reflect on a passage of scripture. Follows the Roman Catholic calendar, but is widely used by Christians of all traditions. There are also special seasonal meditations.
<https://pray-as-you-go.org/>
- Word Live provides daily Bible study and prayer points from Scripture Union. This is linked to a Facebook group, where you could share thoughts and prayers with other Christians, should you so wish.
<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/living-faith>

A prayer for Lent from the Church Army

Holy God, As a pilgrim I journey with you.
I reflect on my life; aware of my weakness,
Aware of my vulnerabilities, aware of my sin.
I look to your Son, through whose death I receive healing,
I receive wholeness, I receive fullness of life,
For life itself is a gift from you.
Help me to hold out that life to others. Amen

A prayer from the Archbishop of Canterbury for all those affected by Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen