**Prayer Ideas Worth Trying**

The CIRE team thank Barbara Bird for this compilation of prayer activities.

**PRAYER BALL** - use a beach ball or cheap plastic ball and write prayer beginnings or scene risks for requests e.g., pray for a child who lives where it is night time now. The idea is to sit in a circle and throw the ball to each other, this could be like musical chairs etc. When the signal to stop comes the person holding the ball initiates a prayer from the ball.

**PRAYER BALL 2 -** Another idea is to use a coloured beach ball or plastic ball but have each colour relate to an important thing to pray for: e.g.,

Blue- thank God for your life

Brown- ask God to forgive your sins

Red- thank God for the forgiveness

Green-thank god for helping you to change

Yellow- celebrate all that is good with life at the moment

Pink- tell God how you plan to follow him.

**PRAYER JOURNALS -** Keep your eye out for special little notebooks that have some appeal. Encourage the children to create their own special journal. Encourage the children to write, draw, create their thoughts and prayers when they experience wonderful moments. Children might like to encourage their parents to add to their book.

**SEASONAL PRAYER -** use the seasons of the year to stimulate a prayer space for your group. For example, during Autumn collect large Autumn leaves and have children write their own prayer relating to nature on the leaf. These could then be collaged around a drawn tree. Winter could be snowflakes, rain drops, clouds. Summer - sun, Spring- blossom tree, flower garden etc.

**HAND PRAYER -** use the idea of the hand to remind children of people to pray for: thumb those closest to you- family/ friends, pointer- those who lead and guide you- teachers, priests, police, middle- those in authority - government, ring- those who are sick, lonely, sad, pinky- pray for ourselves.

**PAPER TOWEL PRAYERS -** this needs to be set up by you prior to each term. Unroll a paper towel roll and on each sheet write a prayer request or concern. You then need to reroll the sheets. Each day tear off one sheet and formulate a prayer appropriate to the words on the paper.

**PRAYER COLLAGE -** use this as a meditative type of prayer. Children given a blank sheet of paper and magazines. Children glue pictures of things to pray for such as weather, school, families etc. children might then be able to locate a psalm/ verse from the Bible to attach to their poster. This is also a good chance to play some of the beautiful songs we have available.

 **WORLD PRAYER -** to encourage children to see outside their immediate environment use a globe of the world or map of the world. Highlight different things happening around the world currently and mark on the map e.g., Olympics, volcano activity, floods. Attach post-it-notes to the different places with prayers attached. This can be added to throughout the year making it a cumulative display.

**WORLD PRAYER 2 -** another idea is to spin the globe and where your finger lands, pray for that country or area.

**CUBE PRAYERS -** cubes can be made from boxes, foam, wood or material that has been stuffed. On each side of the cube draw images representing something to pray for or write verses to use as mantras, or write prayer beginnings or causes. Each person rolls the cube as a dice, then offers a prayer relating to the face of the dice.

**NEWSPAPER/ MAGAZINE PRAYERS -** children use the headlines to locate a story or issue they would like to pray for. Children could also look through a magazine or newspaper to find a picture then ask themselves- where is God in this picture and reflect accordingly.

**ABC PRAYERS -** children sit in a circle and use the alphabet cards taking turns to offer up a prayer relating with the letter of e alphabet they are starting with e.g., A- animals- Lord God thank you for all the animals you have entrusted into our care. Help us to appreciate our animal kingdom.

B- babies- Please look after all the new born babies in our world. Keep them safe and loved always. You could make up a prayer book relating to the ABC. Another alternative would be that everyone in the circle prays a prayer using the same letter e.g., A- aunts, animals, African people, anyone, angry times, etc.

**BAND- AID PRAYERS** - supply of band aids needed. Children use biro to write down a hurtful situation, or the name of someone they know is hurting on the band-aid. These could be stuck on a drawn crucifix as the children ask Jesus to help them or the people being prayed for to overcome their suffering. This would work well over the Easter time when you are talking about the passion of Jesus. You could also stick the band aids onto a big heart instead. This would also work for the feast of the Sacred Heart.

**TEXT MESSAGING OR EMAILING -** this is the perfect chance to highlight what aspect of prayer you are working on with the children in order to keep the conversation happening. You might text a quote for the week or a verse for the week or say we are focusing on saying prayers of thanksgiving this week. Older children might like to write a prayer in text language. These could be displayed beside a large mobile phone with the heading- what are you texting, who are you texting, why are you texting etc.

**PRAYER BANDS -** give everyone a strip of paper to write a prayer or a mantra on eg. Open my eyes Lord. These can be decorated then joined and worn as wrist prayer bands as a reminder to pray. Children could make one for each family member.

**PRAYER STONES -** use stones or glass pebbles that look special. Have a plate to pass around once the group has settled in the circle. Children hold their rock and think of something they want to pray about. Children could vocalise or just think about their prayer then put their stone in a central bowl.

**PRAYER CALENDARS -** fill a blank calendar outline with a prayer message for each day. This is particularly relevant during Lent and advent. There are many online resources available for this. There are also APPS available that are interactive too.

