

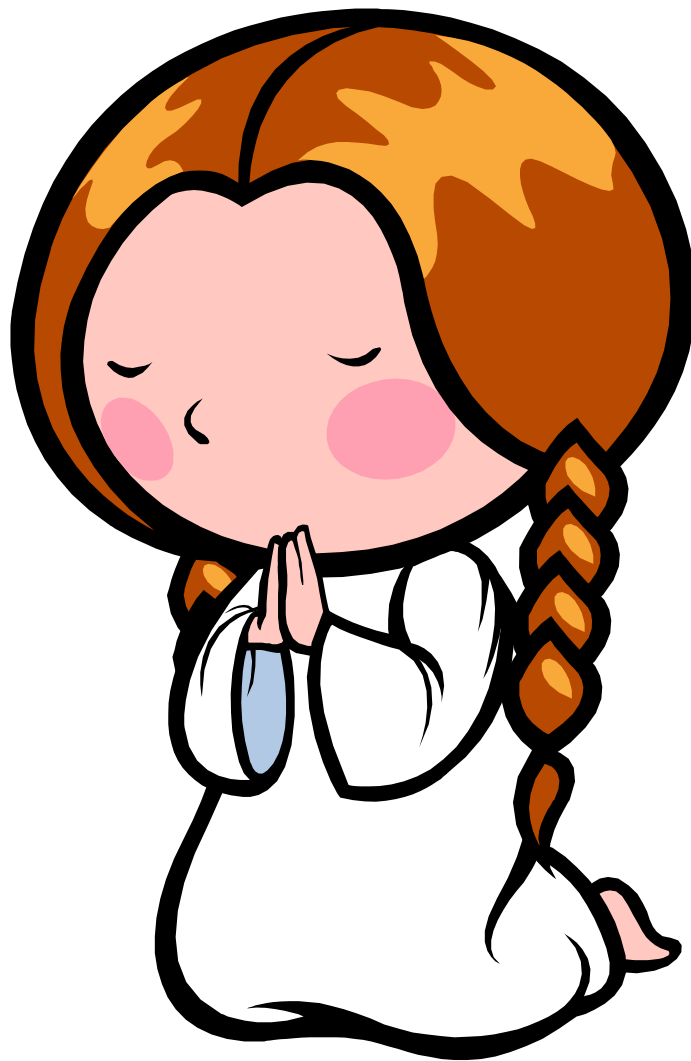
[ Workshop: Creative Prayer with children ]



Daniel Jones  
Youth & Children's Adviser  
Diocese of Bristol

*Thanks to:*

Jane Whitcombe  
Children's Adviser for the Diocese of Bath & Wells



Some ideas for creative prayer...

**Some ideas for creative prayer...**



## Thank you, sorry, please - teaspoon prayers

Perhaps the most simple way of structuring a prayer is to use the three words thank you, sorry, please. Have a short time of chat and discussion focusing on what the group might want to say to God using these three words. Finally have a short time of open prayer or ask a leader to weave together all the topics mentioned, in a closing prayer. TSP, the first letters of Thank you, Sorry, Please, remind us of the recipe book abbreviation for teaspoon. It can be helpful to give younger children a plastic teaspoon to take home to remind them of these three basic categories for prayer.

## Three envelopes

Some groups start out by being rather shy about praying out loud. In this case why not pin up three envelopes labelled "Thank you" "Sorry" and "Please" and let group members write their prayers on slips of paper and put them in the appropriate envelope. Don't forget to check the envelopes from time to time to let everyone share in the joy of the thank you prayers and to find out how the please prayers have been answered.

## An opening prayer

As we gather together  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we put aside the things that distract us  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we leave behind the things that worry us  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we forget about ourselves  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we worship you with songs of praise  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we listen to stories from your Word  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**  
As we hear your teaching  
**Lord, help us to concentrate on you**



## Prayer Pauses

Many people find it helpful when prayers that are led from the front include short pauses for private prayer.

Father God, we thank you for our church/group and we ask that you will help us to grow closer to each other and closer to you.

Let's think of the people sitting on either side of us and ask that God will be especially close to them. **PAUSE**

We also remember those people who are not with us today, perhaps through illness or because they are on holiday.

Let's remember them in our own prayers now. **PAUSE**

Father God, we thank you for the town where we live and we ask that you will help us to spread your love to our friends and neighbours.

Let's think of one or two particular friends and ask that God will help us tell them the Good News. **PAUSE**

Father God, we thank you for the time we have spent together and we ask that you will be with us throughout the rest of the day.

Let's think of the things that we are going to do later today and bring them before God now. **PAUSE**

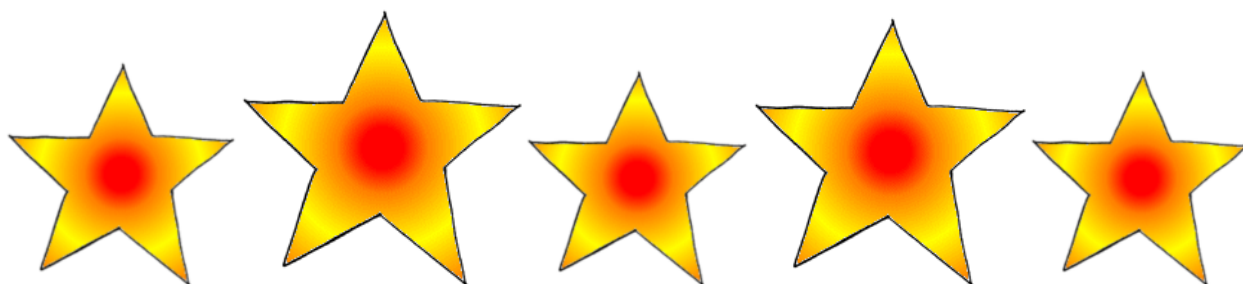
Lord, thank you that you listen to all our prayers spoken and unspoken. Amen.

## Prayer paper chain

Give each member of the group a strip of coloured paper and encourage them to write a one-line thank you prayer. Fasten all the strips together to make a festive paper chain that you can hang across your meeting room. If you have a small group you might want to give each person two or three strips of paper or add to the chain week by week. The prayer paper chain is particularly effective on special occasions like Christmas, Easter and church anniversaries when a long chain can be made during an All-Age service.

## Christmas Stars

Cut out enough stars for everyone to have one, or make some star templates and let every member of the group make their own star. Invite everyone to write one-line prayers thanking God for the gift of his own Son on that first Christmas. Decorate the edges of the prayer stars with glitter, then punch a hole in the top of each one and attach a piece of ribbon so that they can be hung on the Christmas tree.



## Stars

Cut out enough stars for everyone to have one, or make some star templates and let every member of the group make their own star.

Invite everyone to write a prayer on their star. These can be stuck on to a large piece of card as a “sky” background or punch a hole in the top of each star, attach a piece of ribbon and hang them up.

## Hand prayers

Give each member of your group a piece of paper and ask them to draw around and cut out the shape of their own hand. On the four fingers they should write:

- something to praise God for
- something to thank God for
- something for which they would like to ask God’s help
- something they would like to say sorry about

Group members can fold down the fingers on their paper hand if they wish to keep their prayers secret. This leaves the hand in the ‘thumbs up’ shape – a reminder that God has heard our prayers. A leader should conclude by praying for the group, leaving pauses for people to bring their own prayers to God silently.



## Praise poster

In small groups read St Luke 1:26-55 (the Magnificat) and pick out the phrases that describe God. Give each person a sheet of paper and ask them to write out one of the phrases in large, colourful lettering. Paste all the finished phrases on to backing paper under the caption, “We can praise God because....”



## Balloon prayers

Have ready a number of inflated balloons and a selection of permanent marker pens. Invite everyone to suggest one-line thank you prayers and write two or three prayers on each balloon. Hang the balloons in clusters around your church or meeting room. These could be made as part of a special celebration service.

## Pop the balloon

Have ready a number of inflated balloons and a selection of permanent marker pens. Invite everyone to name some of the reasons for which we might need to say sorry to God. Write these on the balloons. Then have a few moments of prayer asking God's forgiveness for all the things we do wrong and including the suggestions written on the balloons. Finally pop the balloons and explain that when we say sorry to God, he not only forgives us, but he also forgets the wrong things we have done and gives us the chance to make a fresh start.

## Fold a prayer – prayer consequences!

Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to write a one-line prayer request at the top of the page. When they have done this they should fold over the paper. Then pass the paper to the left. Each person should now have a different piece of paper on which they can write another one-line prayer and fold it over again. If they wish, they can write the same prayer again. The paper should be passed on several more times until five or six prayers are on the page. Then everyone should stop, unfold and read their paper. Invite everyone to spend a few moments silently offering these prayers to God. If there is time, the prayers can be put in a pile and everyone offered the opportunity to take and read a new set of prayers.

## Wash away wrongs

Ask the group to make a list of things that we do to make God feel sad. Using a water soluble pen, write the ideas on acetate and project them on an Overhead Projector. Once the list is complete, weave all the suggestions into a responsive prayer something like this:

When the prayer is over, sprinkle a few drops of water onto the acetate and watch the water dissolve the ink. Next, use a cloth to wipe the whole acetate clean to illustrate that when we say sorry to God he forgives us and wipes away our wrongdoing, giving us the opportunity to make a fresh, clean start.

**Take great care not to flood the OHP – it is an ELECTRICAL appliance!!**

For all the times we make you feel sad...  
For the times when we lie and cheat...  
For the times when we are angry and grumpy...  
For the times when we are rude or naughty...  
For the times when we deliberately disobey...  
For the times when we are selfish or unkind...  
For all the wrong things we do...

**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord!**  
**We want to say... sorry, Lord! Amen.**

## Wipe away my sins

In advance, write "I'm sorry, please wipe away my sins" on a piece of kitchen roll.

On a blackboard, invite people to list things which they are sorry about – being greedy, not helping someone in need etc. Explain that God wants to forgive us for all our wrong doings and give us the opportunity to make a fresh start. All we have to do is say sorry to God and really mean it. Read Psalm 51 and say a simple prayer saying sorry to God for all the things on the list. Then produce the kitchen towel and invite someone to wipe away the words. When we say sorry to God he not only forgives us but wipes the slate clean.

## Flame prayers

Cut simple flame shapes from yellow, orange and red paper. Give each person a shape and explain to them that when God's Holy Spirit first came, it was as if tongues of fire were reaching out and touching all the people. It wasn't the kind of flame that burnt people, but more like a flame that filled people with the warmth and love of God, a flame which fired up their hearts with courage and enthusiasm.

God sent his Holy Spirit to help people live as Christians. Today the Holy Spirit can help people pray and praise. He can help people tell others about Jesus. God sent us his Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to be our special helper. Encourage everyone to use their flame shapes to write a prayer thanking God for his wonderful gift.

Stick the finished prayers onto a dark background to look like one big flame. Explain that as the Holy Spirit helps us more and more people can be fired up with the love of God.

This can also be done by inviting everyone to draw around their hand on yellow, orange or red paper, cutting them out and writing a short prayer on the hand. Stick the finished prayers onto a dark background to look like one big flame.



## Happy and sad times

You will need a large face that looks happy one way up and sad the other way up.

Show the happy face first and ask what events have made people happy during the last week and make a list of them. Pray about the list or say a one-line thank you prayer for each one. Then turn the face upside down and ask if anything sad or worrying has happened in the past week and make a list of them too. Perhaps there are people who are ill who need praying for. Pray for this list.

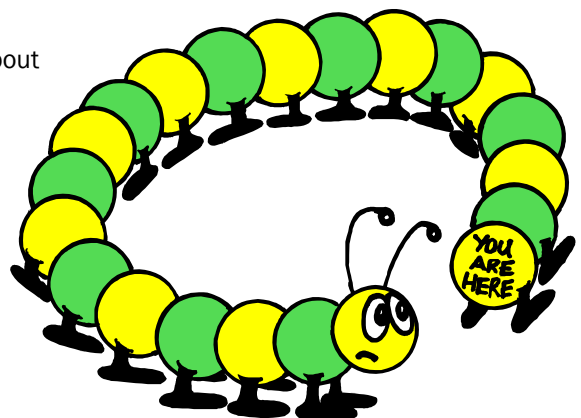


Finish by thanking God that he always knows how we feel, whether we are happy or sad, and thanking him for being just as close to us in the good times as in the bad.

Perhaps everyone could have a happy/sad face to take home as a memory jogger during prayer time.

## Thank you for animals

Give out circles of paper and invite everyone to write a prayer about animals on it. Stick the prayer circles onto a large piece of card to look like a caterpillar and stick a smiley face with antennae on the front. You might want to add feet to the circles.



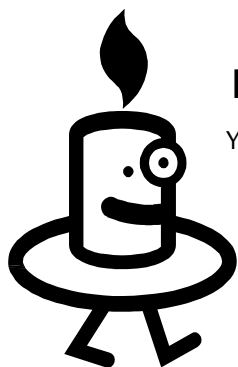
## Light triumphs

You will need candles that relight themselves (joke candles).

Light the candle. Explain that Jesus was the light of the world and when he died, the devil thought that he had put out the light. Blow the candle out. As it relights, explain that Jesus' power was greater than the darkness, and he came back to life.

*'The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overpowered it' (John 1)*

This can also be used at alternative Halloween celebrations.



## Prayer candles

You will need a candle and card circle for everyone.

Invite the congregation to write or draw on their circle things they want to pray for. You might need to suggest events or someone who is ill etc. Invite them to write something they want to ask God about for themselves. Then insert the candle in its card circle holder. The candles can be lit and a general prayer said.

Suggest that these prayer candles might be used regularly during prayer time at home.

## For those who sow the first seeds

Hold up an apple and ask how many seeds there might be inside it. Cut the apple open and count the seeds to discover who guessed correctly. All of these seeds have the potential to grow into an apple tree and produce fruit of their own. In the parable of the sower, Luke 8:4-15, Jesus teaches that the seed is like God's Word. In the right situation it will grow and flourish. Ask everyone who first told them about Jesus, who sowed the first seed. Thank God for all these people, eg: parents, friends, Sunday school leaders, church leaders.

## Flowers

Place a vase filled with water centrally. Scatter flowers on the table or floor around the vase. Explain that the flowers need to be put back in the container with the water in order to live. We need to be in contact with God to be whole and to know life in its fullness.

Ask everyone to pray, in silence, for people and situations they know that need the life-giving Spirit given by Jesus. Invite them to place one of the scattered flowers back in the vase as a token of their prayer in silence, or with a brief explanation of their prayer. When the vase is full it can be placed on the altar.



## Remembrance poppies

Give everyone a red and white paper poppy. Invite people to write a prayer of remembrance on the red poppy and a prayer for peace on the white poppy. Stick the prayer poppies onto a large card cross. You could have a cross of remembrance and a cross of peace.

## Holly wreath

Give out paper holly leaves and invite people to write short prayers on them. Children can draw something about Christmas on theirs. Stick all the prayers onto a circle of card and add a few red paper berries. Attach a ribbon and hang the prayer wreath on a door.

## Gift of Praise

*"Now, our God, we give you thanks, and we praise your glorious name."  
1 Chronicles 29:13*

Make a gift of praise for God. Gift wrap a small cardboard box and tie a bright ribbon around it, or paste a large square of gift wrap onto backing paper and add ribbons so that it looks like a present. Then, give out small pieces of paper or sticky labels and ask the group to each draw or write something that they want to thank God for. Play some quiet music while people come up one at a time to paste or stick their prayers on to the box.





## Praise offering

*Let us, then, always offer praise to God as our sacrifice through Jesus, which is the offering presented by lips that confess him as Lord. (Hebrews 13:15)*

If your church takes up an offering each week, why not use this as an opportunity to also give God an offering of praise. Give out small slips of paper and invite people to write or draw something that they want to praise or thank God for. When the offering plate is passed around, invite people to put in both their money and their offering.

## In the bin

*Happy are those whose wrongs are forgiven, whose sins are pardoned!  
Happy is the person whose sins the Lord will not keep account of!  
Romans 4:7-8*

Give each member of the group a small slip of paper and invite them to write a short prayer saying sorry to God for anything which is on their mind. Have a few moments of silence in which people can quietly offer their Prayers to God and then pass round a bin and ask everyone to tear up their Prayer and put the pieces in the bin. Explain that when we say sorry to God, God takes away all our wrongdoing and gives us the chance to make a fresh start. If you are able to go outside, you might like to put all the torn-up prayers in a metal waste-bin and then set light to them.



## Nativity prayer

Place a 3D nativity scene in the middle of the group. Invite each child to pick up the pieces. Who are they? What part did they play in the story? Each piece is important and plays a special part in the Christmas story and can remind us of special things to pray for in our lives and other people's lives: Encourage the children to share as you pick up each piece to pray. They may come up with ideas but here are some suggestions:

- **Jesus:** God's son - Give thanks for the birth of Jesus, his life, his stories, teaching, miracles, his sacrifice etc
- **Mary & Joseph:** Parents - Give thanks to Jesus's mums who love and care for us
- **Angel:** Messenger of God - A reminder of God's presence and that is there throughout our lives, he has an amazing plan for our lives and promises to be with us always.
- **Wise Men:** Wisdom and gifts: As we learn at school and about God at church, help us to use the gifts and skills God has given us to be kind and helpful to one another.
- **Shepherds:** Protection: Pray for those who protect us including police, the government, soldiers etc. Pray for farmers, those who care for us at other times; Grandparents, teachers, junior church leaders.
- **Donkey & Cow:** Animals: Pray for pets, farmers, cruelty to animals etc
- **Stable:** Pray for our homes, giving thanks for security, for luxuries such as water, heating, food. Pray for the homeless, those who are poor and hungry.

## Prayer Tree

A great visual prayer for all age worship services and children's groups. For the family tree, you will need a large branch or few branches arranged in a big vase. Give each group member a leaf shape and ask them to write or draw their prayer. It can be personal or they can write or draw something in God's creation for which they would like to say thank you. Pierce a hole with a hole puncher and hang them on using wool or thread, or with a spot of glue on one end of each leaf, stick the prayers to the branches of the tree.

Some of the prayers (leaves) can be read out loud to help the children to focus.

*I am the vine, you are the branches. Without me you can do nothing. If you love me and follow my teachings you can ask for anything and it will be given to you. Remain in my love. (John 15)*

## Family Tree

Give each member of your group a simple outline of a person – a gingerbread man shape is ideal. Thread a piece of wool through a hole in the top of each figure. On one side of the figure invite people to write the names of all the people in their family. On the other side they could write a simple prayer, including any special needs and asking God to bless their family. Arrange a few branches in a vase and invite people to come up and hang their figure on the family tree. When everyone has done this a leader might like to say a final prayer, offering all these family prayers to God.

## New Year

*I will give you a new heart and a new mind. (Ezekiel 36:26)*

Give each member of your group a piece of paper and show them how to fold it in half and then tear it into a heart shape. Encourage each group member to write the following words on their heart:

**Lord, in the year that's about to start; Help me to love you with all my heart.**

Read out the following prayer inviting the group to read out the words written on their hearts as a response:

*Father God, as we look forward to the coming year, we ask that you will bless us and be close to us.*

**Lord, in the year that's about to start, Help me to love you with all my heart.**

*Help us all to make the most of all the opportunities that you give us in the next twelve months.*

**Lord, in the year that's about to start; Help me to love you with all my heart.**

*Give us the strength and courage to bear the difficulties and disappointments of the coming year.*

**Lord, in the year that's about to start; Help me to love you with all my heart.**

*In everything we do this year, may we turn to you for help and guidance.*

**Lord, in the year that's about to start; Help me to love you with all my heart. Amen.**



## New Year resolutions

*They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshipped him. (Matthew 2:11)*

Remind your group of the wise men who travelled a long way to find Jesus. When they found him they knelt down and worshipped him and offered him special gifts. What could we resolve to do during this New Year to show Jesus how much he means to us?

Discuss the different possibilities and write up all the suggestions on a board or overhead projector acetate.

For example:

- we could set aside a regular time to talk to God
- we could try to read our Bible more often
- we could be more willing to share our possessions
- we could resolve to tell someone else the good news about Jesus.

Conclude with a prayer asking God to help the group keep their New Year's resolutions.



## Snowflakes

Give each group member a circle of paper and show them how to fold and cut it to make a snowflake. (if you don't have enough scissors for the whole group, you might like to try tearing the paper) When everyone has cut their own snowflake and unfolded it to reveal the shape, compare all the different patterns. You should find that no two snowflakes are identical. Microscopes reveal that snowflakes are made up of tiny six-sided ice crystals and no two crystals are exactly the same. No two people are identical either. Each person is unique; even twins are really quite different. As a group compose a prayer praising God that each person is special and unique and thanking him that he knows each of us inside out. He even knows how many hairs we have on our head! Write out the prayer, then stick it on to a sheet of black or dark blue paper with all the snowflakes displayed around the edge.



## Firestarters Flame collage

Materials: large flame shape on the floor made of paper or card, paper, glue sticks, scissors, pens and crayons;

*'Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there.'* ( Acts 2:3)

The flame symbolises the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the movement of the Holy Spirit now. The aim of Firestarters is to pray that flame into the lives of children.

- *Think about the good things about life – friends, family, countryside, flowers, etc*
- *Draw some of the good things you have thought of and cut them out*
- *Stick them on to the flame on the floor*
- *Make a small flame and stick it to the large one*
- *Spend some time quietly thanking God for the good things about your life*



## More Candle Prayers

Materials: large lit candle, candle prayer cards, pencils, 'words' sheets listed below:

Words and phrases on individual sheets: sadness, darkness, abuse, sorrow, pain, suffering, light, love, care, hope, family, forgiveness, relief, happiness, healing, recovery, safety.

*'Jesus said ' I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness.'* (John 8:12)

The light of Christ came into the world to shine in all dark places and sad situations. As we remember children we think of Jesus the light, and ask his light to shine in the pain that some children face.

- *Look at the flame shining and bringing light*
- *Look at the words on the wall*
- *Write a prayer on the candle card for you to take and say at home using some of the words on the wall.*

## Love for the World

Materials: large inflatable earth or globe;

*'O Lord, our Lord, your greatness is seen in all the world'* (Psalm 8:1)

The world was made by God, and it is beautiful. At one time it was perfect, but things have gone wrong and the world is not the great place it once was. This was not how God meant it to be. Sometimes children are particularly damaged and hurt by things that happen in the world.

- Look at the world and try to find places you have been to, places you have heard about, and places you would like to visit
- Imagine the pain God feels when he sees his perfect world going wrong
- Think about children in other parts of the world. Hold or hug the world silently for a short while, thinking of all of the children in the world, and particularly those who are suffering.



## Prints for Children

Materials: thin dark paint, wet wipes, towels, floor covering, sheets with a child outline shape;

*'We know that we are children of God'* (1 John 5:19)

Our finger-prints are special to us, and no-one anywhere has a finger-print like yours! As we put our fingerprint onto the shape of a child we recognise that we, and all people including children, are precious to God.

- Dip a finger into some paint
- Mark a child outline with your finger-print
- As you do so say out-loud 'We know that we are children of God'

(You can also make small ID cards with the children's fingerprint, their names, age etc)

## Field of Children

Materials: Small cardboard figures, pens, tray of damp sand or heavy soil, prayer on a large sheet: 'God, please use ..... Help him/her work for you'.

*'...we are all God's fellow workers.'* (1 Corinthians 3:9)

God calls us all to work for him and to bring the joy of knowing him to others. We can all do something for God, however young or old we may be. As we place children into the tray, we can imagine adding soldiers to God's army.

- Take a child shape
- Write the name of a child on it
- Place them into the soil or sand, adding them to God's army of workers
- Quietly pray 'God, please use ..... Help him/her work for you'.

## Growing Hands

Materials: mixed coloured paper, pens, glue, scissors, green paper backdrop with flower and plant stalks and leaves drawn on

*'God created us to grow in beauty'*

Children are loved by God. He wants them to grow in beauty, and to be happy and complete. Each of us can help all children to grow and blossom.

- Take a piece of paper and draw around your hand
- Cut out the hand shape
- Stick the hand shape on to the backdrop as a flower
- Sit quietly looking at the 'flowers', think of a child you know and care about, say 'God created... to grow in beauty'. If you are a child use your own name.

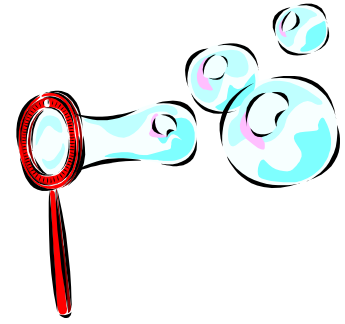


## Bubble Prayers

Materials: bubble-blowing tubs, profiles (below) printed out on large sheets.

*'I will do whatever you ask in my name,  
so that the Son may bring glory to the Father'.*

Jesus promises to hear our prayers and act on them. As we name Jesus and ask him to be with the children on the profile sheets, or other children known to us, we can be sure that Jesus hears our prayer.



**Profile 1:** Katie and Emma are from a happy home. Just a few weeks ago their father decided to leave home and live with someone else. Katie and Emma and their mum are all shocked and confused.

**Profile 2:** Saddam was badly injured in the last war in Iraq, and will never see again. His mother and many other relatives were killed in the fighting.

**Profile 3:** James has difficulties learning, and his mother sometimes finds it very hard to make James understand. At school he gets teased because he gets special help.

