

People of Prayer

Contents:

- Introductory note to the Prayer Leader.
- Full running sheet of the prayer with notes and directions (copy as needed for those reading or doing some other action).
- Prayer handout sheet to be copied for all participants.

Introduction - for the Prayer Leader

Dear Prayer Leader,

Thanks for leading this prayer based on the capacity of PRAYER.

The People of Prayer prayer introduces participants to Christian Meditation as a style of prayer.

This prayer forms part of a series of 9 prayers that are based on the capacities of a Christian community as detailed in the Catching Fire Spiritual Formation Framework: Principle, Prayer, Presence, Welcome, Ritual, Journey, Purpose, Commitment, Fidelity.

The prayer is intended for use with staff groups in a Catholic school community but can be easily adapted to other contexts.

The structure and ideas included are just suggestions. Please feel free to modify or add to the wording to make the experience more personal and relevant for your staff. Adding your own touches will not only make the experience more enriching for you personally, but also for the rest of your group.

In each prayer there is an invitation for the Prayer Leader to share an aspect of their own experience. This is an invitation only and is not named in the participants' handout.

Each of the prayers in the series follows a common structure of:

Gather - Listen - Respond - Go Forth

People of Prayer

Preparation beforehand:

- ✓ Select which of the two alternative 'Listen' versions you will use. Prayer handout 1 uses the multiple passages from scripture; Prayer handout 2 uses the Lord's Prayer text.
- ✓ Print sufficient copies of the relevant Prayer handout for all staff from the end of this document. (Double-sided A4; colour copied if possible but will print well in black and white.)
- ✓ Print additional copies of the Leader guide for those assisting as readers, etc.
- ✓ Ensure you have sufficient copies of the *Prayer* prayer card to distribute towards the end of the prayer.
- ✓ A bell or chime
- ✓ Identify three people to be Candle Lighters
- ✓ Identify one person as Bible bearer
- ✓ If using Prayer handout 2, identify two Readers.
- ✓ Sections identified as 'Leader' may be divided amongst different people but it is helpful to have a recognisable leader of the prayer.
- ✓ Determine the level of information your group requires about Christian Meditation and modify the explanation accordingly.

Creating the space:

Where possible, arrange chairs in a circle or semi-circle around a prayer focus point. Try to create different heights in your prayer focus – even if you conceal a book or box under your cloth to create a different height. Items to incorporate in your prayer focus:

- ✓ Coloured cloth/s
- ✓ Three PrayerFire candles labelled 'Head', 'Heart' and 'Hands' (+ matches to light the candles)
- ✓ Display copies of Prayer prayer cards
- ✓ Bible and a book stand or small easel to display the Bible
- ✓ Cross or crucifix
- ✓ A3 Prayer poster
- ✓ Copy of the 'Capacities Wheel'

Approximate time required: 20 mins

We Gather

The leader welcomes those present and acknowledges the gift of coming together in prayer.

Leader:

Our prayer today continues (or begins) our focus on the Capacities of a Christian community. Today, we are reminded of the call to be People of Prayer who are nurtured and sustained by a personal prayer life.

Prayer has been described most simply as "communication with God." We might also be familiar with the definition of prayer as 'raising our hearts and minds to God.'

For Jesus, prayer was a life-giving necessity - even in the midst of demanding crowds. The gospels are full of examples of Jesus taking the time to pray.

We don't need to look any further than Jesus to see what a relevant, integrated and sustaining prayer life looks like. His deep and nurtured connection to God was his centre; his heart.

We, too, are called into that same relationship with God.

Through prayer, we can discover the deep peace and reality of God's abundant love.

The style of prayer that we will use today as our response will be a form of Christian Meditation.

Let's prepare ourselves to enter fully into this time of prayer together by pausing and allowing ourselves to be still and to rest in the presence of God.

Ring a chime or bell then pause for a moment of silence. Ring the chime again to end the silence.

Leader: Let's now begin by reminding ourselves that we gather in the presence of God whose very nature is relational...

All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Candle lighter 1: As we gather here in your name, Open our minds to know your voice. (light 'head' candle)

Candle lighter 2: Open our hands to do your work. (light 'hands' candle)

Candle lighter 3: And open our hearts to hold your Spirit. (light 'heart' candle)

Bible bearer reverently places the open Bible on the book stand in the prayer space.

Leader: Let us pray together,

All: God of loving relationships, You call us to be people of prayer, inviting us to share with you our joys and hopes; our sorrows and anxieties. Be with us as we strive to recognise our need for you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our prayer. Amen

We Listen (See also an alternative 'Listen' that follows.)

Leader: Jesus provides a perfect example of a life of prayer.

There are frequent references in the gospel accounts to Jesus' prayer life. He often sought a place for solitude and took time apart for prayer.

Many of the significant moments of his teaching and ministry are marked by Jesus taking time before the event to pray or taking time afterwards to pray in response to what had happened.

Let's listen now to some examples of the place of prayer in Jesus' life.

I haven't allocated readers for this and so I invite any of you to read one of the short readings. After each passage, we will respond with a short period of silence before someone else reads the next passage.

Voice 1: In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. (Mk 1:35)
(silence)

Voice 2: The news of him kept spreading, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their illnesses cured, but he would go off to some deserted place and pray. (Lk 5:15-16)
(silence)

Voice 3: Now it happened in those days that he went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. (Lk 6:12)
(silence)

Voice 4: When Jesus received the news about John the Baptist, he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. (Mt 14:13)
(silence)

Voice 5: He took with him Peter, John and James and went up the mountain to pray. And it happened that, as he was praying, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became sparkling white. (Lk 9:28-29)
(silence)

Voice 6: Now it happened that he was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.'
(Lk 11:1-4)
(silence)

Voice 7: Then he withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed. (Lk 22:41)
(silence)

Voice 8: Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. (John 19:30)
(silence)

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

We Listen (Alternative)

Leader: Jesus provides a perfect example of a life of prayer.