**SIGN OF THE CROSS -** use alternatives such as put a cross:

On your ears- that I might listen to God's voice and hear God's Word

On the eyes- that I may see God in everything

On the lips- that I may speak of God to others

On the heart- that I remember that I am loved by God

On the hands- that I may do good deeds throughout the day

On the feet- that I will follow Jesus and walk his ways

From the top of my head to the bottom of my heart, shoulder to shoulder, I love you my God.

**PRAYER HANDS -** you can buy cardboard and foam hands. Children use these hands as prayer hands to write who they are praying for on one side and their own prayer on the other side.

**PRAYER POTS -** make a garden pot and write a prayer intention on a stick in the pot. Pull up a prayer and pray the intention.

**PRAYER JARS -** these are just like the prayer pots. Write on sticks various people or intentions or types of prayers. Randomly pull out a stick and use it as an incentive for prayers.

**GOD ON CALL -** tap into the mobile phone or iPad with a display of a drawn mobile or iPad. Invent a phone number for God such as 1800 RU4GOD. You could have a little phone corner set up and have children role playing talking to God or having a private call up to God. If you make an iPad under each icon on the screen which could be made like a lift the flap you could have a prayer written.

**PRAYER PROMPT CARDS -** these can be downloaded or made up and put onto a ring. When praying together the children could use these when they are struggling to come up with a prayer. These could also be taken home as a resource to use at bedtime or family prayer time.

**POST IT NOTE PRAYER WALL -** always have post it notes available for children to write a prayer intention on at any time. These can be added to a wall as per ant prayer intentions.

**PRAYER THROUGH IMAGERY -** calendars are an excellent source of inspiration. Laminate and keep. Every now and then gather children around some of the images. Ask them to focus on an image that speaks to them, you could spend time in quiet reflection, children could write their own prayer, as a group you could make up a prayer together etc.

**PRAYER MEDITATION** - become aware of God's presence, get comfortable, start with a preparatory prayer, meditate on the biblical text- read the text slowly, recall what it was about, let it come alive in you.

Reflect-what does God want to teach us in this text?

Ponder the meaning of the words, phrases and sentences.

Focus on two or three points

Embrace what God is saying to you, be moved.

Notice what is going on inside you as you pray.

Enter in a short conversation with Jesus - speak heart to heart.

Closing Prayer

**PRAYER IN A BALLOON** - children write a prayer or special intention or verse or psalm on a slip of paper. Roll up and put inside a balloon. Blow up the balloon and let the balloons go all at once. Children try to catch a balloon. Once they settle with their balloon they sit and reflect upon what is written inside.

**PRAYING OUTSIDE** - make the most of beautiful afternoons by taking your prayers outside- stop and use your senses - what do you hear, see, touch, smell? Experience God's goodness and offer appropriate prayers.

**PRAYER STATIONS -** have children set up scripture related prayer stations using objects readily available from your box of trinkets. eg., Let the children come - use godly play figures to create a crowd scene with a Jesus figure stopping to teach on a green cloth. Or the Last Supper- create a table scene of plates and cup. You could copy the text from various scripture readings and assign children small groups to create the scene. Children could then travel through the stations.

**STATIONS OF THE CROSS** - there are downloadable sheets and coloring books available. These could be made use of and turned into a concertina carousel to move around as they reflect on the stations.

**SIREN PRAYER** - when you hear a fire truck, ambulance or police siren, stop and offer a prayer for the driver, the person needing help and their families.

**PRAYER SPECIALIST** - look up the saints for special occasions- e.g., St Blaize for sore throats, St. Christopher for a safe journey. Teach children to formulate a prayer accordingly e.g., Dear Saint Anthony and St Anne, please help me find it as quickly as I can.

**PRAYER PROMPTS** - use reminders to encourage prayer- e.g., We had a priest in the diocese who used to cross his slippers and push them under his bed as a reminder to pray before bed and to pray in the morning. Another priest always made the sign of the cross whenever he passed a church when travelling past. This could be done on any journey:

Playing a spotto game and predicting the name of the church.

As you go through your house say a prayer for the people in your family.

Pray for the people that send you an email or text.

**PRAYER FORMULA** - we use this formula during our First Communion sessions and we have heard many beautiful prayers and watched the sharing of very special prayerful moments using this formula.

Write a name for God

Write something good about God

Write something you want to say thank you for

Or

Write a name for God

An action God does

Something you want for our world

Or

Write your favourite name for God

The best thing about your family

Something you want for your family

**LENTEN PRAYER POT** - gather or make up a clay pot, plasticine pot etc. the pots can be decorated or painted. On Ash Wednesday put the pot in a central place - it reminds us that Lent is here but remains empty for the next few days.

**First Sunday of Lent** - place a small heart in the pot to remind everyone of God's love for us, and the need for us to show our love for others.

**Second Sunday of Lent** - place a small seed e.g. sunflower, pumpkin etc. to remind us that God's love for us constantly grows and that we should try hard to do more for others.

**Third Sunday of Lent** - place a rubber band in the pot as a reminder that God always stretches- he is patient and we need to be the same with others even when it is not easy.

**Fourth Sunday of Lent** - place a marble or game piece in the pot to remind us that we need to share and take turns.

**Fifth Sunday of Lent** - add a little band aid to remind us to help other people when they are sad or hurt

**Palm Sunday** - place a palm as a reminder that Jesus is our King

**Easter Sunday** - a tiny piece of egg shell to remind us that Jesus will always be with us and is always ready to hear our prayers.