- Read the three Profiles and try to imagine what life is like for those children
- Think of a child you know who is going through a difficult time
- Blow a bubble, and say 'Jesus, be with .....(name)'
- Watch the bubble as, just like our prayers, it rises and vanishes

## Out of the mouths

Materials: tape player, tape of short comments about their life made by children, marker pens, flipchart paper;

Many children have lives full of fun and variety. Some also suffer, go through difficult family times, and are damaged. We need to learn to listen to children and value them and their input. This can also be done as a time of sharing writing down the comments made by the children;

- Listen to the tape of children's comments for a few minutes
- Think about the main words or themes you hear
- Write those and any other words from the comments on the paper
- Sit and pray silently for the children whose voices you have heard

## Fruit of the spirit:

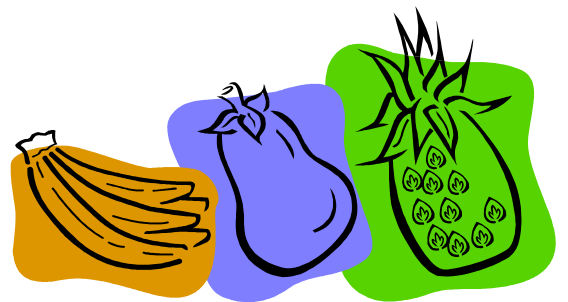
Materials: nine small cartons of fruit juice - orange, apple etc

*'The spirit of God produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.'* (Galatians 5:22)

Wrap each carton in white paper disguising the flavour and write one of the 'fruits of the spirit' on each carton

- Explain that God's spirit is full of nice things to help us be good people;
- He understands that we do wrong a times saying things we shouldn't, getting into trouble.
- Look at the words, think about what they mean? Which do you need more of in your life?
- Give the children suggestions and examples eg: Do you get angry easily by your brother or sister?
- God want to help us. He can hear our thoughts and he wants to help you now.

When everyone has had time to think, invite the children to take a plastic cup and pour a little juice from the 'fruits of the spirit' they would like more of, drink it and remind them that God is with them.



## Quiet Light

Materials: small candles, matches, prayer sheets on display

Prayer (on large sheets): 'Father God, who created light in our world, bring peace and light to our schools now. Amen'

*'Out of the darkness light shall shine' (2 Corinthians 4:6a)*

Schools should be a place of light and enjoyment. However, many children feel pressure or suffer bullying while at school. Teachers and other staff face increasingly difficult workloads and targets. God brings peace to places of unrest and light to darkness.

- Think of schools you know, and silently ask God to shine his light into the children and staff
- Light a candle and say the prayer
- Watch as your candle flickers and adds to the light



## Water of Life

Materials: A large bowl, two smaller bowls of water, small cups, the two prayers below printed onto large sheets

*'I will pour water onto the thirsty land' (Isaiah 44:3)*

In the Bible the love and power of God is often described as water. Water can be really refreshing when we are thirsty, and it help things grow. God wants all children to be refreshed by him, and to grow well.

**Prayer 1:** Spirit of God, as we pour this water please fill all the children in our home / church / community. Amen

**Prayer 2:** Father God, refresh all children and give them new life and a new love for you. Amen

- Read the two prayers and decide which one you prefer
  - Take a small cup and fill it from one of the smaller bowls
- Slowly pour the water into the large bowl, saying the prayer as you do so

## Focus Flags

Materials: simple flags made with bamboo sticks and thin cloth, with the following on them, one of each: three or four figures and the word 'family', plenty of children and the word 'school', a group of children with footballs and the word 'clubs', and a church building with people and the word 'church'.

*'Whoever welcomes children in my name welcomes me.'* (Mark 9:37)

Jesus says good things about those people who spend time with children. Most families really love the children in them, and children are also welcome in many clubs, schools and churches.

- Pick up the 'family' flag, wave it gently, and think about all children you know who are a part of families. Ask God to help both the children, and the parents in that family.
- Pick up the 'school' flag, wave it gently, and think about all the children who go to school. Pray for both the children and all the staff as they care for their pupils.
- Repeat in a similar way with the other two flags. 'clubs' and 'church'

## Pebble People

Materials: small pebbles, a small mat or piece of carpet '*...and the whole family was filled with joy.*' (Acts 16:34)

God's ideal is that children enjoy being part of a loving and caring family. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and sometimes families are not happy or safe places.