There are frequent references in the gospel accounts to Jesus' prayer life. He often sought a place for solitude and took time apart for prayer.

Many of the significant moments of his teaching and ministry are marked by Jesus taking time before the event to pray or taking time afterwards to pray in response to what had happened.

Let's listen now to what Jesus had to say to his disciples about prayer.

(Bible bearer takes the bible from the prayer space and hands it to Reader One.)

Reader One: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew

(Matthew 6:5-15)

'When you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard.

Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him. So you should pray like this:

Reader Two: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours;

but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'
(pause)

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

We Respond

Leader: There are many different forms of prayer. In fact, one of the purposes of this series of Staff PrayerFire prayers that we are using is to deliberately introduce us to a variety of styles of prayer.

The prayer style that we will use today as our response is what's referred to as Christian Meditation.

Many people think that meditation is something that Christians have 'picked up' from the Buddhist and other Eastern religious traditions and so they are suspicious of it as a form of prayer.

In fact, meditation has a very long history in the Christian tradition and the call to meditate is named specifically a number of times in scripture.

Meditation was practiced extensively by the Desert Fathers of the 4th and 5th Centuries and was a significant component of monastic life.

It's true that Christian meditation has been 'rediscovered' to some extent in the last 20 or 30 years – mostly following the work of Benedictine priest, John Main.

He presented a way of Christian meditation that uses a prayer-phrase or a mantra. The mantra that is suggested is the word 'Maranatha' which is an Aramaic word that translates as 'Come, O Lord', or 'Our Lord, come.'

The idea of using the mantra is to keep the mind from wandering. If thoughts and images come and your attention strays, as soon as you become aware of this wandering, return to saying the mantra word or phrase.

The mantra helps us to clear our minds so that we can simply be in the presence of God and in relationship with God. Try not to think or imagine anything - spiritual or otherwise.

We're going to try meditating together as a group for five minutes. I will ring a chime (or bell) to begin our time and ring it again to mark the end of our five minutes.

So, to begin. Put things out of your hands and sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Rest your hands loosely in your lap. Close your eyes and try to remain as still as possible.

When I ring the chime, begin to say the word, Maranatha, silently and slowly. Say it as four separate syllables: Ma – ra – na – tha. Keep repeating the mantra gently but continuously. If your mind starts to wander, return to the mantra.

(Ring chime. Allow five minutes to pass. Ring chime again to finish.)

We Go Forth

Leader: Let's draw our prayer to a close by praying together our closing blessing ...

**All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus as people of Prayer.
Help us to follow his prayerful example:
Turning to you as a friend;
Sharing our sorrows and anxieties;
our joys and our hopes.**

**May your grace, mercy and peace,
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
This day, now and forever.
Amen**

(Leader invites comments from the group about the prayer experience. Leader may wish to firstly share their own experience of using Christian Meditation.)

Distribute the Quick Fire Prayer Card for this week, 'Prayer' and remind the group of the invitation to continue the style of this week's prayer throughout the week. A suggestion is to begin with 5 minutes of meditation each day and gradually build up to 20 or 30 minutes each day

People of Prayer ... Relate

We Listen

In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. (Mk 1:35) (silence)

The news of him kept spreading, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their illnesses cured, but he would go off to some deserted place and pray. (Lk 5:15-16) (silence)

Now it happened in those days that he went onto the mountain to pray; and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. (Lk 6:12) (silence)

When Jesus received the news about John the Baptist, he withdrew by boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. (Mt 14:13) (silence)

He took with him Peter, John and James and went up the mountain to pray. And it happened that, as he was praying, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became sparkling white. (Lk 9:28-29) (silence)

Now it happened that he was in a certain place praying, and when he had finished, one of his disciples said, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, this is what to say: Father, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come; give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us. And do not put us to the test.' (Lk 11:1-4) (silence)

Then he withdrew from them, about a stone's throw away, and knelt down and prayed. (Lk 22:41) (silence)

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit. (John 19:30) (silence)

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

We Respond

An experience of Christian meditation.

Maranatha

We Go Forth

All: As we go about our day, O God;
As we strive to walk with Jesus
as people of Prayer,
Help us to follow his prayerful example:
Turning to you as a friend;
Sharing our sorrows and anxieties;
Our joys and our hopes.

**May your grace, mercy and peace,
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
This day, now and forever.**

Amen

Spirit of

Prayer

We Gather

**All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

As we gather here in your name,
Open our minds to know your voice.

'head candle

Open our hands to do you work.

'hands candle'

And open our hearts to hold your Spirit.

'heart' candle

**All: God of loving relationships,
You call us to be people of prayer,
inviting us to share with you
our joys and hopes;
our sorrows and anxieties.**

**Be with us as we strive to recognise our need
for you.**

We ask this in the name of Jesus our prayer. Amen

We Listen

'When you pray, do not imitate the hypocrites: they love to say their prayers standing up in the synagogues and at the street corners for people to see them.

In truth I tell you, they have had their reward.

But when you pray, go to your private room, shut yourself in, and so pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

'In your prayers do not babble as the gentiles do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

So you should pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.

'Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours;

but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.'

(Matthew 6:5-15)

The Gospel of the Lord.

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**May your grace, mercy and peace,
Bless us, keep us and transform us all,
This day, now and forever.**

Amen

People of Prayer - Relate

Spirit of

Prayer

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**All: In the name of the Father, + and of the Son, and
of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

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