



Parish Development Programme

**Resources
for
Prayer and Worship**

Opening Prayers

Gracious God,
we thank you for this opportunity to meet together
and discuss the future of our parish.
We come together today recognising
that each of us has a place, a role,
a ministry within the body of Christ,
all with something to offer to one another,
and something to receive.

Open our hearts to you,
All: and our minds to one another.

We thank you for the assurance
that Christ is here among us as we gather in his name.
Give us the ability to hear your voice
through your word, your Spirit,
and the fellowship we share,
so that in all our thinking, talking, planning and deciding
we may discern your will
and work more effectively to fulfil your purpose.

Open our hearts to you,
All: and our minds to one another.

Gracious God,
we thank you for all that has been accomplished
in and through our parish thus far -
all who have served our parish over the years,
who have nurtured and encouraged our faith,
who have been part of our continuing life and witness.
We pray that you will enable us,
in our different ways,
to build together for the future,
open to the prompting of your Spirit,
guided by the love of Christ,
and working for your glory.

Open our hearts to you,
All: and our minds to one another.

6. Pray some quiet instrumental music on CD. In the silence invite each person to pray for three things:
 - a. For one thing for their parish and its worship
 - b. For one other person in the church
 - c. For one thing they'd like to receive for themselves

Allow several minutes on each topic. One member of the group could conclude with an appropriate spoken or liturgical prayer.

Here are a few examples from the Preparation Course:

1. Invite those present to imagine they are going to a church they've never been to before. Imagine that the welcomer is Jesus. What does he say? How does he act? What do you see in the background? Take time to explore how you feel. Pray that Jesus' ministry of welcome might be a reality in your church...and in you.
2. Ask people to use the letters W-E-L-C-O-M-E to express what they would like the welcome in your church to be e.g. Warm, Encouraging, Loving etc. Write the words on large pieces of paper and place on the floor around the room. Invite people to move around and quietly to pray that these qualities might be reflected in their own lives and in the life of the parish.
3. Invite those present to think of one or two people they know who currently do not attend worship (it could be family members, friends, colleagues, neighbours, anyone) but whom they would like to welcome to church. Play some quiet music. Invite those present if they wish to write the names of those they have identified on a piece of paper and in silence to bring them forward to a set point (eg. a cross on a table). Stress the pieces of paper will not be identified. It is confidential, between them and God. One person concludes with a spoken prayer eg. St Patrick's prayer (p 450 BCP). This can be used first in "me" form for the welcomer and then "them" for those to be welcomed.
4. Use the Late Evening Office - led by a person or team of people who would not normally lead worship
5. Thank you - Please prayers. Seated in a circle pass a lighted candle around the group twice. As each person receives the candle they are invited to say "Thank you God for... (perhaps something in the life of the parish)" then, second time round, "Please.... ". Give permission for those who might find it intimidating simply to pray inwardly. Give examples before you start.

Closing Prayers

Living God,
we have spent time together today,
we have shared words, news and ideas,
and we thank you for all this has meant to us,
everything we have given and received through being here.
But we know that you do not call us simply to words or ideas,
but, above all, to action, to express our convictions through deeds,
our faith through works.
Guide us then as we return to the daily tasks of life,
and help us to make real there what we have discussed here.
Teach us to practise what we preach,
to turn our dreams into reality,
and so may we share in building our parish,
our community and a better world,
to the glory of your name.

Amen.

Lord, as we work together planning for the future well-being of our parish,
we pray that all our work may be focused on you.

At the heart of what we do, may there be listening,
listening to what your Spirit is saying to us,
through our people and through the world around us.

At the heart of what we do, may there be wisdom,
wisdom that does everything with care and forethought,
wisdom that is shrewd and astute.

At the heart of what we do, may there be courage,
courage to explore and to experiment,
courage to let go and courage to begin again.

Gracious God,
give us wisdom to see the opportunities before us,
courage to grasp them,
and perseverance to see them through to fulfilment,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

The following simple formulas are easy ways to organize prayer.

Although some parishes might have used a few of these ways of praying most of the exercises will be new to them. Please check with the parish before using any of these prayers.

ACTS

A - Adoration - praise God for who God is

C - Confession - own up to our sins

T - Thanksgiving - thank God for all God has done

S - Supplication - make requests for ourselves and others

Five-Finger Prayer

Thumb - pray for those closest to me

Pointing finger - pray for those who guide us: teachers, doctors, clergy, counselors, social workers, mentors

Middle finger (tallest one) - pray for those who stand tall:

government, civic and business leaders, police and firefighters

Ring finger (your weakest finger) - pray for those who are weak:

the poor, sick, infirm, infants, homeless, and the powerless

Pinkie (the smallest, the least) - pray for myself and my needs

Take a TRIP with God

Ask the following questions:

T - Thanks: For what am I thankful?

R - Regret: What do I regret?

I - Intercession: Whom do I need to pray for?

P - Purpose: What is my purpose or plan? (this day, week, my life)

PARTS of Prayer

P - Praise

A - Ask

R - Repent

T - Thank

S - Share

Litany: A Call to Prayer

“Jesus said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’” (*Matthew 9:37-38 RSV*)

Through Jesus, we are called to pray.

“Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.” (*Colossians 4:2-3 NRSV*)

Through God's Word, we are called to pray.

“Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador.” (*Ephesians 6:18-20 NRSV*)

Through God's messenger, we are called to pray.

“Called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America calls upon its members, congregations, synods, churchwide unit, and related institutions and agencies to pray for the renewal of this church so that every member, congregation, synod, churchwide unit, and institution might bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.” (*The Evangelical Strategy of the ELCA*)

Through Christ's church, we are called to pray.

Jesus said to his disciples, “So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” (*Mark 11:24 NRSV*)

Trusting in God's promise and call, let us pray. Gracious God, Lord of the harvest,

You send us out into fields and streets, neighbourhoods and schools, places of work and places of play, and to the ends of the earth. As you send us, send also your Holy Spirit, that we might be renewed, strengthened and empowered to be bold witnesses to the Good News of Jesus Christ; in whose name we pray. AMEN