- Think of a child and family known to you
- Pick up a stone and place it on the mat, saying 'This is a child'
- Pick up another stone and say 'This is the child's mother (or carer)'
- Pick up another stone and say 'This is the child's father'
- Pick up two more and say 'This is the child's family'
- Pick up two more and say 'These are the child's friends'
- Look at your pile of stones, and quietly think of all the people involved in a family



## Children in view

Materials: newspaper collage of stories which include children, other newspaper and magazine articles, cuttings and pictures, scissors, glue

*'I will teach your children and bring them success'* (Isaiah 54:13)

Children can be successful, but others suffer. Children are often in the news, but it is not always good news. God values children, yet the world so often hurts them and lets them down.

- Read the headlines and look at the pictures on the collage
- Think about the stories and pray for those involved
- Cut out a headline, picture or story about children
- Stick it to the collage and conclude with a prayer giving thanks for families and homes



## Walk-through Map

Materials: a floor map of the UK for people to walk on (this is not commercially available, so will need to be made)

*'All the nations that you have created will come and bow down to you; they will praise your greatness.'* (Psalm 86:9-10)

The United Kingdom is made up of countries, regions and counties. We have people from many backgrounds and faiths. The Bible tells us that God made all people, and that one day everyone will be united and worship him. Even now he loves all people in all places, including the young.

- Look at the map and try to find a place or area where you know families and children live
- Stand on the area where they live and pray; Thank you, God, that you love.....(name the people you know). '
- Think of another family, grandparents etc, stand where they come from, say the prayer for them, and so on

## The Way Forward

Materials: a map (any map will do) which will be cut/wrapped into pieces

We are all on a journey, a long journey through life. It is not easy for us to find the right way, as there will always be choices and difficult decisions to be made (wrap up the map). We need people, each other and God to help us follow the path that God has got ready for them.

- Encourage the group to take a piece of map holding it quietly thinking of their lives so far. What decisions have you had to make recently? Were they easy? Did you ask for help? What happened?
- All of us (and God) can help us follow the path He has for us. Piece together the map and say a prayer. (The children can take their piece home with them as a reminder)



## Blessed are...

Materials: post-it notes, pens, the quotes from the Beatitudes displayed on large sheets

- Beatitudes Quotes:
- Happy are those who want to do what God says
  - Happy are those who are not proud or boastful
  - Happy are those who are kind to others
  - Happy are those who are pure and live a good life
  - Happy are those who work for peace

One day Jesus spoke to his followers about how they should live. He said that people could find real happiness deep down if they lived the right way. It is important that children and young people learn to live in the way Jesus described. Some of the things Jesus said are on display here.

- Read the things Jesus said can make people happy inside
- Think about which you would like to be like
- Write your name on a post-it note and stick it near these sayings of Jesus



## Planting a Seed

Materials: sunflower seeds, plastic cups, potting soil, spoons, floor covering

*'Other seed fell on good soil....  
It came up, grew, and produced a good crop.'* (Mark 4:8)

In order to grow to be strong and healthy, seeds need good soil, feeding and watering. In the same way we need comfort and love in order to develop into the people God made us to be. As we plant seeds we pray that we will have all we need to grow:

- Take one of the seeds in your hand, look at it and think of people you are close to
- Put some soil in a cup and place your seed deep inside it. Hold the cup with the seed in it and ask God to help you and any children you know to grow into the people he wants us all to be



## Putting the Pieces Together

Materials: 4 A4 size pictures of a child or children in a range of bad situations of war, sadness or poverty. These can often be found in newspapers and magazines. Each one should be laminated and then cut up into four or five pieces.

*'He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.'* (Psalm 147:3)

The world is not always a good place. Children are often the victims of war, poverty and suffering. They may go through more pain and hurt than most adults ever experience.

- Take a pile of pieces and put them together
- Think about God's promise to heal and rebuild even the most damaged of people
- Silently ask God to bring healing and relief to all children who are suffering

## Changing Cultures

Materials: examples of books, toys and games used by children two generations ago and used today (NOTE: If any items are valuable this activity will need supervision), a flipchart or large piece of paper, pens

*'I the Lord do not change.'* (Malachi 3:6)

The world that children are growing up in is changing all the time. Many things which they read or play with were not known even a few years ago. Some of the things which are popular with children may not be safe or suitable.

- Look at the range of items considering things which children now feel are not good
- Write a simple prayer asking God to protect children from the bad things in today's culture